

MARSH MUSINGS

by Dr. Lenore Tedesco, Executive Director



As my second summer season rolls into full swing, I find it to be a great time to reflect on the past year and take stock of our path and the progress the Institute has made on its journey into the future. It's been a remarkable year; not without its challenges and I can't say that I anticipated all the changes we would see. I can confidently say that each change has been to strengthen the Institute and align our activities and efforts more directly with our mission to preserve and protect coastal and wetland ecosystems through programs in research, conservation and education.

Last May, I outlined my *Plan for the Future* for the Institute. The objective is to create a center of excellence in research, conservation and education of coastal and wetland ecosystems through vibrant, dynamic, accessible and impactful research and conservation initiatives. At the core of the strategy are sweeping changes in program diversity, focus and intent. I am a strong believer in the power of community engagement in the stewardship of natural resources and

the need to making science accessible to the public. Programs that are underpinned by science and common-sense conservation, but have the power to invoke the emotional connections between a person and nature are the key to achieving greatness for The Wetlands Institute. A critical component of this plan is the addition of key human resources. The Wetlands Institute needed to attract experts in key strategic growth areas to develop new programs and enhance existing programs.

I am thrilled to say that we have done that! There are a lot of new faces at the Institute – and more to come. In January, Brooke Knapick joined the team as the Director of Educational Program Development. Brooke has done an amazing job evaluating programs, adding new teaching and learning opportunities in the aquarium, and added more exploration and discovery to educational programs. She has a lot more planned. In March, we added Sue Slotterback to the education team. Sue has more experience in developing and delivering engaging, hands-on education programs than about anyone in the state.

In April, Christine Mattera became our Director of Marketing and Communication and immediately enhanced our communications, website, social media presence, and overall advertising program. In May, we shifted our focus to research and conservation. In early May, Katie Sellers received her Master's degree from the University of Miami and became a full-time conservation scientist at the Institute. Katie has been working on our Marine Debris program and now heads up our horseshoe crab research and conservation programs.

Dr. Ralph Boerner, and PhD candidate Ben Atkinson are leading the Coastal Conservation Research Program this summer. Terrapin nesting season is in full gear and they are working very hard to train interns, rescue terrapins, and mentor the undergraduate students in independent research projects. In mid-May, Dr. Lisa Ferguson became the Deputy Director of Research and Conservation at the Institute. Lisa is a great addition to the team and brings expertise in habitat use, health, and behavior of coastal birds to address management and conservation issues. Immediately upon her arrival, she was out in the field working with the Delaware Bay Shorebird Project, the new horseshoe crab rescue program (see related article), and working with me on monitoring research of the emergency beach renourishment project (see related article).

These new faces bring new energy, ideas, expertise, and commitment to creating a center of excellence in research, conservation and education at the Institute. We are implementing the *Plan for the Future* by launching new programs, strengthening existing programs, and building a strong and resilient framework for unprecedented growth. It's a very exciting time to be part of The Wetlands Institute. As you can see, we are **Making No Small Plans**. I'm excited you're a part of it.