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Employee News

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Mike Santucci (forestland conservation program manager) resigned his position with the agency to pursue a career change. Mike’s contributions to securing great conservation easements and the Generation NEXT program will stand as testament to his commitment and care towards the forests of Virginia. His leadership in our program and to our partners will be missed. We wish Mike well in his new endeavor. Mike’s departure during the COVID-19 period provides an opportunity for VDOF to pause new land conservation activities for the rest of 2020 and reevaluate our approach to forestland conservation in order to guide recruitment of a new program leader.

Thank You

- ◆ Thank You to Charlie Becker (utilization and marketing program manager) for his assistance along with Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) on the Central State Hospital Property in Dinwiddie County. Charlie and Ed have been working with the Virginia Department of General Services staff and the Architectural & Engineering Team designing the new Central State Hospital to be built on the property. The footprint of the hospital requires the harvesting of approximately 25 acres of existing forest. Some of the trees were recently marked to be utilized in the construction of the new hospital through urban wood project vendors to hopefully make some conference table tops and benches for the completed facility. The overall timber sale will be sold through the State-Owned Lands Program.
- ◆ Thank You to Jeremy Falkenau (senior area forester) and Bryant Bays (regional forester) for coordination of the Pre-Harvest meeting prior to the harvest starting on the Eastern State Hospital State Lands Project.
- ◆ Thank You to Zach Olinger (forest management & education specialist), Joe Boswell (senior area forester), and David Tompkins (forest technician) for their assistance in cruising 49 acres of timber on the Catawba Hospital State-Owned Lands project in Roanoke County; the mature hardwood stand was identified through an updated State Lands Management Plan by Denny McCarthy (area forester). During the cruise, personnel discussed opportunities and strategies for hardwood regeneration including the possible pre-harvest treatment for invasive species, as well as, pre- and post-harvest activities to favor oak and hickory over poplar and maple.

Training Opportunity

Pesticide Applicator Recertification Credits

- ◆ The Annual Nutrient Vegetation Management Workshop was cancelled due to COVID-19 but has been rescheduled as a webinar June 4, 9 am to 4 pm.
 - You must attend the entire webinar to receive credits, so a good internet connection and reliable power source are needed.
 - Pre-registration is required by June 1. After you register, you will receive the login information in a follow-up email. This information will give you direct access to join the webinar on June 4th.
 - There have been some difficulties with Internet Explorer, so use Chrome to register at https://virginiatech.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_aUsYCnE3RhaTeQF0UW22MQ. Contact [Lori Chamberlin](#) with questions.

News You Can Use

Health Assessment Deadline Extended for Premium Rewards

- ◆ In an effort to advance employee wellness and also maximize employee savings, COVA Care and COVA HealthAware members will have **until May 29** to complete a health assessment in order to receive a Premium Reward beginning July 1.
- ◆ Participants must complete a health assessment with your **current** plan administrator. This includes employees who requested a plan change during Open Enrollment from one eligible premium reward plan to the other. The premium reward for July 1 will apply to your new enrollment.

Emerald Ash Borer Treatment Kits

- ◆ Regional emerald ash borer (EAB) treatment kits will be distributed in late May for treating ash on state lands. Ash treatment season has now begun, so please let [Meredith Bean](#) know if you find the

opportunity to inject some trees! The IFRIS time code for all EAB work (treatment and cost-share applications) is "Grants/Funds - Dedicated" --> "Grand Slam 19LaSR". There are two different Accomplishments in IFRIS: "EAB Treatment" for ash treatments on state land, and "Cost Share Plan/Application" for EAB cost-share work.

Removing Assets from IFRIS

- ◆ If you have items that need to be removed from your inventory, please submit Form 26 Damaged, Lost or Stolen Property Certificate, to the Regional Foresters/State Forests Manager/Nursery Centers Manager for review and approval. Once approved, forms will be routed to Finance for removal from IFRIS. To ensure the reviewer has access to all information needed to approve your request, please document the reason for removal of the item.

Project Updates

Revised VDOF website

- ◆ A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued on May 11 to request proposals to develop a new agency website. The RFP was issued to vendors who are currently on a state-wide contract to perform similar work for state agencies which will shorten the time it takes to make an award. Proposals are due to the agency later this month and an award in early June is anticipated. This has been a priority of the agency and we're excited to be making progress toward a new website. The team reviewing the website proposals and making a recommendation are Parik Patel, Janet Muncy, Michelle Stoll, and John Colligan.

Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ One of the unique features of the urban wood movement is the wide variety of species being used by crafters. Over the past few years we have seen conference tables made from boxelder, sycamore flooring and shelving, and smaller, decorative tables made from red cedar slabs.
- ◆ The same can be said about the tree-of-heaven bench that sits in our headquarters building (see photo below). In 2006, due to the innovative thinking of Charlie Becker, this bench was created as part of a research project to determine commercial uses of *Ailanthus altissima*.
- ◆ The bench was built by David Bohnhoff from Goochland County. Over the past fourteen years, David has continued to refine his skills and expand his marketing, emerging as one of the premier crafters in the Richmond area. David was recently featured in R-Home magazine as a "Master Craftsman". Interestingly enough, VDOF's James Garner building was mentioned in the article as a place to view a Bohnhoff original. Contact information for David Bohnhoff can be found in the Urban and Small Woodlot Forestry Business Directory >> (www.vurbanwoodhelp.org)



Last Week

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ In the April 27th Branch email, Rob Farrell also shared an update on Virginia's Hardwood Initiative. This is a multi-faceted initiative, working with stakeholders, and developing expertise in hardwood management. One practice for improving growth and development of hardwood stands is "Crop Tree Release" or "Crown Release," where the best trees are identified in young hardwood stands, and competing trees that touch the crown (top) of the crop tree are removed on at least three sides. This is a practice that can be easily done by landowners, or contractors. On Friday, May 8, Jason Fisher, Virginia Tech Natural Resource Extension Agent in Halifax Virginia, hosted a ["Fifteen Minutes in the Forest: Crop Tree Release"](#) webinar. The webinar outlined why and how to do crop tree release and included a message from Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management branch) about the Hardwood Initiative. The ["Fifteen Minutes in the Forest Series"](#) airs every Friday at noon, with past topics of Timber Sales and future topics on bottomland hardwoods and invasive plants. VDOF supports the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program at Virginia Tech through Forest Stewardship Funding and cooperative working relationships.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist), Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) and Matt Wolanski (Shenandoah senior area forester) treated 39 hemlocks at Paul State Forest to protect them from the hemlock woolly adelgid. This is part of our ongoing effort to protect endangered tree species on state land with both chemical and biological control.
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin, Katlin DeWitt and Dean Cumbia measured plots at Lesesne State Forest that had been grazed by goats last summer. The forest health staff conducted a case study in 2019 to assess goats as a tool to remove invasive plant species. Initial grazing was followed by either a second round of grazing or chemical control. The plot that received herbicide treatment after goat grazing appears to have the best invasive plant control.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center completed approximately two-thirds of their loblolly pine field seeding with a target of 32 million seedlings produced. Following completion of the field planting, the containerized seeding of loblolly and longleaf pine will begin.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) established field studies to evaluate survival and early growth of loblolly pine seedlings packaged in bags versus the nursery's traditional open-ended bundles. VA Best seedlings lifted in early March were stored in both types of packaging. They were planted between April 6-8 in a replicated study design at Garland Gray Forestry Center, Dragon Run State Forest, and an industry tract near Appomattox. After one month in the field, survival is 100 percent and every seedling has initiated growth, ranging from swollen or expanded buds to several inches of stem elongation. There is no difference between the packing/storage methods thus far.
- ◆ Augusta Forestry Center continues to periodically irrigate some of the seedling beds to prevent damage to germinated seedlings from cold temperatures. The staff is conducting routine field maintenance and has treated seed in preparation of their pine seeding.

Central Region

- ◆ B.J. Butler (area forester) and Martha Warring (senior area forester) met with Peter Agelasto of the Rockfish Valley Foundation and Deya Ramsden (Middle James River forest watershed project coordinator) to see what projects could be completed through the James River Buffer Program. The area in consideration is along the South Fork of the Rockfish River and the Rockfish River Trail.

Improvement of the riparian buffer as well as an opportunity for education about riparian buffers, trout habitat and the importance of forests would be some of the outcomes of the project.

- ◆ Drew Arnn (senior area forester) attended an interactive webinar/conference call with Colonial and Plantation Pipelines. The purpose of the web meeting was to help inform responders and emergency personnel that interact with pipeline right-of-ways about emergency protocols and lessons learned during an actual incident. These existing pipelines traverse the counties in the Dan River work area.

Western Region

- ◆ Shawn Lindsey, Executive Director of Spearhead Trails, was recognized by the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals with an Individual Service Award for his outstanding contributions in Virginia's coalfields. Shawn has added hundreds of miles of trail to the network in just three years, inspiring creative change and driving economic development in seven coalfield counties in Virginia. In an email sent to his colleagues and partners, Shawn recognized and shared his appreciation for the relationships built with several Virginia conservation agencies including VDOF. Spearhead Trails received two bulldozers, one transport, and two pickup trucks from VDOF during the last two-plus years. Additionally, Western Region staff have also worked with Shawn and his crew on fire prevention in this area and have used the trails to provide ATV and UTV training to our employees. We are honored to have contributed to Spearhead Trail's ability to make a difference in this part of Virginia, and congratulate Shawn for his well-deserved recognition.

State-Owned Lands

- ◆ The Southampton State-Owned Lands Timber Sale is currently advertised on the VDOF web site under the Business Center tab. The harvest was split into two sales consisting of mostly pine sawtimber and pulpwood found on the Southampton Correctional Property. Thank you to Scott Bachman (senior area forester) for his assistance in developing the Invitation For Bids (IFB) and contracts.

Public Information

- ◆ Michelle Stoll (public information director) participated in the Southern Group of State Foresters Communications Committee call last week.
- ◆ VDOF's COVID-19 guidance is included in the resources provided by Global Fire Monitoring System ([LANDSCAPE FIRE MANAGEMENT AT TIMES OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC](#))

News Clips

- ◆ [Caroline County Public Schools distributes tree saplings along with lunches](#)
- ◆ [Tractor catches fire in Appomattox County field](#)