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Employee Recognition

New Position – Jon Perry – Forest Technician

- ◆ We are pleased to announce that Jon Perry will be joining the Western Region team effective February 10. He has served VDOF well as a Forest Technician in the Central Region for more than 5 years and will be transferring to the Headwaters work area. Jon graduated from Mountain Empire Community College with an Associate’s Degree in Forestry and is a Wise County native. Please join me in welcoming Jon back home again!

Coming Up

Camp Woods & Wildlife

- ◆ Camp Woods & Wildlife will be held June 22-27 at Holiday Lake 4-H Center. This will be our 74th year bringing young people into the woods for a unique learning experience! Camp is open to any Virginia resident aged 13-16 who has not attended before. More information can be found at www.dof.virginia.gov/forestry/camp/. Nominations are open now through April 10. Please spread the word among schools, youth groups, and landowners in your area.
- ◆ Camp does not run without counselors and instructors. If you are interested in helping to make this year’s camp a success, please talk with your supervisor. Staff applications will be available soon!

News You Can Use

Forest Landowner Education Update

- ◆ Twelve years ago, VDOF, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Virginia Tech's Forest Landowner Education Program began collaborating to offer weekend retreats for beginning forest landowners. The format was designed to bring owners together in a casual setting, introduce them to natural resource professionals, share basic forest management information, and show examples of sound management on the ground.
- ◆ In 2019, 75 woodland owners, with an average ownership of 180 acres, attended one of three retreats. In exit surveys, participants said that in the next year they intended to create a list of ownership goals (57 %); contact a natural resource professional (66 %); obtain a management plan (60 %); and implement at least one sustainable management practice (76 %). Attitudes also changed as a result of the retreats. One hundred percent of participants agreed that working with a natural resource professional would help them achieve their ownership goals (versus 71 percent prior to the retreat). In addition, 98 percent of participants agreed that active management practices are beneficial to woodlands and wildlife (versus 23 percent before).
- ◆ To date, more than 450 landowners have attended a retreat. Follow-up surveys 2-5 years later show impressive results. For example, 81 percent met with a natural resource professional (versus 19 percent of the general landowner population). Fifty percent obtained a written forest management plan, compared with only 3 percent of landowners nationally. And participants implemented a number of sustainable forest management practices on their lands, including wildlife habitat improvement (63 %); harvesting and selling timber (50 %); and eliminating or reducing invasive species (50 %). Based on these results, the Landowner Weekend Retreats appear to be providing woodland owners with the tools they need to start implementing sustainable management practices on their land.
- ◆ This year's retreats will be held March 20-21 in Appomattox County, May 15-16 in Galax, and September 25-26 in New Kent County. Registration and information can be found at <https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu>. Please share the link with any forest landowners who are new to forest management.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ This year, VDOF again hosted the Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment (VT-CNRE) Leadership Institute students on the first stop of their weeklong tour visiting government natural resource agencies and other partners. As always, the students generated lively discussion about the role of government in natural resources stewardship.
- ◆ VDOF leadership also met with Director of Employer Relations John Freeborn, Forestry Department Head Dr. Jay Sullivan and the new Sustainable Biomaterials Department Head Dr. Ching Huang, from VT-CNRE to discuss recruitment of students to VDOF. Discussion also focused on strategies for increasing diversity in the natural resources field and how VA Tech could develop a natural resources degree program for working professionals. Our initial interest is in developing a program for VDOF forest technicians who have considerable on-the-job experience in forestry but do not have an undergraduate degree that would allow them to serve as area foresters. Hector Rivera (HR director) will be following up with the college on this potential.
- ◆ Corey Connors, new executive director for the Virginia Forestry Association visited VDOF headquarters to meet with the executive team and discuss statewide issues and potential collaboration.

