



**February 24, 2020**

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**Employee Recognition**

*Page Hutchinson – Thank You!*

VDOF’s conservation and forestry education programs reach all ages and walks of life. The following are two examples of the impact our educational programs make!

- ◆ The Goochland Garden club (around since 1938!) recently reached out to Page Hutchinson (PLT coordinator) for a chapter program. Page’s presentation began with explaining VDOF’s Mission then went into the importance of riparian forested buffers, the national Big Tree program, the VA Big Tree program and concluded with the importance of planting native trees. In addition to selling 15 sets of VDOF Tree ID Books, Page also created handouts with important links and resources related to these

topics. Retired Department of Education employee and Goochland County Garden Club member Barb Young sent the following note to Page after the presentation:

- “I STILL have folks at the Garden Club who rant and rave about how good your presentation was!! Thanks for doing that for us. I owe you big time! Just let me know if there is ever anything I can do for you!! “
- ◆ Page also provided a PLT training for Roanoke Public Schools recently. The following note, sent to the Science Coordinator Erin Barnett, came from one of the teachers who participated in the training:
  - “Erin, thank you for organizing today’s professional development. It was definitely one of the most beneficial ones I have been to in a long time. I appreciate that it was geared toward K – 2 rather than just the subject in general. Thanks for including us!”
- ◆ Thank you Page, and all of our VDOF employees promoting forestry and conservation education in Virginia!

## Coming Up

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### *Virginia Telework Week 2020*

Our Commonwealth celebrates the benefits associated with teleworking during its annual Virginia Telework Week March 2-6, 2020.

- ◆ As an agency, we are a vivid example of a high performing organization when a properly managed telework leads to:
  - increased employee productivity and engagement;
  - improved work/life balance;
  - reduced traffic congestion; and
  - decreased wear and tear on transportation infrastructure.
- ◆ In this context, Our Executive Team would like to extend two challenges in the spirit of telework week.
  1. Can you identify and attempt a new task during your regularly scheduled telework day. The task shall be one you’ve been accustomed to do in an office or physical duty location environment. By doing this you will be identifying a new opportunity leading to increased performance on a future telework day.
  2. A change of scenery, go to a local coffee shop, diner, library or even a park setting that will enable you to telework for a portion of the day; then share a picture with @ForestryVA is #Telework!VA2020.

## Help Needed:

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### *2020 Calendars*

- ◆ There are still boxes of 2020 VDOF calendars sitting in the warehouse at HQ. They will soon be obsolete, so we want to get them into the hands of landowners, community organizations, etc., promptly. Please reach out to Jennifer Leach with the number of boxes you would like.

### *DGIF in need of Active Bear Dens*

- ◆ Now is the time of year female bears produce cubs which may be disturbed by humans. This year DGIF has already received several orphaned cubs, well beyond what they normally see. DGIF is asking for

VDOF field staff help in locating active bear dens with female bears to act as fosters. DGIF has a few radio collared females but want to expand options to keep orphaned cubs wild.

- ◆ Please notify DGIF if you hear of or come across an active bear den and, without disturbing the bear and potential young and can determine if there are cubs in those dens. It would be helpful to include a GPS location of the site and other pertinent information such as VDOF contact info, landownership, access, etc. Email the location/information directly to Katie Martin ([Katie.martin@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:Katie.martin@dgif.virginia.gov)) and Stephanie Simek ([Stephanie.simek@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:Stephanie.simek@dgif.virginia.gov)).
- ◆ You can approach the den area and listen from a distance for the sound of nursing cubs or calling/bawling (see links below). Please try to avoid approaching the den entrance. You can listen from a distance and approach slowly until you hear a sound. If you are within approximately 50 feet (15 meters), they should stop and listen.
  - Nursing cub sound: <http://bearsmartdurango.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/nursing.wav>
  - Cub and mother communication: <http://bearsmartdurango.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/CUB-MOTHER.wav>

## News You Can Use:

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### *VFA and DRY HYDRANT Grant Period is Open!*

- ◆ Grant application information was sent out via email to all fire departments across the Commonwealth. Fire staff encourages everyone to check with your local departments to make sure they received the email, encourage them to apply, and to answer any questions they may have.
  - The full information is located on our website at <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/financing/grants.htm>, both grants have an application deadline of March 31, 2020.
- ◆ Anyone with questions should contact [Sandy Mills](#) on the VFA grants or [Fred Turck](#) on the Dry Hydrant grants.

