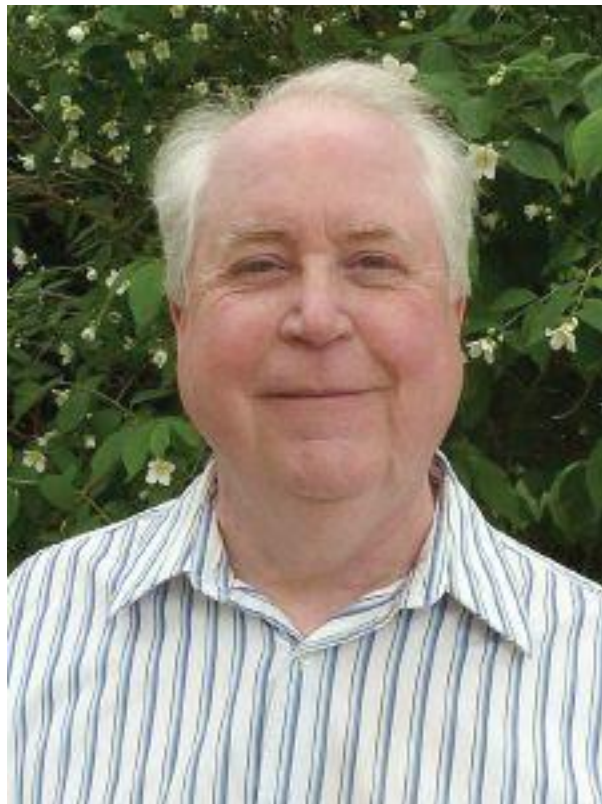


**BLUE RIDGE WILDLIFE CENTER NAMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR;
BURWELL TO STAY**

Posted: May 19, 2015

By **VAL VAN METER**
The Winchester Star



David B. Bancroft

MILLWOOD — The Blue Ridge Wildlife Center has a new executive director. David B. Bancroft, 59, former president of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, has been hired by Blue Ridge's board of directors to oversee the center's work as it prepares to move into an expanded quarters next spring.

Ground was broken in March for the 8,000-square-foot rehabilitation and educational center.

The center's founder, veterinarian Belinda Burwell, remains director of wildlife services and will continue to serve on the board of directors.

Lisa Goshen, newly elected chairwoman for the center's board, said Bancroft "brings years of environmental and administrative experience to BRWC that we feel is essential for the further growth and development of the organization."

In addition to his work for water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, Bancroft has led sustainable agriculture initiatives, promoted "farm to table" certification of restaurants and served as deputy executive director of the council of the Great Lakes Governors, executive vice president of the Solar Energy Industries Association and a director of the Washington, D.C., Relations at the University of Wisconsin Foundation.

Bancroft said he was attracted to the job because of Burwell's "cutting-edge work" in the rescue and rehabilitation of native animals," as well as wildlife education.

"She has blazed an exciting trail in the wildlife arena," he said.

Bancroft said he hopes his background in a variety of habitat issues will complement her work.

Working out of a temporary trailer until the new building is completed, Bancroft said his initial efforts will be focused on fundraising.

While \$1.1 million has been pledged for constructing the center and equipping it for its hospital functions and its housing for a wide variety of wild animals native to the region, he will be attempting to bring in an additional \$100,000 to close the gap needed to support its future educational and research efforts.

Bancroft said the educational animal ambassadors, those too badly injured or handicapped to be released back into the wild, will form the basis for the center's educational efforts.

Animals are a great gateway for children to learn about water quality, vegetation and habitats.

"Nothing gets a child as excited as seeing a live animal."

Animals open the doors to discussion of all sorts of issues, including water resources, agriculture and habitat infringement, he added.

While the nonprofit center is known for its rescue and rehabilitation work, Bancroft said he hopes to see the educational aspect and some of its groundbreaking research come to the fore.

Goshen said the center is "lucky to have two dedicated professionals like David and Belinda, who bring complementary skills and abilities to the organization. Together, they will help foster the next stage of growth for BRWC as we move into our new facility and meet the mission of ensuring the future of our region's wildlife."

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center is a nonprofit charitable organization for wildlife conservation and rehabilitation. It assists native wildlife at no charge. It is completely funded by private donations. For more information, go online at blueridgewildlife.org.

— Contact Val Van Meter at vvanmeter@winchesterstar.com