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**Employee Spotlight**

***Clint Folks, Grayson Coleman, Cole Young and Patty, Jake and Emma Nylander – Thank You!***

- ◆ Below is an email received from landowner Mr. Walter Burnett thankful for services provided by Clint Folks (area forester) and his crew. During their day together, Mr. Burnett said he was happy to pay his taxes knowing that it ss what pays for the work that Clint is doing for him and his property.
  - “I want to thank you for coming with all your crew to plant my riverside field. High water did come two days after you were here, but only went into the field a little ways with no damage and is of course back to normal. I feel blessed to have your team helping me with my farm. Clint has been terrific and is a wonderful communicator and keeps me informed of all that I am able to do to improve my forest. You guys are tops in my world. Take care and Kit and I hope to see you again.”
- ◆ Utilizing Joint Chiefs funding for the Lower Cowpasture Watershed, Clint Folks worked with a Bath County landowner to enhance a riparian buffer in a field next to the Cowpasture River. Due to the location, this particular area was not eligible for other cost-share programs, so Clint developed a species list and coordinated the tree planting. Joined by his planting crew of Grayson Coleman and Cole Young (forest technicians), Patti Nylander (senior area forester), Jake and Emma Nylander (junior conservationists), Todd Groh (forest resource management program coordinator) and Dean Cumbia (director forest resource management), while maintaining social distancing, they planted approximately 1,100 hardwoods and pines. Two days later the field was hit by minor flooding, but both

the trees and shelters stood firm and sustained no damage. Thank you to everyone who participated in this project!

## Project Updates

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### *Urban Wood Project Update*

- ◆ Here is a bit of good economic news among these dreary days of a COVID economy! We have contacted about a half dozen local/urban wood producers from across Virginia and all of them said they have been very busy. Some are still trying to complete their backlog of orders while others are receiving new orders.
- ◆ Two of the businesses have started marketing DIY (do-it-yourself) wood project kits and they seem to be very popular in the more suburban/urban areas. After all, there are thousands of people sitting at home looking for things to do.
- ◆ One of the businesses had to reduce staffing due to the size of his shop since he could not attain comfortable social distancing in the workplace. However, he said he is about to move into a new, larger workshop and is hopeful he would be bringing back the furloughed workers.
- ◆ Interestingly enough, this seems to be following a pattern of small, local, wood, landscaping and agricultural businesses being very busy during these COVID days. It has also been reported that wood sales for landscape timbers and wood fencing products have greatly increased -- again, likely due to the fact that folks have time on their hands to do home/farm projects.

## Last Week

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### *State Forester*

- ◆ Rob Farrell has been working with stakeholders to identify candidates for the Board of Forestry open seats representing hardwood lumber and small landowners.
- ◆ VDOF staff continues to be an integral component of the COV-IMT that is managing the response to the pandemic. The B Team began their second rotation late last week and will continue on the IMT until they are again replaced by A Team in about 10 days.
- ◆ VDEM has indicated the COV-IMT will continue to be activated for at least another 90 days and possibly through October 1. VDOF will continue to support the effort with 8-12 personnel per team for as long as it remains active.

### *Forest Resource Management*

- ◆ Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) crews have completed measurement of nearly 51 percent of the current panel of inventory plots. Additionally, these have been transmitted to the US Forest Service (USFS). This eight percent accomplishment is right in line with what we need to measure monthly. Special thanks to the FIA crews for maintaining this good level of production despite challenges due to the current situation.
- ◆ The 2018 FIA data has been posted to the internet for users, and a copy of the 2018 FIA tables has been placed on the Common drive (H):/FIA folder.
- ◆ Todd Groh (forest resource management program coordinator) and Dean Cumbia communicated with Ebonie Alexander of the Black Family Land Trust (BFLT) on April 27 to discuss working together to reach and engage traditionally underserved landowners. This work is supported by a grant from the USFS and the US Endowment for Forests and Communities and is focused in eight counties in Southside and Southeast Virginia. VDOF field staff have done good work in assisting landowners

through preparation of forest management plans and implementation of forest management projects. Additionally, BFLT reports two new Century Forest landowners, one new Certified Tree Farmer, two families with riparian forest buffer tax credits in association with the Enviva program, and one landowner who is serving on the Board of the American Forest Foundation. The grant runs through the end of September and we look forward to continued work together.