### *Comprehensive Employee Wellness*

**Caring is a collective effort** - from Hector Rivera (director of human resources)

- ◆ In recent years our communities continuously struggle to build on common values that extend beyond our own nucleus, and this can also affect the workplace. It is important to recognize when our teammates or coworker needs a friend, sounding board or shoulder to lean on. I want to challenge each of us to connect with each other while playing an active role in removing the barriers that hinder good relations. Have you recently checked your ego? What are your biases? Can we find common ground? What is their perspective?
- ◆ Equally important is looking out for our own well-being. I cannot emphasize enough the benefits behind the Commonwealth's Employee Assistance and the CommonHealth Programs, which aim to impact our health and increase our performance or readiness.
  - <http://www.commonhealth.virginia.gov/commonhealthvirginia.htm>
  - <https://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/employeebenefits/employee-assistance>
- ◆ Last but not least, many of us have been impacted by the tragic loss of a loved one through suicide. Personally, I lost an uncle two weeks prior to my cousin's (his daughter) wedding in September 2014 and my youngest son lost his high school soccer buddy/teammate last June just hours after he graduated from high school. Tragic events that leave us thinking if we could've done something. In the military we have an acronym that often helps us to look out for each other - ACE = **Ask** your buddy,

**Care** for your buddy and **Escort** your buddy. Don't be afraid to connect with coworkers and offer them assistance as they traverse an unforeseen situation. We are excellent at providing the first response to communities in need, but often fail to take care of ourselves when life has thrown a curveball or disrupted our foundation. In conjunction with VDOF Fire Programs, we encourage your situational awareness on this issue by sharing a few resources such as:

- NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE USA: 1 (800) 273-8255: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- SUICIDE HOTLINES CANADA: <https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/>
- IAFF: <http://client.prod.iaff.org/#page=behavioralhealth>
- NVFC: <https://www.nvfc.org/programs/share-the-load-program>
- FF PERSONAL SURVIVAL: <http://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/category/personal-survival/>
- ROSECRANCE FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM: <https://rosecrance.org/addiction-treatment/florian-program/>
- NFFF: <https://www.everyonegoeshome.com/2017/02/08/prevent-firefighter-suicides/>
- SAFE CALL NOW: <https://www.safecallnow.org/>
- FIREFIGHTER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: <http://www.ffbha.org/>
- THE CORDICO GUARDIAN SYSTEM: <https://www.cordico.com/first-responder-mobile-app/>

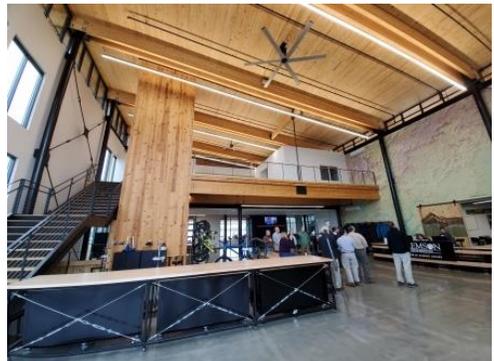
## Last Week

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- ◆ Rob Farrell participated in Capitol Hill visits with the National Association of State Foresters in support of funding for the USDA Forest Service (USFS) State and Private Forests funding. Farrell met with staff in Senator Kaine's office, U.S Representative McEachin's office and the staff supporting the House Agriculture Committee Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry. Farrell also participated in a briefing on state urban and community forestry programs.
- ◆ **UAV-LSR Grant Update** - The VDOF received a USFS UAV-LSR grant in 2017 after the Southern Group of State Foresters GIS Committee recognized a need to explore emerging technologies. The grant has allowed VDOF to:
  - Provide support training and UAS Part 107 FAA Certification for nine certified pilots, with five more currently in training.
  - To acquire UAS platforms (drones) for evaluation and testing. We now have nine drones – two Phantom 4 Pro v. 2.0, three Mavic 2 Enterprise Dual (this one has a thermal camera), three Mavic 2 Pro, and one Mavic 2 Zoom.
  - To conduct pilot projects to evaluate UAS technology for support of state agency program areas. Since January 2019 VDOF UAV pilots have worked on at least 35 different projects; so far, use of the drone helps staff complete these tasks in a quarter to a third of the time compared to the traditional method. Projects have included:
    - harvest inspections
    - BMP audits
    - Riparian Buffer Tax Credit evaluation
    - pre-commercial thinning determination
    - greenstreak flights
    - evaluating the goat project for invasive plant control
    - acreage determination for RT
    - aerial reconnaissance on two prescribed burns (one grass and one cutover)
    - mapping a large VDOF easement in southwest Virginia

