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Employee Recognition

- ◆ Thank you to Heather Dowling (senior area forester) and Jack Colyer (forest technician) for their help in preparing for a State-Owned Lands Timber Sale on the Central State Hospital. Heather and Jack assisted Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) in the cruising, harvest boundary marking and mapping of approximately 26 acres for harvest. Thanks also to Tom Zaebst (assistant state forests manager) for running the cruise data, and to Jim Pugh (GIS/remote sensing analyst) for early GIS work on the project.
- ◆ Thank you to Stuart Sours (water quality specialist) for his oversight on the Patrick Henry Corrections State-Owned Lands harvest project.
- ◆ Thank you to Brad Carico (deputy regional forester) and Chad Austin (water quality engineer) for their assistance in laying out and cruising for the Bland Corrections Timber Sale currently being advertised. Brad and Chad assisted Ed Stoots in the identification of the harvest area, marking of the harvest boundaries, and cruising the timber. The Invitation to Bid and Contract specifics are found on the [VDOF Business Center](#) web page under Timber Sales.

- ◆ Thank you to Matt Coleman (senior area forester) for his assistance in the sale of timber on a VDOT Rest Area North of Richmond and his oversight of the logging that is wrapping up this week.

Coming Up

Reset and Recharge: Takin Care of Our Mental Health in Uncertain Times

- ◆ **Free Webinar – April 2, 2020 @ 2:00pm** - The spread of COVID-19 has more than just physical health implications. It also creates uncertainty and changes in lifestyle that can have an emotional impact. Firefighters, EMS providers, and rescue workers may be feeling the impact especially hard as they navigate the new realities of responding and maintaining operations during this crisis. Join us for this free webinar on how being a first responder during a pandemic can impact our mental health.
- ◆ Hosted by The National Volunteer Fire Council click on link below to register.
 - https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_n4Vq5qKXR7OfQ_60VEwuhA

Items of Note

Riparian Forest Buffer Tax Credit

- ◆ It is Tax Season and there is still time to get in applications for the 2019 Riparian Forest Buffer Tax Credit for any of your eligible landowners. While the deadline for federal taxes has been delayed until June due to the COVID-19 virus, the Virginia State Income Tax deadline for filing remains May 1 with the stipulation that if an individual owes taxes to the Commonwealth, payment can be delayed until June 1.

Project Updates

Policy and Procedures

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 8-1 Human Resources General Policies](#) – Employees considering retirement shall read “Retirement Planning” section in P&P 8-1 to learn how to submit Form 8-51 (Intent to Retire Notice) up-to 12 months in advance; allowing our HR team to assist and advise employees as they prepare to transition from state service. Employees will be scheduled to attend seminars and educational programs to aid in understanding retirement income and benefits.
- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 8-2 Human Resources Equal Opportunity and Employment Practices](#) - has been updated adding procedures and Form 8-52 Voluntary Lateral Transfer Request for lateral transfers when the director of human resources approves an agency vacancy for fill via a lateral transfer.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell and Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) participated in a webinar with Lowell Ballard of Timmons Group to learn about current, state-of -the-art dashboards available to state natural resource agencies for both public and internal reporting of strategic accomplishments.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager) assisted the South Carolina Forestry Commission with reviewing and ranking community forestry grant applications for the 2020 grant year.