- ◆ The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). On April 29, FSA announced a new program called, CLEAR30. The goal of the program is to assist landowners who are currently enrolled in the CREP program in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, by extending their existing contracts to 30 years. This will provide them additional incentives and help assure that the conservation benefits of these buffers will be long lasting. <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Virginia/news-releases/2020/usdas-new-crp-pilot-program-offers-longer-term-conservation-benefits>. VDOF has significant involvement with the CREP program and participating landowners, providing technical service and assistance.
- ◆ Forest management staff are working collaboratively with field and headquarters staff on several facets of riparian forest buffer implementation. Becky Woodson (forest management programs coordinator) has assisted on the purchasing and contracting side for both the James River Buffer program and the Joint Chiefs, Lower Cowpasture river projects. Todd Groh has finalized procedures, and has answered initial inquiries regarding the Mountains to Bay buffer initiative in the Shenandoah Valley. Todd Groh and Dean Cumbia assisted the Mountain Valley Team with a riparian buffer planting project on the Lower Cowpasture River. And finally, Dean Cumbia and Deya Ramsden (Middle James River forest watershed project coordinator) visited several buffer sites and discussed programs, options and recommendations.
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) and Jerre Creighton (forest research program manager) taught a virtual class on non-native invasive plant control to the Piedmont Master Gardener Trainees. The webinar was attended by 45 people.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist), Matt Wolanski (Shenandoah senior area forester) and Lori Chamberlin treated 30 hemlock trees at First Mountain State Forest to protect them from the hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive insect that causes hemlock mortality. This was the second day of treatment. In total, 97 hemlocks were treated at First Mountain State Forest.

## Agency Lands

- ◆ Jerre Creighton the research report Effects of Different Levels of Utilization on Long-Term Site Productivity. The report has been printed in the latest issue of the Virginia Loggers Association newsletter and can be found on page 16 through the following link: <https://www.valoggers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/VLA-FEB-Newsletter-2020-REDUCED-3-min.pdf>
- ◆ Another research report, Effects of Early Pruning on Ring Specific Gravity in Young Loblolly Pine Trees, has been published and can be found on the H drive under the Creighton folder, file name: Burkhardt and Amateis 2020 Early Pruning WFS.pdf. Half of the plots for this study are located on Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest.
- ◆ Dennis Gaston (eastern area state forests manager), along with Eastern Region personnel, assisted State Lands with timber cruising at Southampton Correctional Center. Dennis also met with a Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Conservation Officer concerning the possible installation of surveillance cameras on state forests.
- ◆ Mike Womack (Appomattox-Buckingham & Prince Edward-Gallion state forest manager) served on the VDOF COVID-19 IMT response to assist VDEM/EOC.
- ◆ State Police dog training was conducted at Dragon Run and Sandy Point State Forests.

- ◆ Augusta Forestry Center personnel had to remove their irrigation pump due to rising level of the South River from recent rains.

## Eastern Region

- ◆ Bike Walk RVA set up a [tree scavenger hunt](#) around the City of Richmond to encourage folks to get outside, get moving and learn about trees. Bike Walk RVA will plant a new tree for anyone who visits all 12 trees in the month of May. Eli Podyma (community forest specialist) assisted with site selection, and VDOF is helping to sponsor planting stock.
- ◆ VDOF staff assisted Judy Okay (master gardener) to plant an urban project at Powhatan State Park. This was a volunteer project led by Judy Okay. The planting was to be cancelled because of COVID-19, leaving just two Department of Conservation & Recreation staff to plant the trees by themselves. Doug Audley (area forester), Jack Coyer (forest technician), Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry program manager), Molly O’Liddy (urban & community forestry partnership coordinator) volunteered to help plant to 350 trees while following COVID-19 restrictions and meeting social distancing guidelines. (pictured)



## Western Region

- ◆ Aaron Rosenbalm and Rocky Wood (forest technicians) returned to some recent fire sites and stabilized fire lines to protect water quality. Their work also helped landowners with water diversion issues.
- ◆ While assisting a 90-year-old landowner with tree identification and a tree health issue, Greg Estoll (senior area forester) further helped his customer by jump starting her car. She was very grateful for both assists – she noted that she needed to go take care of her sister after their field visit and would have otherwise been unable to do so.

## Public Information

- ◆ During this extended time of working at home with no travel, Page Hutchinson (Project Learning Tree coordinator) has been working on the formatting of the *Virginia Supplemental Activity Guide* to the Project Learning Tree (PLT) *K-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide*. Two years ago, Virginia PLT worked with two Advance Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) science teachers from York County Public Schools. Their students divided into small teams and chose a general PLT activity and made it Virginia specific (i.e. Invasive Species.) Their activities were field tested with middle and elementary students and revised. These lessons have needed to be edited and formatted for a printed booklet, which Page hopes will soon be completed and ready for print.
- ◆ Social media this week continues to promote forests and drinking water (#DrinkingWaterWeek, #ForestsToFaucets) and air quality awareness.
- ◆ The revised Tree ID books arrive this week.

## News Clips

- ◆ [Virginia nursery seedlings are fortifying forests’ futures](#)
- ◆ [Editorial: Protecting land, water should be a national priority](#)
- ◆ [What Everyone’s Getting Wrong About the Toilet Paper Shortage](#)