



SAPROLITE

NEWSLETTER of the SOUTHEAST SECTION
GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA
Winter 2016-2017

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The time has come for sending out the Winter 2016-2017 edition of **Saprolite**, the periodic newsletter of the Southeastern Section of the Geological Society of America. One of the features of this Winter edition is the Annual Letter from the Chair of the section. For those who find the selection of section officers to be a bit mysterious, let me try to cast some light on this. I have the honor of being Chair this year, in part through having been Local Chair of the annual section meeting in 2014 in Blacksburg. It has been typical for prospective officers of the section to enter the leadership succession through chairing section meetings, but others have gotten involved as well, like last year's Chair Beth McLellan. Of course ultimately you, the members of the section, choose your officers through the annual balloting process. I encourage any of you who may wish to serve GSA Southeastern Section as an officer to contact the Secretary-Treasurer Blair Tormey to indicate your interest. In any case, your service as an officer, as a member of a section meeting local organizing committee, or in any other volunteer capacity to national GSA or to the section is crucial to the long-term success of our Society and our section (more below). The Chair-Elect (the person who will be writing this letter in next year's **Saprolite**) is Jonathan Mies, Local Chair of the Chattanooga meeting in 2015. Please look elsewhere in this edition of **Saprolite** for a complete list of your current section officers.

Saprolite is the traditional newsletter of the section and it had lapsed into inactivity for a number of years before former Chair Blair Tormey resurrected it in 2015. As a kind of "reward" for his generous and valiant efforts in doing this, Blair has been elected as the incoming Secretary-Treasurer of the Southeastern Section, a task formerly performed with distinction by Donald Neal for many years. Don stepped down last year and so Blair is in his first year in the most important post in this or any other GSA section. Section secretaries are an integral part of the national GSA organizational structure and meet regularly with the GSA Council in Boulder and at the annual meetings to help form policy for the society. In my recent term on GSA Council (2011-2015) I saw at first hand the critical role played by the section secretaries. Congratulations to Blair for being selected to take on this honorable task and many thanks to Don Neal for having done it in model fashion for as long as he did.

Now for some statistics and history, especially for our newer members. The Southeastern Section of GSA is not among the largest in membership of the six regional sections, but in my experience with national GSA it is one of the more energetic and participatory of the sections.

GSA's largest section is the Cordilleran (5640 total members, primary and secondary), followed by Northeastern (4817), Rocky Mountain (4314), North-Central (3260), Southeastern (3239) and South-Central (2863). Those members who have chosen no section affiliation total 2196. Section membership is affected by several factors, including geographic area, number of academic institutions with geology departments, regional awareness of geology and longevity of the section, among others. Formalized regional affiliations within GSA go back a long way – the oldest of the GSA sections is the Cordilleran, founded in 1901, barely 13 years after the founding of GSA itself. The Southeastern Section is second oldest, founded in 1947, followed by Rocky Mountain (1948), Northeastern (1965), and finally North-Central and South-Central (1966).

As Past-Chair Beth McLellan pointed out last year in Saproliite, member interest in section activities, particularly attendance at the annual section meeting in the spring, has been on the upswing for several years, and we have had robust section meeting attendance in recent years, including 781 in Savannah in 2007, 754 in Asheville in 2012, 767 in Blacksburg in 2014 and 840 in Chattanooga in 2015. This is in part testimony to the high quality of the roughly 400 presentations at most recent meetings. However, as Beth noted, professional attendance numbers have been stagnant while student registration has steadily increased. The section management board would like to see both student and professional participation on the increase. Her analysis of causes for the upward trend in student attendance remains accurate, I believe – it is driven not only by the chance to hear cutting-edge science being presented and discussed, but also by opportunities for professional networking, for making contacts that have serious graduate school and career implications, and for the social exposure to fellow students throughout the section who share enthusiasm for geosciences. It seems likely to me that such student engagement will continue to increase.

