

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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My term as lead editor is coming to an end, and I will soon hand over the reins to my coeditor and colleague Kelly Tzoumis for volume 15. Kelly has lined up an exciting suite of thematic issues for 2013. The year 2012 has been exciting and successful for *Environmental Practice* (*ENP*), with thematic issues devoted to green infrastructure, professional ethics, and fracking (this issue!). As always, the June issue was devoted to the theme of the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) annual conference. This year's theme was *Science, Politics and Policy: Environmental Nexus*. With the exception of the conference issue, the task of collecting manuscripts for the thematic issues was codirected by me and several diligent guest editors to whom I am extremely grateful. The editorial office of *ENP* employs a coeditor approach that alternates lead editorship annually between a natural scientist (James Montgomery) and a social scientist (Kelly Tzoumis), both of whom have practitioner experiences in environmental science and policy in the private and public sectors. The lead editor focuses on development of thematic topics, whereas the coeditor engages in strategic planning, including reaching out to authors, for his/her lead year. This model is vital to maintaining the three "ships" that are vital to sustaining NAEP: membership, authorship, and readership. In addition, this model of shared leadership has been quite effective in bringing in new perspectives and topics on environmental issues to achieve greater interdisciplinarity, as well as maintaining the mission of NAEP by providing quality manuscripts that balance interests of both the practitioner and the scholar in the environmental profession. The daily operations of the journal are handled by our managing editor, Dan Carroll, who has developed an efficient peer-review process and continues to reach out to potential reviewers. We have an active editorial advisory board (EAB) of 15 members, who represent a mixture of scholars and practitioners from across the United States (US). EAB members have all reviewed or written manuscripts for the jour-

nal. We hope to expand the EAB to include more international representation.

This issue of *ENP* is devoted to the hot-button topic of hydrofracturing, commonly referred to in the vernacular as *fracking*, which involves injecting water under high pressure into a bedrock formation via a wellbore. This process removes sediment and rock fragments from existing fissures and fractures and also increases their size and extent. I have some personal, albeit rather indirect, experience with fracking. In 1984–86, I worked as a production geologist for Pennzoil Exploration and Production Company in Houston. I spent a significant amount of time flying in helicopters to oil rigs in the Louisiana Gulf, where my job was to oversee borehole geophysical logging to determine the presence of oil and/or natural gas and eat lots of Cajun food. I spent considerable time consulting with both petroleum engineers and drilling engineers, and it was during these conversations that I first learned about fracking. Fracking technology was used on several of the older, played-out wells in some of the producing fields I managed. A cocktail of chemicals and abrasives was pumped into the wells to enhance porosity and stimulate gas recovery. Moreover, all of the rigs on which I worked employed directional drilling technologies. Another aspect of my job was to pray that the drill string would hit the intended reservoir. Such was the nature of directional drilling at that time! Indeed, while fracking technology has been in use since the 1940s, the technology for directional drilling has recently been refined to the point where hitting the target has become more reliable. This combination of old and new technology has provided the environmental community with a real-time dilemma of how to provide for energy independence while protecting natural resources.

The seed for this thematic issue was planted by NAEP President Paul Looney, who had participated in a webinar on fracking and was impressed with one of the speakers:

Tamara Gagnolet. Tamara is Energy Program and geographic information system (GIS) manager for the Pennsylvania chapter of the Nature Conservancy. She was the lead analyst for the Pennsylvania Energy Impacts Assessment; manages spatial analysis, mapping, and conservation planning projects; and advances energy-related strategies in the Central Appalachians. She holds a BA (in human biology) from Stanford University and dual graduate degrees—Master of Forestry and Master of Environmental Management—from the Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment. At Paul's suggestion, I contacted Tamara and pitched the idea of having her serve as guest editor for this issue. She agreed to sign on and in turn recruited her colleague, **Dr. Scott Bearer**. Scott is senior scientist for the Pennsylvania chapter of the Nature Conservancy. He came to the Conservancy after completing a postdoctorate (US Geological Survey Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD), where he helped develop the monitoring plan to remove the bald eagle from the federal endangered species list. He holds a PhD (in forest/wildlife interactions) from Michigan State University, a MS (in landscape ecology) from Pennsylvania's Clarion University, and a BS (in forestry) from Virginia Tech. I worked with Tamara and Scott to develop the Call for Papers. Tamara and Scott reached out to a host of potential authors, both practitioners and academics, to secure manuscripts addressing the legal, environmental, ecological, social, political, and human health aspects of fracking. The articles contained in this issue of *ENP* present to the reader the most current and cutting-edge thinking and research on many of these aforementioned aspects of fracking. It also is worth noting that *ENP* and NAEP are at forefront of addressing the fracking controversy. I am grateful to Tamara and Scott for their willingness to sign on as guest editors, for securing a host of high-quality manuscripts, and for writing this issue's Letter from the Guest Editors, in which they present a brief synopsis of each article.

James Montgomery