- mapping a swamp logging job in Southampton.
- ◆ Recently, VDOF was able to obtain our Certificate of Authorization (COA), which will allow the agency to expand our abilities by allowing UAV operation at night, if needed, and give us access to the Emergency COA process if we have a need to operate within restricted airspace.

### Forestland Conservation

- ◆ VDOF, in partnership with USFS, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and USDA-APHIS, deployed Urban Forest Strike Team (UFST) members to assist with data collection for spotted lanternfly, a quarantined invasive pest to Virginia. Representatives from the North Carolina Forest Service and the District Department of Transportation also participated in the deployment. The UFST collected data on 12,893 Ailanthus trees and completed almost 2,000 acres of assessments during the deployment. A hired contractor will treat these trees later this year. Assessments occurred on private property, a local landfill, a quarry and along the I-81 corridor. VDOF staff members who were onsite collecting data or serving in a support capacity for the deployment included: Terry Lasher (assistant state forester), Robbie Talbert (regional forester), Dean Cumbia (director forest resource management), Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry program manager), Molly O'Liddy (urban & community partnership coordinator), Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager), Katlin Mooneyham (forest health specialist), Meredith Bean (emerald ash borer coordinator), Drew Arnn, Greg Estoll, Matt Wolanski, Joe Rossetti (senior area foresters), Mike Aherron, Jordan Herring, Denny McCarthy, Tom Snoddy (area foresters), Jim McGlone (urban forest conservationist) and Bill Perry (forester specialist). (pictured) Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) also attended day-one to help promote this outstanding effort.
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- ◆ Charlie Becker (utilization & marketing manager) attended the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) Ecosystem Services, Utilization & Marketing (SUM) Committee meeting in Clemson, SC. In addition to providing updates on the regional Urban Wood and Hardwood Sub-Regional Timber Supply (SRTS) Model projects, (including an announcement about the Southern Regional Urban Wood Forum to be held at the Hilton Charlotte Airport Hotel in Charlotte, NC, July 22-23), Charlie provided information on activities from the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance's Forest Utilization Committee. Priority projects for the SUM Committee include expansion of Timber Supply Analysis tool use, updating the Forest Products Locator, preparing for the Forest Economic Contribution Summit in March, completing the Hardwood SRTS model, Timber Products Output (TPO) issues and products, expanding our work in ecosystem services and updating website and other educational and promotional materials. The local tours and program focused on Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) and other wood design and construction (pictured).
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- ◆ Terry Lasher attended and fielded questions during the James River Association (JRA) Board of Directors meeting. He supported a speech provided by Secretary Ring regarding the joint James River Buffer Program between JRA and VDOF. The program is funded through a grant from the Virginia Environmental Endowment and focuses on tree establishment in the middle James River watershed.
- ◆ Terry Lasher completed a course “Understanding Forest Carbon Management” through Michigan State University.

### *Forest Resource Management*

- ◆ The third regional Forest Management Planning training session for newer employees was held at the New Kent Conference Center on February 11. Attendees included seven from the Eastern Region and three from the Central Region. Special thanks to Bryant Bays (regional forester), Todd Groh (forest resource management program manager) and Brenda Clark (conference center manager) for their work in making this a successful training. The rains paused slightly in the afternoon to allow the group to “dive” into the deep woods at New Kent. Forest management plans are one of the best ways to engage landowners and begin them on the path to active management.
- ◆ The forest health staff (Lori Chamberlin, forest health manager; Katlin Mooneyham, forest health specialist; Meredith Bean, emerald ash borer (EAB) coordinator) participated in the urban forest strike team deployment to Winchester, Virginia to map tree-of-heaven in the spotted lanternfly infested area. Since tree-of-heaven is being targeted for treatment as a way to slow the spread of the spotted lanternfly, this work will greatly facilitate treatment this summer.
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin spoke at the 2020 Woods and Wildlife Conference in Roanoke. The forest health update covered oak decline, spotted lanternfly and pine bark beetles.

