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Employee Spotlight

Stephen Jasenak – Thank You!

- ◆ Below is a letter of appreciation received from Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Educational and Training Coordinator and Youth Conservation Camp Director Bonnie Mahl regarding the work Stephen Jasenak (water quality specialist) did as a counselor during the 2019 Youth Conservation Camp.
 - “On behalf of the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, I would like to thank the Virginia Department of Forestry for allowing Stephen Jasenak to serve as a 2019 Youth Conservation Camp Counselor. Mr. Jasenak did a fantastic job teaching the campers about forestry. Mr. Jasenak really stepped up to the plate to share his forestry knowledge and jumped right in to lead the Forestry programs throughout the week. The campers learned a great deal from Mr. Jasenak and I appreciate his attitude to help where needed and flexibility with all the moving parts of YCC.
 - Youth Conservation Camp would not be the great success that it is without contributions from our local soil & water conservation districts and partners like VDOF. The counselors serve as leaders, educators, mentors, and subject experts throughout the week and are an integral part of the everyday workings of camp. I would like to thank you for allowing Mr. Jasenak the time to share

the good work of Virginia's conservation organizations with students from throughout Virginia. I hope VDOF will continue to see the benefit of supporting Youth Conservation Camp for years to come. Thank you.

- A camper wrote in their evaluation "this week has been one of the best of my life." Another camper had this to say about TCC "I got to extend my knowledge... like the impact mussels have on watersheds, topography maps, water quality testing using shock fishing and much more!" Youth Conservation Camp would not be a success without great counselors like **Mr. Jasenak.**"

Life Changing Impact – Former Employees John Swift and Hal Myers (Amherst County)

- ◆ Below is a story shared with Martha Warring (senior area forester) from a former part-timer firefighter and Persian Gulf War veteran.

- "My name is David W Weisgerber and just about 32 years ago I was living In Amherst, VA in a house I had just bought with a young family. I was working every job I could find, most as a laborer for various construction companies and was always being laid off come winter. We struggled during the winters up there. One summer I took a temp job at the James River



Work Area. Two men were working the place at the time and I genuinely wish I could recall their names. I was the low man on the pole.... I painted the tools, I mowed the lawn... I rode in the trucks with them as we checked the tool boxes out in the remote areas. I was told that **if** a bad enough fire came along, I could get a more interesting job experience, but one never came along that season. I ended up joining the Army desperate for a job that would ensure I could care for my family in March of 1988 and was of course then forced to move from beautiful Amherst VA. Forward to 1992..... After Desert Storm, I got out of the Army and was once again desperate for a job. I took on a graveyard shift at a textile mill which I loathed... but persevered from necessity. In addition, I took other temp jobs on top of the full time job I had, thinking it would help me get ahead financially. One day I got very fed up.... It seemed that no matter how many jobs I worked, no matter what I did... I was still just as poor, just as much in debt etc.. It was getting me nowhere. I decided then that if I was destined to be poor, I at LEAST wanted a job that I didn't HATE. I remembered my time working for the VA Forestry service. I remembered how I was,

frankly speaking, just doing the "crap jobs" and yet... it was one of the happiest jobs I remembered ever having. The guys were GREAT to me. I woke up looking forward to going to work. So it was I started looking at the NC Forest Service and found a job as a seasonal crewman. Years later I would get full-time with Bladen Lakes State Forest. It was through them I found my love for wildland firefighting and would fight fires in California, Washington, Colorado, Montana, Texas etc.... while doing all that, I was able to get 2



associates degrees in Computer Technology. While working at Bladen Lakes, I was introduced to GPS systems and GIS mapping. (Pictured: Top - Me in Montana 1998, Bottom - Me and my two daughters, the bride was born in that house... her sister was 2.)

- Today, I am the GIS Administrator for Polk County North Carolina within the IT Department. I am too old to still be running the mountains like I loved.... But I would NEVER have made it here, where I am today, if I hadn't met the two men running James River Work Area back in 1987.
- Earlier this month, I was helping a friend transport a car to her daughters in Fredericksburg VA when I suddenly realized along the way that places were looking/feeling familiar. I had all but forgot that I had once lived up that way for a short few years. On the way back I convinced my friend to let me take a slight detour on our way back to NC and was able to locate my old house on RT 60. I even commented to my friend how much I wished I could see the old forestry place that had changed my life but I knew I could never recall how to find it... (Pictured: My old house)
- Oddly... when leaving the house, our cars GPS told us to take a right turn from the house even though we were convinced we needed to take a left. The GPS had us drive down RT 60 away from the traffic circle of Amherst then had us turn right onto a small short road which ended at a T intersection with E Monitor Rd. The GPS said to take another right which led us through some very lovely area. Imagine my surprise when I saw the Forestry station pass by on my right! I was so elated (and amazed that the car GPS took us out of our way to exactly where I had been wishing to see??). Regrettably, no one was in the office. But I took a picture of the sign on the door which is where I got your name from. If there is ANY chance you know who the guys were that worked there in 1987... It is my wish that you let them know just how much a difference they made in my life from that all too short a time when I worked there.
- Thank you so much and Merry Christmas!"