Addressing the issue of stagnant professional membership numbers is a trickier matter. Among professionals (somewhat more so than with students), GSA competes for members with other geoscience professional societies, some considerably more specialized than GSA. The list includes the American Geophysical Union, Mineralogical Society of America, AAPG, both SEGs (Society of Economic Geologists and Society for Exploration Geophysics), and AIPG, among others. Although many geoscientists belong to several professional societies, a significant number choose only one, for reasons that may include rising costs of membership, expectation of employers, or a preference for a strong disciplinary focus. One of the challenges for GSA over the last several decades in recruiting new members has been the increasing specialization of many of the members of the geosciences community. From its founding in 1888 and by its nature, GSA has always had a strong focus on traditional geosciences fields and has not generally been nimble in promptly embracing newly arising fields, particularly technologically focused ones. This “conservatism” can be regarded as a strength of the Society, but it has also been a weakness in that GSA has essentially ceded the competition in some new areas, nanogeoscience being one that comes readily to mind. So a major challenge for GSA going into the future, a challenge both for current leadership and for all of us as members, is to keep the pressure on to strike an appropriate balance between retaining a commitment to our long-time core constituencies while at the same time welcoming new geosciences communities that can and should be a part of our common enterprise in the 21st century. How can *you* help with this? Talk with your friends and colleagues who are perhaps skeptical of the value of membership in GSA and convince them that there is a place for them in our Society and great opportunities within GSA for the future. GSA has a well-defined process for development of formalized affinity groups that can ultimately lead to formation of new Divisions

within the Society, the Cave and Karst Division being a recent example. So newer disciplinary areas can become assimilated into official structure more easily than you might think.

Speaking of the future, we all should know by now that we have just entered new and uncharted territory in the national political landscape, and we should all be concerned as to what effects the changes might have on our geoscience community. Not possessing a crystal ball, I can't and won't speculate on anything in detail, but as I write this letter the events of the past week and a half since January 20th suggest that science in general and earth and atmospheric sciences in particular may be facing a difficult time in coming years. My best advice to all is to be engaged in what is going on at the intersection of science and politics, to keep yourselves well informed, and to be prepared to be an activist for the things that are important to you personally, that are likely to affect your work and careers, and that may negatively affect the broader scientific enterprise that you are a part of. Keep in mind that GSA provides you a professional mutual-interest community – as an active part of this community you have more power than you do individually. You all have opportunities to serve the society as a volunteer – through service on committees, as an officer councilor of national GSA, and through numerous venues within the section. Many GSA national committees have seats that are specifically designated for members of various sections and especially for students. I served for a number of years on the nominating committee for GSA and know that identifying students for committee service is very difficult. And now there is a formal student advisory committee that selects one of its members annually to serve a full voting member of GSA Council. I urge any students interested in participating in this to seek a member sponsor to nominate you or to self-nominate. The health and vitality of the Society depends on active participation by as many of the members as wish to do so.

Finally, a few bits and pieces to talk about. The Geological Society of America will soon embark upon a campaign to raise the GSA Foundation endowment significantly over the next few years. This is in response to fiscal challenges that include the need to provide more services to members in the areas of Penrose Conferences and Field Forums, Graduate Student Research Grants, Meetings, and Publications. This last is of special importance. The national mandate to provide Open Access publishing of papers that result from federal funding will place significant strain on the budgets of all professional societies that engage in publishing journals or books. To cover loss of income from subscriptions and increased costs, new sources of funding must be found. When the campaign officially begins, I urge all of you to consider carefully how important GSA is to you and to give accordingly so that your Society can continue to provide the services that enhance your professional career.

One frequent question that I and other GSA leaders hear from members is “how can I have input and provide feedback?” GSA leadership at the national and section levels always wants to hear from you and to answer your questions and concerns. Please keep in mind that the best route to opening a communications link is to contact section officers or designated representatives who can act as conduits. Chuck Bailey from the College of William and Mary is a member of the Southeastern Section and is also an elected member of the GSA Council, which is effectively the governing board of national GSA. Chuck would welcome feedback from all members. And I serve as the Southeastern Section representative on the Geology and Public Policy Committee (GPPC), a committee that is tasked with writing and periodically revising GSA's public policy documents and white papers. If you have any concerns about GSA and the positions it takes on policy at the national level, please feel free to contact me and I can convey your concerns to the committee. There is a short section below to update everyone on current doings at GPPC. The Southeastern

Section leadership urges you to be aware and proactive, and to utilize your elected leaders effectively.

Kudos. I will conclude by thanking several folks for special service to the Southeastern Section over the last year. First, to Venkat Lakshmi and the local organizing team in Columbia SC, thanks for a great meeting in Columbia. Next, to David Spears and Karen Layou and the rest of the local committee for organizing what promises to be a great meeting this spring in Richmond. Thanks to Beth McLellan for serving as Chair of the Southeastern Section Management Board preceding me, and special thanks to Don Neal who completed many years of exemplary service as Secretary-Treasurer when he handed the reins to Blair Tormey last spring. Finally, Kelly Vance stepped down early last year as a very effective Southeastern Section representative on the Geology and Public Policy Committee after serving several terms. I have replaced him on this committee and have large shoes to fill.

