



November 21, 2023

Upcoming Events

No upcoming events.

Have an agency-relevant event to share? Email **Mary Weaver** at Mary.Weaver@DOF.Virginia.gov

Policy Updates

Dress Code and Uniforms, Policy 8-008

Please review the recent changes to our Dress Code and Uniforms, Policy 8-008. The updates identify proper footwear and attire for office personnel. No changes were made to field uniforms. The document can be found on our Intranet: https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/PP_08-008_dress-code-and-uniforms.pdf

Agency Updates

Fall Fire Season Update

Virginia's 2023 Fall Fire Season is already one for the record books.

This is the longest active stretch – 35 days and counting – of fall fire activity of any current DOF employee's career.

Not counting the Matts Creek Fire occurring on federal land in Bedford County, DOF has suppressed 139 wildfires that have burned 13,905 acres this fall fire season. This represents the most acres burned in the last 10 years aside from 2016, when 16,837 acres were burned. These fires have damaged two homes and eight other structures, but DOF suppression efforts are credited with saving 214 homes and 275 other structures.

With the exception of the Matts Creek Fire, all wildfires are currently contained. Crews continue to monitor contained fires until they receive significant rainfall and can be considered fully extinguished. Virginia's fall fire season ends Nov. 30.

See photos from the Quaker Run Fire in Madison County on DOF's Flickr page: <https://ow.ly/qTNX50Q9T03>



DOF Trains Virginia National Guard to Support Wildfire Suppression Efforts

On Nov. 7, Governor Youngkin declared a state of emergency and mobilized the Virginia National Guard (VNG) to aid wildfire suppression efforts. DOF staff including Eastern Deputy Regional Forester John Hisghman, Five Forks Forester **Heather Dowling**, Forest Technician **Al Brooks**, Forest Technician **Mark Winebrenner** and Assistant Director for Wildfire Mitigation and Prevention **Mike Downey** mobilized quickly to provide a wildland fire field day training to 38 VNG soldiers at Camp Barfoot on Sunday, Nov. 12. This basic fire training enabled the soldiers to participate in wildland firefighting and work alongside DOF across the Commonwealth. Soldiers received basic training for wildland fire tool use, safety, installing hand lines, and working with dozers and engines. DOF staff also distributed firefighting PPE and supplies to the entire group. This group of guardsmen then went to the Quaker Run Fire in Madison County where they assisted with mop-up operations.



More photos of the training can be found on the Virginia National Guard Flickr page:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/albums/72177720312652864/with/53327271752>

Winner of the 2023 Conservation Forestry BMP Award

On Nov. 16, the Hanover-Caroline SWCD awarded Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jefferson of Thornberry LLC, with the 2023 Soil and Water Conservation BMP Forestry Award at the bi-annual banquet. About 55 people attended the function, held at the Mattaponi Springs Golf Club. The Jeffersons own approximately 1,000 contiguous acres in Caroline County, with about 700 of that forested, and have maintained a long-standing relationship with DOF over the years. They will receive the state forestry BMP award at the December Virginia Association of Conservation Districts meeting in Norfolk.



National Complex Incident Management Course in Washington

During the week of Oct. 30, Assistant Director of Fire and Emergency Response **Jason Braunstein** traveled to Vancouver, Washington to serve as the instructor cadre for the Complex Incident Management Course (CIMC) the week of Oct. 30. CIMC is an advanced emergency incident management course designed to train experienced wildland fire managers through a combination of classroom, demonstration and practical exercises to build competency. Emergency response professionals from the Oregon Department of Forestry, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Montana Department of Natural Resources, CalFire, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service attended. CIMC is the nation's highest level of emergency management training for the nation's incident management team members.

Now Hiring – Eastern Region Forest Health Liaison Position

One forest health liaison position is open in the Eastern Region. Any field staff with an interest in forest health or a desire to learn more about forest health threats in Virginia is welcome to apply. Selected individuals will receive additional training and participate in monitoring activities with the VDOF forest health staff. Forest health liaisons will be a point of contact between the field and the forest health program staff and will assist with forest health outreach as needed. These additional duties will not exceed 5% of the employee's time. This is a temporary assignment with a three-year term and requires approval from your district forester. If you are interested in applying, please complete Form 6.6 and send to **Lori Chamberlin** at Lori.Chamberlin@DOF.Virginia.gov no later than Dec. 15.

Hemlock Tree Protection Research

An important discovery at Sandy Point State Forest was highlighted by the U.S. Forest Service. In March 2021, DOF Forest Health staff released *Leucotaraxis* silver flies on hemlock trees at Sandy Point State Forest. These flies are predators of the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), which is an invasive insect that damages hemlock trees. Other predators of HWA have been released across the region, but thus far have proved insufficient to alone halt hemlock damage. Researchers are now focused on two species of *Leucotaraxis* silver flies in hopes that an additional predator will control HWA populations and protect our hemlocks. In April 2023, researchers at Virginia Tech recovered two silver flies at Sandy Point State Forest, indicated that the population survived and reproduced since the initial release in 2021. This is good news for the long-term protection of hemlocks at Sandy Point. Read more here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/nrs/news/featured/predatory-flies-offer-new-hope-hemlock-forests>

Successful Throwing Shade VA Program is Growing

DOF announced that the [Throwing Shade VA native tree discount program will be expanding in 2024](#). Next spring, DOF will include 10 retail nurseries where customers can receive a discount of \$25 on eligible native trees (on purchases of \$50 or more). This spring, DOF launched a two-month pilot with three retail nurseries that resulted in selling 1,555 native trees across Virginia. Funded through state water quality improvement dollars, the program incentivizes customers to buy and plant native species that in turn provide benefits to our ecosystem and help measure progress towards Virginia's water and Chesapeake Bay watershed goals.