Project Updates

Policy and Procedures

- ◆ [Policy and Procedures 8-5 Human Resources – Professional Development, Education and Training](#) reflects the most significant change in our VDOF educational programs' history. We are pleased to announce the agency's official tuition assistance and educational paid leave programs. These programs aim to provide either financial assistance or educational paid leave for accredited off-duty education programs in support of a VDOF employee's professional and personal self-development goals. Employees request participation via [VDOF Form 8.50 Educational Tuition Assistance/Educational Paid Leave Request](#) and the HR office approval is contingent on priority funding tiers, contributor performance and/or degree completion plans appropriate for careers within VDOF. Please read pages 6-9 of the policy to familiarize yourself with the programs -- if eligible complete [VDOF Form 8.50 Educational Tuition Assistance/Educational Paid Leave Request](#) for consideration and submit to Ms. Clore at kristina.clore@dof.virginia.gov for further processing and HR Director's approval.

Training Opportunities

Fire Academy Registration

- ◆ VDOF's 2020 Statewide Interagency Wildfire Training Academy will be on the campus of Longwood University, May 20 – 23, 2020.
- ◆ A special two-week registration period, exclusively for all full time VDOF employees, will open at noon on **January 27, 2020**. Regular public/open registration will begin at noon on February 10, 2020.

- ◆ The final details and registration link will be emailed out on the morning of **January 27**.
- ◆ The course matrix for this year is as follows:

CLASS MATRIX / CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENTS				
Virginia Interagency Wildland Fire Academy, Longwood 2020				
5/20-5/23/2020				
TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
19-May	20-May	21-May	22-May	23-May
Setup	S-212	S-212	S-212	S-212
Setup	M-410	M-410	M-410	M-410
Setup		S-215	S-215	S-215
Setup	S-131	S-131	S-200	S-200
Setup	RX-310	RX-310	RX-310	RX-310
Setup		S-211	S-211	S-211
Setup				S-130/190
Field Work	S-212	S-212	S-212	S-212
Field Work				S-215
Field Work			S-211	S-211
Field Work				S-130/190

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ There was full attendance at the Board of Forestry meeting held at the Richmond Raceway Complex in association with the Agribusiness Council Banquet. Rocky Goodnow, economist with Forest Economic Advisors LLC, was invited to present on national and international economic trends and how they may impact Virginia. Charlie Becker (utilization & marketing manager) presented a summary of results from the two Forest Industry Roundtable meetings held in December. Michaela Martin from VEDP and Emily Flipppo from VDACS also provided information on state economic development efforts in support of forestry. This meeting addressed the Board's second priority topic and will be the basis for future discussions on steps that we can take to support the forestry sector in Virginia.
- ◆ The agency released the 2019 version of the State of the Forest annual report with a new, more engaging format.
- ◆ Rob Farrell met with Dan Spethman of Working Lands Investment Partners LLC and silviculture professor David Carter from VA Tech to review the latest draft of the hardwood forest assessment tool. This tool will support the hardwood management initiative and make it easier for professional foresters to make better decisions about hardwood forest management prescriptions.

Forestland Conservation

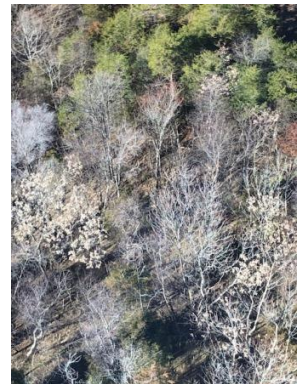
- ◆ The Virginia Trees for Clean Water (VTCW) grant program received 25 proposals, totaling \$172,076, requesting funding for community tree planting projects across the Commonwealth. Lara Johnson (urban and community forestry program manager), Molly O'Liddy (urban and community forestry

partnership coordinator) and Meghan Mulroy (community forester) ranked the proposals and the U&CF Program will issue awards over the next two weeks. Field staff associated with the project will receive a copy of the grant application and award information.

