

Greetings friends of the Wetlands Institute. I am thrilled to become the new Executive Director of such a wonderful organization. Cindy O’Conner has done an amazing job of growing and stewarding the organization through her long tenure and it will be very beneficial to me to have access to her knowledge of the area and the institute as I begin my journey.

First a bit about me to help you understand where I come from and the experiences that define the fabric of my being. I grew up on a tidal marsh on the north shore of Long Island and the more my toes were in the mud, the happier I was. Clamming, fishing and water skiing defined my early days and exploring tide pools and rocky beaches remain the most cherished memories of my youth. I went to college at Boston University where I received a bachelor’s degree in Geology. My senior thesis was on beach processes of a beach/barrier island/inlet system near Kennebunkport, Maine. My favorite class was a one year course on beaches. I couldn’t believe you could actually study beaches for a grade! From Boston and Maine, I migrated south to the University of Miami’s Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, where I earned my PhD in Marine Geology and Geophysics. My research focused on coastal processes and coastal stability related to hurricanes but also considered the role that the biological systems played. I have worked throughout south Florida and the Caribbean in shallow bays, tidal flats and wetlands. I was a scientist on several research cruises in the Gulf of Mexico, offshore of Nicaragua, in the Turks and Caicos, and Aruba. I have studied drowned shorelines in a submersible offshore of the Florida Keys, and worked with the National Parks Service understanding the stability of shipwrecks in south Florida and the Dry Tortugas. It was during my time in the Everglades, Ten Thousand Islands, and Caribbean that I fell in love with birds and bird watching. I am one of those Life Listers and no little brown jobbie is too small to ignore.

In 1991, I became an assistant professor in the Indiana University system in Indianapolis and have spent 20 years as a teacher, researcher, administrator and civil servant. My research has spanned a wide range of topics including coastal stability and sea level rise in the Everglades, coastal ecosystem response to hurricanes (esp. Hurricane Andrew), wetlands restoration, estuarine response to climate change and sea level rise, the effects of pollution on coastal ecosystems, stream and wetland restoration and preservation in the Midwest, and finally water resources research related to harmful algal blooms and the effects of agricultural runoff on streams and lakes. I have mentored 30 graduate and countless undergraduate students over the years. I have published about 35 articles in scientific journals and given more than 120 invited lectures. I travel extensively for research and to give professional papers and have been an invited speaker and/or researcher in China, Australia, Canada, Iceland, England, Holland, France, Germany, and Turkey. I have current research projects in Brittany, France and Berlin, Germany and will continue this research in my new role with the Wetlands Institute.

In 1997, I became the Director of the Center for Earth and Environmental Science at IUPUI, while retaining my teaching and research responsibilities. The center has a mission of promoting science-based environmental stewardship through applied research, teaching and service. Under my tenure at the center, the program grew to have 6 full-time research scientists, an annual operating budget of more than \$1,000,000, was named a Signature Center for Water Resources Research at IUPUI, became a recognized leader in applied research on water resources, and has a well-developed environmental science education and outreach program addressing issues of No-Child-Left-Inside and the crisis in underprepared science, math, technology and engineering students in the US. The center has a well-developed and diverse base of funding that comes from research contracts and grants, corporate philanthropy and individual giving. The center enjoys partnerships and strong relationships with over 30 community organizations, government agencies, corporations, foundations, watershed groups, museums, and schools. I have focused my past 20 years of service in Indiana to bringing science and

applied research to work in the everyday lives of the citizens of Indiana. I have always been committed to making knowledge work with the belief that a little knowledge that works is worth infinitely more than knowledge that remains locked up in scientific journals or laboratories. I am confident that I have made a difference – and it is this conviction that inspires and motivates me.

Enough about the past – and now for the future. My most salient thought for the Wetlands Institute is make no small plans! The Wetlands Institute is poised for great growth and expansion. It has all the critical components – location, a wealth of critical issues and conservation targets, the dedication of supporters, volunteers and staff, a committed and knowledgeable board, and a great community. A key tenet of my leadership is to keep strong programs strong so that the terrapin conservation program will flourish well into the future. There is also great opportunity to expand the research and conservation focus of the Institute to include coastal issues, global climate change, sustainability, fisheries, biodiversity, water resources, and much more. I will work to develop a core of baseline data about the environments around the Institute and build a framework of support for visiting scientists for teaching and research. I believe that research drives conservation and there are distinct and important opportunities for the Wetlands Institute in both areas. I am already actively investigating collaborative research partnerships and learning about key issues and initiatives for the State and region. I am anxious to begin meeting stakeholders in the coastal, bay and wetland communities to discuss critical research and conservation issues and how the Wetland Institute can play a role.

I am a passionate educator committed to lifelong learning through engaging experiential education programs. In the coming months, I will be working with the education staff to review our current programs and consider future programmatic emphasis, needs, potential new partners, and markets. Special events and membership are critical components of the funding base of the Institute and are an important way for the Institute to engage its stakeholders. While these programs will remain a focus of the Institute, we will work to diversify our funding base to include more contracts and grants, corporate partnerships and sponsorship programs, and private donors.

I am tremendously excited for the possibilities of a great and prosperous future for the Wetlands Institute. This is a time of assessment, research, and learning for me. My door (and email) is wide open and I hope to meet many of you to hear your ideas and thoughts, understand your vision and passion for the Wetlands Institute, welcome you as a new partner, or discuss how you or your organization can become a part of the revitalization and growth of the Wetlands Institute. Join us in the development of this new vision and get onboard (or stay onboard). There are only great things ahead for the Wetlands Institute.

Sincerely,

Lenore P. Tedesco, PhD
Executive Director, appointee