Many of us will gather in several weeks at the Omni Conference Center in Richmond for our annual section meeting. I look forward to seeing all of you there!

Best wishes,
Bob Tracy
Chair, Southeast Section
rtracy@vt.edu

SOUTHEASTERN SECTION ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Management Board, 2016-2017

Chair:	Robert Tracy	Virginia Tech
Past Chair:	Elizabeth McClellan	Radford University
Vice Chair:	David Spears	VA Dept. of Mines, Minerals and Energy
Past Vice-Chair:	Venkat Lakshmi	University of South Carolina
Chair-Elect:	Jonathan Mies	University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
Secretary-Treasurer:	Blair Tormey	Western Carolina University

GSA Councilor: Chuck Bailey College of William and Mary

Membership

At the end of December 2016, SE Section membership stood at 3,108 total members, including 1014 Professionals, 430 Seniors, 1 Honorary Fellow, 360 Early Careers, 1,197 Students, 67 K-12 Teachers, and 39 Affiliates.

Financial Status of the Section

At the end of fiscal year, 30 June 2016, the section had \$144,220 in its accounts. The total interest realized during the fiscal year was \$1,158. This interest, together with a reported surplus of \$8,486 from the section meeting in Columbia, SC, and section members' dues, is used to fund the Section's Student Research Grants, Student Travel Grants, and general operations of the section.

Future Section Meetings

March 30-31, 2017 – Richmond, VA

April 12-13, 2018 – Knoxville, TN

2019 – Auburn, AL

2020 – Harrisonburg, VA

Local Chair(s)

David Spears, david.spears@dmme.virginia.gov

Karen Layou, KLayou@reynolds.edu

Colin Sumrall csumrall@utk.edu

Willis Hames, hameswe@auburn.edu

TBA

Student Research Grants

The Section has two research grant programs, one for undergraduates and another for graduate students. The graduate grant competition in the spring of 2016 resulted in the expenditure of \$6,400 to support the research of 8 graduate students from a pool of 17 applicants. In the late spring of 2016, we received a record 17 undergraduate grant applications. An expenditure of \$5,000 was approved to support the research of 10 undergraduate students.

Student Travel Grants

The Student Travel Grant program continues to be very popular. In the fall of 2015, the Section expended \$4,920 to support the travel of 82 students presenting papers at the annual meeting. In the spring of 2016, the section expended \$3,750 in support of 25 students presenting papers at section meeting. The Section appreciates the matching funds provided by the GSA Foundation and the contributions from members. Total student travel expenditures for 2015-16 was \$8,670.

65th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Section

The 65th annual meeting of the section was held in March, 2016, in Columbia, SC. Venkat Lakshmi chaired the meeting. There was 1 symposium, 16 theme sessions and 10 discipline sessions. 4 field trips were run successfully and a field guide is in production. The meeting was well planned and well attended (690 attendees).

66th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Section

The 66th annual meeting of the section will be held March 30-13, 2017 in Richmond, VA. David Spears, the State Geologist at the VA Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, and Karen Layou, Geology Professor at Reynolds Community College, will be the General co-Chairs. Field Trip co-Chairs are Chuck Bailey and Shelley Jaye, Exhibits Chair is Chee Saunders, Student Volunteer Chair is Lynsey LeMay, and the Sponsorship co-Chairs are Matt Heller and Steve Leslie. The meeting should be successful both scientifically and financially.



Notes from the Geology and Public Policy Committee

The Geology and Public Policy Committee of GSA met in Denver at the Annual Meeting on September 24th and 25th, 2016 and will have its next meeting in Washington DC on March 4th and 5th – this meeting includes Congressional Visits Days in which GPPC members and GSA staff visit with senators, congressmen or their staffs to inform them of policy matters of interest to the geosciences community. The current elected representative from the Southeastern Section is Bob

Tracy, Virginia Tech (replacing Kelly Vance, Georgia Southern University). The GPPC is responsible for formulating and recommending to GSA Council public policy-related issues of relevance to the geosciences and the GSA community. This includes both new initiatives as well as periodic reviews and updating of existing Position Statements and Critical Issue Statements.