- ◆ Lara Johnson, Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) and Meredith Bean (EAB coordinator) worked with two Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards to plant nine trees in the front lawn at the Garner Building.
- ◆ Charlie Becker (utilization and marketing manager) attended a webinar by Forest Economic Advisors (FEA) on Effects of the COVID-19 Outbreak on the US Economy, Housing, and Wood Product Markets. Additional information is available on the [FEA website](#), but below is a summary of projections:
 - a. Expect unemployment rate to temporarily to jump to 20 percent or higher.
 - b. Biggest impact expected in second quarter (April-June) with recovery starting in third quarter.
 - c. Will take about a year for most things to return to early February numbers.
 - d. Expect housing acceleration later in year.
 - e. Outlook depends on large economic infusion into economy and short recession period.
 - f. Total Debt percentage to GDP could exceed 100 percent leading to future inflation and other issues.
- ◆ Charlie Becker attended a webinar by the IMPLAN Group that focused on ways to model impacts of the COVID-19 virus in the economy.
- ◆ Charlie Becker participated in a conference call on the status of the Hardwood Sub-Regional Timber Supply (SRTS) Model project with representatives from North Carolina and Kentucky Forestry, and NC State University. The Hardwood SRTS model will allow users to look at various forest management and impact scenarios and show how they can affect our forest makeup in the future. One of the initial uses of the new model will be to look at how an increase in white oak demand will affect future forests. Initial testing of the model is planned for later this year.
- ◆ Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources Ann Jennings and Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher held a conference call to discuss the VDOF's Green Infrastructure Center grant outcomes, potential Tree Canopy Legislation meeting, VDOF's Priority Watershed selection approach and status of Trees for Clean Water funding.
- ◆ Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Heidi Hertz, Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Kathleen Jabs, Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Mike Coleman, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Greg Evans, and Terry Lasher held a conference call to discuss changes to and the new direction of the Sentinel Landscapes application. The team set deadlines and next steps and identified new approaches to the Commonwealth's plan. They also discussed the formulation of a Statewide Coordinating Committee, including potential members and organizational makeup.
- ◆ Terry Lasher participated in the monthly Chesapeake Bay Interagency WIP meeting. The Virginia Institute for Marine Science, Center for Coastal Resources Management provided information to the group about Living Shorelines as BMPs.
- ◆ Terry Lasher and Justin Barnes (deputy regional forester) co-hosted a conference call with the Rivanna Conservation Alliance to discuss potential grant opportunities and partnership to achieved WIP III goals in the Rivanna watershed.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Ips bark beetle reports continue to come in. Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) looked at two spots in Fluvanna County with Chuck Wright (area forester) last week.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Seed stratification for the 2020 loblolly pine seedling crop has been completed with a total of 2,775 pounds of seed prepared, which will be planted at the Garland Gray Forestry Center this spring. The

process entails weighing and dividing the seed into 10-pound increments, soaking for 24 hours in water, draining, bagging and placing the seed in the cooler at Augusta Forestry Center (AFC) where it will stay for the next month. The team treated an additional 200 pounds of loblolly pine and various hardwood species that will be planted at AFC. Jerre Creighton (research program manager) oversaw the process with assistance from Todd Groh (forest resource management program coordinator and Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) forestry liaison), Dean Cumbia (director forest resource management), Patti Nylander (Mountain Valley senior area forester), Robert Howell (Shenandoah technician), Matt Wolanski (Shenandoah senior area forester), Josh McLaughlin (assistant forestry centers manager), Jake Good (nursery technician), Harvey Darden (director agency lands) and Katlin DeWitt.

- ◆ NCSU Tree Improvement Cooperative selected eight of VDOF's best loblolly pine families for grafting, and scion collected from these will be used for the 2021 field tests. Ones Bitoki (tree improvement program manager) completed 188 grafts which will be grown this season at NCF's Goldsboro nursery.
- ◆ Dennis Gaston (eastern area state forests manager) and Ben Duke (state forest technician) have been assisting the tree improvement staff with the roguing (thinning) of the third cycle orchard at New Kent Forestry Center.
- ◆ AFC continues to receive, pack and ship orders for this season. Orders YTD total over 1,000.
- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center continues to fill orders for loblolly pine for planting this season.
- ◆ Mike Womack (Appomattox-Buckingham & Prince Edward-Gallion state forest manager) continues to work on the VDOF Incident Management Team (IMT) as the Lead Ops Chief and is involved with daily IMT and Virginia Department of Emergency Management briefings.
- ◆ Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has been training several dogs and dog handlers on Cumberland State Forest to support their law enforcement work. VDOF has assisted the effort by providing grounds, buildings and vehicles to be searched during the training.

Water Quality

- ◆ As of April 1, VDOF has issued 185 Tax Certificates on 94 applications for the Riparian Forest Buffer Tax Credit on 1,460 Acres of Riparian Buffer retained with a buffer value of \$2,616,951.43 and a tax credit associated with those buffers of \$591,334.50 going to those landowners who retained those buffers.