### *State-Owned Lands:*

- ◆ Recently Virginia Military Institute (VMI) made contact with Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator), following his initial visit in late summer/fall 2019 concerning the State-Owned Lands Program, for help in harvesting timber on a portion of one of their State-Owned Lands tracts. The project involved harvesting approximately nine acres of timber that was mostly planted using funds from the State-Owned Lands Fund in 1982 to create a much-needed parking area that had received Secretary of Administration approval through an Environmental Impact Report. Western Region Senior Area Forester Patti Nylander provided quick and efficient service to help gain approval for the harvesting of the timber and identify a potential buyer for the timber. In just two weeks, the Department General Services (DGS) approved the project, which was then contracted for a harvest of approximately \$7,000 or more of timber. Proceeds from the sale will reimburse VDOF for its time and will yield funding to aid in planting trees on another VMI property that is currently in open land, thus mitigating the loss of forestland. Thank you to Patti and to Jim Pugh who helped to provide mapping for the project. Well done!

### *Agency Lands*

- ◆ A student with the James Madison University School of Integrated Sciences has used GPS to map stream channels, hiking trails and other features at First Mountain State Forest. The trails on this state forest currently total 5.4 miles.
- ◆ The Lynchburg Ultra Series Holiday Lake 50 K trail run was held with approximately 300 runners participating. Portions of the event occur over trails on the Cumberland State Forest.
- ◆ Augusta Forestry Center has processed 680 orders for this year’s sales and 1.0 million seedlings have been graded to date.

- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center has packed a total of 12.1 million loblolly pine seedlings to date.

### Information Systems:

- ◆ The VDOF hosted the Southern Group of State Forester's GIS Committee winter meeting on February 10 to 14 in Charlottesville, VA. We had a high turnout, as most of the southern states were present. Highlights of the meeting included federal updates, wildfire technology presentations and sUAS/LiDar demonstrations. Chris Asaro (USFS) lead a discussion and question period regarding the Forest Action Plans. Lynne Lewis (USFS) updated the states on the Stewardship Priority layer to be included in the SMART (Federal Stewardship Reporting Program). Lowell Ballard (Timmons) and David Jones (Technosylva) presented the next phases of wildland fire technology ranging from FiResponse to SouthWRAP updates and enhancements. Dr. Randy Wynne of Virginia Tech presented their recent remote sensing applications in forestry. Mike Bialousz and Sunni Fleming (ESRI) presented their work on conservation easement monitoring using mobile applications. We were excited to host West Virginia Division of Forestry GIS Specialist Steve Harouff. This was the first time we have cooperated with our neighbors to the west; we hope to continue this partnership. Lastly, the week ended hiking on the Saunders-Monticello trail testing a mobile application that collects urban tree canopy data.

### Central Region

- ◆ Kinner Ingram (community forestry specialist) attended the Native Plant Symposium in Prince William County. The event was attended by over 300 people who attended three breakout sessions. He spoke at two of the breakout sessions to around 60 people about the basics of forest health.
- ◆ Matt Hall (area forester) coordinated the Tree Farmer Re-certification for current inspectors in Farmville recently. Eleven inspectors, both state and private, attended from as far away as North Carolina.
- ◆ Patrick Murphy (senior area forester) taught 22 Boy Scouts from throughout Central Virginia at the Hampden Sydney College Merit Badge Day. Murphy has taught Forestry merit badge, in two sessions, all nine years that the college has hosted the Boys Scouts.