- ◆ Lara Johnson and Molly O'Liddy met with staff from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) to update VDOF's existing Urban Forest Strike Team EMAC agreement.
- ◆ Charlie Becker presented the results of the Forest Industry Roundtables to the Board of Forestry. At the close of 2019, the VDOF conducted two Forest Industry Roundtable listening sessions. One was conducted for the western region of the state in Salem on December 10. The second eastern regional session was held on December 18 in New Kent. Leading industry representatives across the different industry sectors were invited to participate. The purpose of the meetings were to hear about participant concerns regarding multiple aspects of the state of the industry in Virginia. The results will assist the VDOF with determining a course of action regarding market support and development. In addition, forest industry stakeholders such as other agencies (e.g. Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services) and industry groups (Virginia Agribusiness Council) were invited to listen, but not engage or participate. The State Forester and VDOF staff offered updates on several initiatives related to forest industry.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Katlin Mooneyham (forest health specialist), Jim Pugh (GIS technician) and Meredith Bean (emerald ash borer coordinator), conducted an aerial survey for tree of heaven in Frederick County. Tree of heaven is a preferred host of the spotted lanternfly (invasive insect) and VDACS is treating tree of heaven in an attempt to slow the spread of the spotted lanternfly. Mapping the precise location of tree of heaven in Frederick County, (one of the counties infested with the spotted lanternfly) will facilitate treatment. This aerial survey was conducted over two days in January. Tree of heaven females are easy to identify from above in the winter because they hold onto their seed pods after leaf drop. The project was supported by Farm Bill funds awarded to VDACS and passed through to VDOF. Pictured: Ariel view of tree of heaven (with seed pods) in Frederick County.



Agency Lands

- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center began lifting loblolly pine bareroot seedlings and packed a total of 1.5 million seedlings last week.
- ◆ As of January 13th, Augusta Forestry Center (AFC) has received 416 orders for this year's seedling sales.
- ◆ Soil sample collections at AFC have been completed and delivered to Waypoint Analytical. Sample analysis will provide information for next season's seedling nutrient requirements.
- ◆ At the request of a consulting forester, Jerre Creighton (research program manager) visited a ~40-year-old pine plantation thinned 4 years ago and showing evidence of crown decline and mortality. With assistance from Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) and Katlin Mooneyham, Jerre was able to diagnose the tree as suffering from heterobasidion root disease (formerly called annosus).
- ◆ Dennis Gaston (state forest manager, eastern area) met with the Department of Historic Resources to properly date the outbuildings on Zoar State Forest.

- ◆ The Department of Game & Inland Fisheries facilitated managed deer hunts each Saturday in December at VDOF's Hockley Research Forest located in King and Queen County. They also held an apprentice quail hunt on the forest this month and an apprentice rabbit hunt will be held in February.

Central Region

- ◆ Jordan Herring (senior area forester), Kinner Ingram (urban and community forester), and Jim McGlone (urban forest conservationist) attended the Potomac Watershed Roundtable Forum. This forum is a regional government-citizen forum that promotes collaboration and cooperation among local governments and stakeholder interest groups. Topics varied from encouraging the public to plant native plants to the implementation of native warm season grasses.
- ◆ Jim McGlone gave a presentation on Urban Ecosystems to the Banshee Reeks Master Naturalists basic training class. He talked about changes in stream hydrology, invasive plants and missing apex predators, and the effects this had on people and the environment. Since deer kept coming up as vectors of change, Jim shared his recipe for venison stew.
- ◆ Jim McGlone gave a talk on tree biology to the Arlington and Alexandria Tree Stewards training class. Since they would be having their class on pruning in a few days, Jim also talked about how tree biology dictates proper pruning cuts and how to use pruning to manipulate tree hormones to create good structure. He also corrected out of date information that some Tree Stewards were still using.

Public Information

- ◆ Robbie Lewis (senior area forester) and Michelle Stoll (public information director) attended the third session of the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute (VNRLI) in Richmond. The session included a visit to the Capitol and a panel discussion featuring Martha Moore (Va. Farm Bureau) and Dawone Robinson (Natural Resources Defense Council). Assistant Secretary of Ag & Forestry Heidi Hertz welcomed the cohort and provided an overview of natural resources-related legislation this year.

News Clips

- ◆ [Emerald ash borer isn't the only dangerous invader for Virginia](#)
- ◆ [Bedford leaders evaluate ways to incorporate greenery along downtown street](#)