Remarks
Russell W. Baxter
Erchul Award Ceremony, April 8, 2014

I would first like to thank Carol Wampler for graciously submitting my nomination and Tayloe Murphy and Joe Maroon for supporting it. It was an unexpected pleasure to receive support from people for which I have such respect and admiration. It is truly an honor to be placed among this year's nominees and previous recipients of this award.

I would also like us to take a moment to remember Captain Erchul, whose leadership, vision, and enthusiasm have brought us all here again this year; my thanks also to Amy and her colleagues at VMI who keep his precious memory alive through this symposium and this award.

I would also like to recognize my wife Sharon, who many of you know, who may be more qualified for this award than me and who has showed over last six years and more recently, the last six months, what the marital vow "in sickness and in health" truly means.

Now a few brief words about leadership.

I would first like to single out Tayloe Murphy, my friend and mentor, for teaching me, whether he realized it or not, about what being a leader truly is and how to inspire and promote positive action. There obviously have been others, many who are here today, from which I've learned and modeled my approach to people and to issues. But I've always said I owe Tayloe my career and I can't let that go unsaid.

One thing Tayloe often said, and I'm almost quoting him here. "Take care of the people and the issues will take care of themselves." I always took that wisdom to mean, that while we are in the conservation business and often deal with complex scientific and technical issues, we can only make progress through our positive relationships with people; both friends and adversaries. We must truly understand the positions and motivations of those that we deal with and treat all in a cordial and respectful manner.

I will also admit, as Secretary Ward and I have jokingly discussed, I've learned a little about leadership from my favorite move "The Godfather" in which Michael Corleone famously recounts what his father taught him to "keep your friends close, but your enemies closer."

The most important thing I've learned is that a leader supports smart, dedicated people who are doing the right thing. The leader often gets the credit, but much of the real work is done day-to-day by the professionals and advocates in governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, private industry ….. in many places. So I dedicate this award to those people I've had the good fortune to work with every day of my career to protect and restore Virginia's

environment who, by their hard work and accomplishments have made it possible for me to receive this award.

Thank you.