At the September meeting our most intense discussion involved a new Position Statement on Energy. This discussion reviewed efforts of the last 10 years to develop this Position Statement and the many considerations and viewpoints involved in drafting such a statement (the 10 years reflects how difficult this task is!). The principal motivation in creating this position statement is to make the strongest case for a place at the table for geoscientists in formulation of national energy policy. The committee is working on a “cradle to grave” principle in which the statement will deal with all aspects of energy, from exploration and discovery through production to ultimate disposal of waste products. Southeastern Section representative Tracy is one of the small working group trying to draft this position statement and if any section members wish to provide input and ideas, they would be welcomed.

Other business included potential new Position Statements on Women in Geosciences, Legal Concerns for Geoscientists, and Scientific Freedom. Periodic review and updating were discussed for the Critical Issue Statement on Hydraulic Fracturing and for Position Statements on Water Resources, Value of Geologic Mapping, Geosciences and Natural Hazards Policy, Geoheritage, Support of Planetary Exploration, Geoscience Data Preservation, Open Access to Data, Rewarding Professional Contributions, and Teaching Evolution. (R.J. Tracy, Virginia Tech, rtracy@vt.edu)

Respectfully submitted,
Blair Tormey
Secretary-Treasurer, Southeast Section

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTION

Important Dates in 2017:

1 February, 2017: Session Submission Deadline, GSA Annual Meeting

1 February, 2017: Graduate Student Research Grant Deadline

27 February, 2017: Richmond Early Registration Deadline

March 30-31, 2017: Southeast Section Meeting, Richmond, VA

1 April, 2017: Undergraduate Student Research Grant Deadline

22-25 October, 2017: GSA Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA

Vote for Section Officers

A copy of the ballot for officer elections is included at the end of this newsletter. The ballot will also be made available electronically through GSA this spring.

Do you have news to share with the Southeastern Section?

Email the Section Chair, (Bob Tracy, rtracy@vt.edu), or Section Secretary-Treasurer (Blair Tormey, btormey@wcu.edu) and we'll be sure to include it in the next issue of Saprolite!

TO MEMBERS OF GSA SOUTHEASTERN SECTION
Ballot for 2017 - 2018 Officers Southeastern Section

Please vote by completing the section at the bottom and mailing it to GSA postmarked no later than 1 March. Biographical information on the candidates is on the following pages.

You may vote online **by 1 March** at:

Access the online e-ballot by using either your GSA member number or your e-mail address that is in your GSA member records. For membership assistance, please contact GSA at: gsaservice@geosociety.org or call (888) 443-4472. You may also submit your completed ballot by Fax: (303) 357-1074.

Section Chair (one-year term):

- Jonathan Mies
 Write-in _____

Chair Elect (one-year term):

- Venkat Lakshmi
 Write-in _____

Vice Chair (one-year term):

- Colin Sumrall
 Write-in _____

Secretary-Treasurer (one-year term):

- Blair R. Tormey
 Write-in _____

Mail Ballot To: Section Office, Geological Society of America
PO Box 9140, Boulder, CO, 80301-9140

Mailed ballots should be postmarked no later than 1 March.
You must complete the following section to validate your ballot:

Your Name (printed) _____

Your Signature (required) _____

Your GSA Member Number * (required) _____

* Your 7 digit GSA member number is on the top right corner on the external mailing label. If you need assistance with your member number, call: (888) 443-4472

Biographies of Candidates for 2017 - 2018 Section Officers

Section Chair (one year term)

JONATHAN W. MIES, Structural Geology/Tectonics. Education: University of New Hampshire, B.S. 1981; University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, M.S. 1987, Ph.D. 1990. Professional Experience: Robert Lake Wilson Professor of Geology, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, CHATTANOOGA, 1993-present. Member: GSA.

Chair Elect (one year term)

VENKAT LAKSHMI: Geophysics. Education: Roorkee University, B.E., 1987; Univ. of Iowa, M.S., 1989; Princeton University, M.A., 1992, Ph.D., 1996; Professional Experience: Professor, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1999-present; Member: GSA, AGU, AMS, ASCE, IEEE.

Vice Chair (one year term)

COLIN D. SUMRALL, Paleobiology. Education: Arizona State University, B.S. 1989; University of Texas at Austin, M.A. 1991; University of Texas at Austin, Ph.D., 1996. Professional Experience: Assistant Professor, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, 2012-present; Member: GSA.

Secretary-Treasurer (one year term)

BLAIR R. TORMEY. Stratigraphy. Education: Pennsylvania State University, B.S., 1996; University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, M.S., 1999; University of Wisconsin, 1999-2002. Professional Experience: Coastal Research Scientist, WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY, 2005-present; Member: GSA; AAPG; NAGT.