Eastern Region

- ◆ On March 27, Matthew Coleman (senior area forester) assisted Caroline County Fire and Rescue units, the Caroline County Sheriff's office and Virginia State Police in a search and rescue mission. A three-year-old girl and her dog had entered the woods and had been missing for approximately three hours when the search began. The wooded area contained extremely steep ravines and marshy areas, which is where the girl and her dog were eventually found, more than one mile from her home. The pair were spotted by the State Police helicopter and returned home.

Central Region

- ◆ Farmville Tree Board members and town shop employees gave Arbor Day trees to interested Farmville residents who we believed would plant them while following appropriate social distancing guidelines. This project had 1,000 seedlings of three species for many to enjoy.

Western Region

- ◆ While conducting a final harvest inspection, Kenny Thomas (forest technician) observed a large column of smoke nearby. Upon investigation, he discovered the smoke was from a local sawmill owner

burning a pile of slabs. The operator was informed of the 4PM burning law, however the burning pile was much too large to extinguish and the fire was not in danger of escaping. The operator told Kenny that in the past he sold the slabs to a local chip mill that is no longer in business. A thought occurred to Kenny that some of the local loggers with in-woods chippers might be interested in buying and selling the slabs to the Virginia City Hybrid Energy Center. Kenny was able to connect the sawmill operator with a local logger interested in chipping the slabs. The result was no more burning and the logger and the sawmill owner will add a little money to their pockets for a usable forest product.

- ◆ While suppressing a wildfire in Botetourt County, Johnny Vest (natural resources specialist) and Joey Wirt (firefighter) rescued two baby squirrels from a burning snag. Vest made arrangements with SWVA Wildlife Center to care for the orphan squirrels. (pictured)



- ◆ Andrew Fotinos (forest conservation specialist) was guest lecturer for DSLCC forestry students. He spoke on Land/Forest Conservation in Virginia to a group of about 10 students. The entire class was held over ZOOM video conference and students were more engaged than ever.

- ◆ Brian Ledford (natural resources specialist), William Neff and Kenny Thomas (forest technicians) assisted the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Program in March with a prescribed burn in Lee County. The prescribed burn was for the maintenance of approximately 18 acres of warm season grasses. (pictured)



- ◆ Chris Thomsen (regional forester) assisted the owners of Glenburn Farms in Vinton, Virginia with planting American chestnut seedlings on their property. The farm, purchased in 1938, initially raised livestock, but overtime the owners became active in the management of their forest resources. In recent years, the farm has been developing their eco-tourism appeal and has become a popular conference and wedding venue.

- ◆ Clint Folks (area forester), Grayson Coleman and Cole Young



(forest technicians) maintained their social distance while planting live stakes at the AFC. Willow whips were purchased from the Shenandoah Soil and Water Conservation District and cut into 10-inch live stakes. Root growth hormone was added and the stakes were planted along the banks of the South River and the main tributary that flows through the nursery to the South River. Several weeks ago, staff at the nursery removed autumn olive bushes and other unwanted trees along the

creek; the live stakes were planted as a means to re-establish native vegetation along the stream banks to protect water quality and provide wildlife habitat. (pictured)

Public Information

- ◆ The public information team has been creating video content for educators and parents to use as teaching tools during the statewide shut-down. Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) and Page Hutchinson (PLT coordinator) created content for two environmental education activities from PLT curriculum for families to use at home.
- ◆ Raina provided guidance to Jesse Bander (forest technician) on a "career day" video that features his work in the field. These resources (and more to come) will be shared on social media and our website.
- ◆ Active PLT facilitators (all volunteers) are being thanked by getting a shirt with an embroidered PLT logo to wear when they facilitate a workshop. Each facilitator was allowed to choose the color they wanted and they're a colorful bunch! Overwhelmingly the favorite color was "Maui Blue". Are they trying to tell us something? Shirts arrived and have been individually packaged and are ready for mailing.

