

# From Counting Fish to Implementing Energy Policy

*Editor's Note: Occasionally the Crest will highlight the accomplishments of a VIMS alumnus to give our readers a sense of the many different career paths taken by graduates of the School of Marine Science.*

By Dr. Maurice Lynch

Dr. Robert Middleton (*Ph.D.* '89) was recently named Director of the White House Task Force on Energy Project Streamlining, a group established by Executive Order in May 2001 in response to recommendations in the National Energy Policy.

The task force was formed to coordinate regional energy policy, reaching out to states, local communities, tribes, businesses, and non-governmental organizations, particularly in geographic areas where increased energy development activity is expected. The task force's mandate is to help assure that natural gas, oil, coal, wind, electrical, and other forms of energy are available to American citizens in an environmentally sound and safe manner.

Middleton received his MA at VIMS in 1979 with a thesis on the abundance, distribution, and bionomics of a group of deep-sea fishes called grenadiers or rat-tails. He went on to earn a Ph.D. at VIMS in 1989, with a dissertation on finfish use of an intertidal York River creek.

"VIMS gave me an excellent education," says Middleton. "The best part was the cross-fertilization between grad students and professors. They made you get out there and do things to make things happen. It wasn't just book learning."

Middleton's Ph.D. advisor Dr. Richard Wetzel notes that Bob was "always challenging the status quo, looking for new solutions to existing environmental issues and testing current thinking through questioning and observation. Our relationship quickly evolved from mentor-student to colleague and friend."

Middleton began his federal career in 1983 with the Marine Fisheries Statistics Group of the National Marine Fisheries Service on an Interagency Personnel Assignment from VIMS. Later that year he began a long tenure with the Department of Interior's Mineral Management Service (MMS) working on environmental assessments of offshore oil and gas development in the North Atlantic.

"Working on these contracts was a great opportunity to learn the federal

decision-making process from the ground up," says Middleton.

In 1987 he received his first major promotion within MMS to a position dealing nationally with protected species. He served as MMS liaison with other federal and state agencies on offshore leasing and permitting matters. He also was detailed to work on special projects with increasing responsibility in policy areas that culminated in his promotion to Chief of Staff in 1993.

Career highlights include membership on the Department of Interior team that created the National Biological Services (now the Biological Resources Division of the US Geological Survey); and membership on the National Implementation Team of the Coastal America Program.

Middleton became active on the international scene as the Project Officer of a Department of Interior training and technical assistance program to Hungary, which resulted in the establishment of a new agency to manage that nation's mineral resources.

In 1997 Middleton was awarded the Department of Interior's Meritorious Service Honor Award for career achievements. The award specifically cited his successful management of environmental research studies,

participation in the Vice President's National Performance Review of the Department's mission and activities, and continual advancement of new technology to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of departmental programs. In addition, the Secretary highlighted Middleton's work in helping Hungary to facilitate its economic and political transformation to a free-market economy and his organization of a subsequent international conference in Budapest to share this information with the other newly independent states of Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, Khazakstan, Bulgaria, and Romania.



VIMS alumnus Dr. Bob Middleton directs the White House Task Force on Energy Project Streamlining.

Middleton was asked to serve as a member of the Presidential Task Force on Energy Project Streamlining in 2001, and assumed his present position as Director of the Task Force in 2003.

## REU Program in Swing at VIMS

Students in the 2003 Summer Intern Program are gaining research experience with VIMS faculty mentors. Their 8-week stay is funded primarily by NSF's Research Experience for Undergraduates program. Top row L to R: Chris Eaton (Williams College), Rachel Fontana (Univ of Miami), Lisa Kurian (Slippery Rock Univ), Jennifer Foley (Marietta College). Middle: Theresa Childress (Hamp-ton Univ), Adolph Flowers (Morehouse College), Lisa Marko (Western Washington Univ), Sara Grill (Eckerd College), Margaret Cerf (Texas A&M). Bottom: Andrea Barber (UNC Wilmington), Alison Smith (UMASS Dartmouth), Cynthia Craig (Morgan St. Univ), Mike D'Amico (Univ. of Hawaii Hilo).



**WILLIAM & MARY** **VIRGINIA INSTITUTE of MARINE SCIENCE**

**Web Update** **VIMS**

---

Welcome   Research   Education   Advisory Services   Administration   Resources   News & Media

**Awards Ceremony**  
VIMS' Annual Award Ceremony recognizes faculty, staff, students, and volunteers for their outstanding achievements during 2002. Visit [www.vims.edu/newsmedia/topstories.html](http://www.vims.edu/newsmedia/topstories.html) to learn about the winners of this year's Awards, and more.

**Charting Our Destiny**  
VIMS has begun an ambitious but essential campaign to raise \$23 million in private funds during the next 5 years. The campaign web site highlights naming opportunities, provides progress reports, and presents stories that illustrate the many ways that private and corporate donors have contributed to VIMS. Visit [www.vims.edu/campaign/](http://www.vims.edu/campaign/)

**Crest**  
Interested parties can now subscribe to CREST or change their mailing address using an on-line form. The form also provides an option for joining a "Top Stories" e-mail list to receive periodic updates on important VIMS research and events. Visit [www.vims.edu/newsmedia/crest.html](http://www.vims.edu/newsmedia/crest.html)

**New Zealand Workshop**  
This website highlights a recent international workshop in New Zealand that was chaired by VIMS researcher Dr. Steven Kuehl. The NSF-funded workshop educated participants on studies of the New Zealand continental margin and stimulated collaborative relationships between New Zealand and US scientists. Visit [www.vims.edu/margins/workshop.html](http://www.vims.edu/margins/workshop.html)

**Tides and Currents Tutorial**  
Emeritus Professor Dr. John Boon has developed an interactive tutorial to help upper-level students better understand the cause and behavior of tides and currents. Visit [www.vims.edu/physical/research.html](http://www.vims.edu/physical/research.html)

**Weather, Water, and Tides**  
Boaters and other outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy the real-time data this site affords. Displays show air and water temperature, wind speed and direction, and salinity. Archived data are also available. Visitors can access local tide calendars as well as a table of time and height differences for locations in the Bay. Visit [www.vims.edu/resources/realtime.html](http://www.vims.edu/resources/realtime.html)