- ◆ During the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2020 (Q1 FY20), DHRM reported that our mean days to hire was 45 (VDOF) and 41 (VDACS) days respectively. In DHRM's FY20 Q2 snapshot, the secretariat exceeded the goal with an average of 45 days to hire.
 - Mean days to hire is defined as the timeframe between when a job is posted and when the position is filled in the Recruitment Management System (RMS). This shows that we are making steady progress towards DHRM's goal for completing hiring actions within 50 days.
 - VDOF – Averaged 46 days to hire for 19 filled jobs.
39 days less than the state's average of 85 mean days (+)
 - VDACS – Averaged 43 days to hire for 36 filled jobs.
42 days less than the state's average of 85 mean days (+)
- ◆ The Secretariat's FY20 YTD Combined Mean is 44 days for 55 filled jobs. Our combined average places the secretariat in Top 12 amongst 123 agencies.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester), Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager), Molly O'Liddy (partnership coordinator) and Jordan Herring (senior area forester) attended the Chesapeake Bay Tree Canopy Summit in Laurel, MD, to meet with over 100 partners from the Bay states. The goal of the event was to learn about new tools, approaches and research to assist the Bay states in meeting the watershed-wide canopy goals.
- ◆ Lara Johnson and Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) met with VDACS and VDOT staff to coordinate the spotted lanternfly efforts in February.
- ◆ Lara Johnson and Molly O'Liddy prepped awards for the Virginia Trees for Clean Water Program to be issued over the next two weeks.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Meredith Bean (emerald ash borer coordinator), Joe Lehnen (forest utilization & marketing specialist), and Meghan Mulroy (community forester) met with Newport News Waterworks foresters to track down EAB-infested ash on their property. Several larvae were recovered and have been sent to VT to officially confirm Newport News as an infested county. Afterwards, they met with a local tree company, Johnny Timbers, and discussed tactics for woodworking and becoming an 'urban wood' company through the Virginia Urban Wood Group's directory.
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health manager) attended the 30th USDA Interagency Research Forum on Invasive Species in Annapolis, MD. This is a national meeting with participants from federal, state and local agencies. Research updates covered many topics including the spotted lanternfly, gypsy moth, beech leaf disease and urban forest pests. This information will help us monitor Virginia's forests for forest health threats and advise landowners on appreciate preventative actions
- ◆ Katlin Mooneyham (forest health specialist) met with Kathleen Ogilvy (area foresters) and Josh Colyer (forest technician) to survey ips beetle spots in Dinwiddie and Powhatan counties using an agency drone. Using the camera on the drone, they were able to determine how many trees were impacted by the beetles and where the problem trees were located.
- ◆ Dean Cumbia (forest management) and Joe Rossetti (senior area forester) attended the Southern Group of State Foresters, Forest Management Committee winter meeting in Savannah, Georgia on January 14-16. This is an annual meeting of the forest management heads and U. S. Forest Service Cooperative Forestry partners. Meeting topics included an overview of forestry in Georgia, the Forest Stewardship Program, the Emergency Forest Restoration Program other USDA forestry programs,

biomass pellets, the Shared Stewardship program under the USFS, policy updates and sharing of current programs and events across the South. A field trip highlighted the Savannah port operations (wood pellets and chips), sugarberry (hackberry) decline and forest, endangered species management and land conservation efforts at the U. S. Army Base at Fort Stewart. The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for sharing and learning from the other states and conservation partners.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center has packed a total of 4.8 million loblolly pine seedlings to date. One contractor has begun picking up seedlings for planting.
- ◆ As of January 20, Augusta Forestry Center has received 452 orders for this year's seedling sales.
- ◆ Various trainings are held on state forests and Zach Olinger (western area state forest manager) recently met with officials from River North Correctional Facility to discuss a planned prison escape training to be conducted on the Matthews State Forest.
- ◆ State forest personnel have begun repainting boundary lines on the Cumberland State Forest. This important task to accurately identify our property borders is conducted on several miles of the 155 total miles of boundary line each year.

Central Region

- ◆ David Powell (senior area forester) participated as a guest panelist for the Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) quarterly meeting and public forum held at Ivy Creek Natural Area. Approximately 50 people attended the program, which concentrated on winter invasive plant treatment strategies. Additional information about the event is located on the PRISM website: <http://blueridgeprism.org/>
- ◆ Chuck Wright (area forester) began marking timber for the upcoming timber sale on Department of Corrections property in Goochland County. The project will be a stand improvement harvest, as well as a road and stream crossing improvement project.

Western Region

- ◆ Bill Miller (senior area forester) attended the quarterly meeting of the Guest River Working Group. Representatives from Appalachian Voices, Town of Wise, Wise County, U. S. Forest Service, LENOWISCO Planning District, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Health, and Cardno Consulting were present. Some of the items discussed were the identification of potential brownfield sites, updates from DEQ, the Brightfields Act and planning for the annual Guest River Cleanup.
- ◆ Blue Ridge work area personnel supported the USFS to complete a 18 acre Prescribed burn. The burn was on the national forest but backed up to the yards of Blacksburg residents in Laurel Ridge Firewise Community. This burn was just the start of an ambitious plan by professional forest managers in SWVA to burn up to 15,000 acres annually in the Appalachians. The link below is to an article in The Roanoke Times announcing planned burns in this area of Montgomery County.
https://www.roanoke.com/news/nrv/controlled-burns-to-begin-near-blacksburg-some-pandapas-trails-may/article_39cf723c-cdc8-5390-8c7f-cc1c6ee29fe3.html?sfns=mo
- ◆ Greg Estoll (senior area forester) and Daniel Cloeter (area forester) coordinated with Jennifer Gagnon (VCE) to host a Tree Farm Inspector's Certification at the Salem Regional Office. Approximately 25 foresters representing VDOF, industry, and consultants attended.

Public Information

- ◆ Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) and Jeremy Falkenau (senior area forester) served on the curriculum review and revision team for Forest Management and Advanced Forest Management courses, within the Career and Technical Education program of the Virginia Department of Education.