### Eastern Region

- ◆ The Eastern Region gathered at New Kent Forestry center for a region-wide fire training day prior to the beginning of Spring Fire Season. The day started with a guest speaker from the National Weather Service with an update on the predicted fire weather and information on the products that the weather service can provide. Following that, a representative from TC Energy provided guidance on safe operations around gas lines during wildfires and prescribed burns. From there, the region split into small groups and rotated through three stations including new 10-hour service guidance on model K tractors and hydraulic hose safety, refresher on fire investigations and wildlife operations and a FiResponse exercise. Regional staff, including Jesse Bander, Kevin Dodson (forest technicians), Dave Houttekier (area forester) and Heather Tuck (regional fire program specialist) served as the station instructors.
- ◆ Manij Upadhyay (area forester), John Rose (forest technician) and Scott Bachman (senior area forester) led the ground-cover fire section of the latest career firefighter class for York County. Students spent the morning indoors covering the book work needed to complete their training. In the afternoon, the recruits got to put their backs to work raking line through a young pine stand as well as a mature hardwood stand. (pictured)



- Forester for the Newport News Waterworks James McCabe, provided a site just miles from the academy for our field work. Even after a day-long rain prior to the class, we were able to demonstrate the dozer capability. The waterworks site was surprisingly sandy and well drained. Being close to the academy gave the recruits more time for line construction. Thanks James!
- ◆ Virginia Tree Farm Committee Regions 1, 2 and 4 partnered with Franklin Lumber to conduct an advanced Tree Farm inspector training. The training was held at the Franklin Lumber training room and was attended by a mix of forestry consultants and VDOF personnel. Changes to the Tree Farm database, committee and re-inspection procedures were covered. Nancy and Terry Godwin (Franklin Lumber) taught portions of the class, along with VDOF personnel Dave Slack (capital area forester) and Robbie Lewis (maritime senior area forester). Matt Hall (area forester) assisted in preparing materials for the training. Shown in action teaching the class are Nancy and Terry Godwin, and the VDOF's own Dave Slack delivering some profound statements about Tree Farm inspections and the new landowner fee structure (pictured)



- ◆ The Capital team hosted a bulldozer training day at the Zoar State Forest to acquaint our part-time bulldozer operators with our new units. Nine operators had the chance to learn about and operate the new bulldozers. (pictured)
- ◆ Jeremy Falkenau (senior area forester) met with Sr. Education Manager, Virginia Agriculture (VA AG) in the Classroom Tammy Maxey and Procurement Forester, Mid-Atlantic Tree Harvesters Frankie Johnson to discuss plans for filming an active harvest operation. This active harvest will be one part of a total-immersion virtual forestry experience VDOF and VA Ag in the Classroom are developing.
- ◆ Staff from the Eastern Region, State Forests, Capital Work Area and Peninsulas Work Area assisted with planting 1,000 Loblolly Pine at Zoar State Forest (pictured).
- ◆ The Eastern Region hosted a joint Consulting Forester/VDOF meeting in Tappahannock, which gave consultants and VDOF staff a chance to meet and discuss forestry in eastern Virginia. The meeting included updates on the role of the Association of Consulting Foresters and an overview of VDOF agency initiatives, as well as information about tree farms and Virginia Best Management Practices and Riparian Buffer Tax Credits.



## Human Resources

- ◆ Hector River (director of human resources) was selected as one of the 12 most senior human resources leaders in state government to join the newly formed Commonwealth's Compensation Workgroup. In response to the 2019 Session of the General Assembly of Virginia, the working group

must define the goals and process for managing the compensation of the Commonwealth's classified workforce. The workgroup will then serve as a driver for updates to the Appropriation Act and develop a modern methodology that can be used to determine (i) the amount of funding that should be appropriated for state employee salary increases each year, and (ii) how to distribute that funding to address state agencies' most significant workforce challenges. During the February 18, 2020, kickoff meeting, group members set the foundation to understand issues relating to the Commonwealth's workforce, particularly how compensation levels may be affecting the ability to recruit and retain key talent by analyzing compensation levels against competitive market levels.

### **Public Information**

- ◆ On February 12 Page Hutchinson (state project learning tree (PLT) coordinator) participated in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) State Implementation Committee meeting held at VDOF Headquarters. Page provides PLT updates to the Committee and promotes forestry education to the members.
- ◆ Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator), Bill Sweeney (area forester) and Andrew Vinson (water quality specialist) helped plan and host the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Roanoke Woods & Wildlife Conference. One hundred twenty attendees learned about the latest management and research topics in forestry and wildlife.

### **News Clips**

- ◆ [Protecting Virginia Forests from Wildfires](#)
- ◆ [Virginia's 4 p.m. Burn Law goes into effect on February 15](#)
- ◆ [Virginia's last wild areas must be protected and connected](#)