

2013 Conservation Forum to Focus on Climate Change

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Climate change adaptation will be the focus of the Garden Club of Virginia's 2013 Conservation Forum, set to take place in October at Monticello. Experts will share information that ranges from global to local. Forum speakers will address the reality of climate change, its impact on Virginia and the ways in which we are starting to adapt.

Keynote speaker Robert Talley will present a national and international overview of how climate change is being addressed. He heads Talley Associates, a consulting firm that offers general political consulting, and regulatory and legislative lobbying services to clients with issues before the legislative and executive branches of government. His primary areas of expertise include energy and the environment.

Skip Stiles, executive director of Wetlands Watch, will discuss the state of knowledge about sea level rise in Virginia, its impacts, and the work of his organization to prepare coastal communities for those impacts. In addition to his work at the Norfolk-based organization, he sat on former Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine's Commission on Climate Change; Kaine is now one of Virginia's U.S. senators.

The third speaker, Chris Burkett of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, coordinates Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan. He will share his work with new climate models as they affect the Piedmont area of Virginia. He and his colleagues have been studying the effects of 40 climate change variables on 20 different species of plants and animals. Wildlife action plans such as the one on which he works are the nation's core programs to prevent species from becoming endangered.

The fourth speaker, Austin Kane from the National Wildlife Federation, will help listeners translate climate change information to best practices in their own lives. She will provide information and guidelines on how to change lifestyle and gardening practices to adapt positively to our evolving world. Her work as a science and policy manager for the National Wildlife Federation Mid-Atlantic Regional Center focuses on safeguarding wildlife from climate change, developing a database of climate change initiatives, and building state capacity to address climate change.

The forum includes presentation of the GCV's Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation. The forum will also feature remarks by Susan Stein, the Richard Gilder senior curator and vice president for museum programs at the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

The forum will take place Oct. 30, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Monticello's Montalto Conference Center.

Following the morning program and lunch, attendees are invited to take part in a specially offered tour of the GCV's current restoration project at Monticello, Landscape of Slavery: Mulberry Row; there are house and garden tours available as well.

Details about the forum, tour and other facets of the event will be posted in September on the GCV website, www.gcvirginia.org. ❁