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Employee Spotlight

Incident Management Team (IMT) – Job Well Done!

- ◆ Our Incident Management Team (IMT) members continue to distinguish themselves and the agency with their superior level of work on multiple crises. Over the past week they have continued to lead the planning efforts for the COVID-19 response and have been engaged in helping Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) plan for the upcoming hurricane season. Now they have added

the First Amendment Demonstration incident to their plate and continue to lead the Commonwealth with their competence and commitment.

John Miller received this thank you note from an executive at VDEM:

- *“I just wanted to touch base to say thank you. The level of professionalism that your team has brought to their support of the VEST has been fantastic. I truly appreciate your partnership and look forward to working with you in the future.”*

*Michelle Tilley Oblinsky, CEM, VaPEM
Virginia Emergency Support Team Director
Virginia Department of Emergency Management*

John also added this note to the team members:

- *“The thank you from Michelle Oblinsky at VDEM is much deserved for each of you! Each of you have been asked to step into a role previously unfamiliar to you, where you were expected to immediately perform at a high level, working in a virtual environment, to address the state impacts of a global pandemic, assuming a much higher level of responsibility than I would have ever imagined ... for 75 days and counting!!!
As I just mentioned to Team 1 on their AAR call, marking the end of their third deployment, each of you have actually done such a good job that I really am not sure that VDEM will ever let us go!!!
Finally, let me also take this chance to offer each of you my own thanks for doing such a great job. Each of you has stepped up to set an IMT mark in Virginia – far beyond anything anyone expected outside of our agency ... and, unfortunately, due to the civil unrest and potential hurricane threat that lies ahead, things only continue to expand! Great job IMT members!”*

Employee News

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Matthew Hall (Heartland area forester) has resigned his position on June 1 to pursue a new opportunity. Best of luck on your new adventure.
- ◆ Robert Howell (Shenandoah area forester) has resigned his position on June 5 to pursue a new opportunity. Best of luck on your new adventure.

Project Updates

Policy and Procedures

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 7-5 VDOF Services and Equipment for Landowners](#) - All of the Forest Resource Management Policy and Procedures are now complete and posted on the intranet. The final one to be posted is P&P 7-5 VDOF Services and Equipment for Forest Landowners. As the title states this policy and procedures document identifies the services and equipment that are available at no cost and for a fee to landowners. The procedures state how VDOF staff will manage rental equipment, such as planting machines and sod scalpers, as well as offering services like timber marking and tree planting coordination. Additionally, it outlines how to encourage and interact with private forestry service providers. If you have forest management questions that aren't addressed in the procedures, please contact your senior area forester (SAF), deputy regional forester (DRF), or forest resource management branch staff.

Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ Last fall's American chestnut salvage harvest at the Lesesne State Forest (Nelson Co.) continues to provide beneficial outreach opportunities. Recently, Anson Parker, a member of both the Charlottesville Tree Commission and the University of Virginia (UVA)'s urban wood team, laser engraved American chestnut tree cookies as outreach tools for the VA Urban Wood Project. (pictured)



- ◆ The Virginia Urban Wood Project has been partnering with the UVA faculty by providing American chestnut samples which they will use for instructional purposes. In case you might have missed it in last week's Branch, here is a link to a recent article about UVA's urban wood team and the construction of a solar kiln for drying lumber from trees that had to be removed from the grounds: <https://news.virginia.edu/content/class-2020-students-project-will-make-sun-dried-lumber-available-grounds>
- ◆ The entire article and pictures can be viewed by using the following link: https://www.dnronline.com/dnronline/urban-wood-grants-new-life-to-old-lumber/article_2b035d3a-5d6d-5420-a783-5d3705fa14c3.html

Website

- ◆ The project to overhaul the VDOP website is moving into full gear. We received responses from two companies who are on a VITA approved contract that are interested in working with us to develop our new website. We are in the process of thoroughly reviewing the proposals to ensure we not only have a partner with the right technical expertise, but also someone who will listen to us and help us develop a robust and interactive web presence that VDOP can use as a tool to support our programs and services and communicate with all of our constituencies. We anticipate contracting with one of the companies in the next couple of weeks and after that quickly moving into development of the new site.
- ◆ In addition, the agency staffed web working group is gathering the programmatic and other information from across the agency needed to ensure we have complete and accurate information to post to the new site. We will continue to provide regular updates as the project moves ahead.

Coming Up

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Cost-Share Deadline

- ◆ Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Cost-share Program application deadline is right around the corner, **June 22!** We are still accepting applications up to this deadline, but not all applications will be approved this year. By the end of May, 117 applications were submitted, totaling \$61,096 in requested assistance to treat 333 trees (10,971 Diameter Breast Height inches). The EAB committee is working hard to rank efficiently and approve wisely, but some hard decisions will have to be made, as the total cost-share budget is \$60,000 this year.

News You Can Use

Office of the Attorney General (OAG) Meeting

- ◆ We recently met with our Assistant Attorney General and her staff to formalize a monthly conference call and new tracking sheet for the matters submitted by VDOF to the Attorney General's office. Both the OAG's office and the agency believe this will help to improve communications as well as ensuring that agency priority matters are understood.
- ◆ As part of this new process all requests for review or input from the OAG's office will go through the chain of command to the appropriate member of the executive leadership team before being submitted to the OAG. This will ensure the agency knows what has been assigned for OAG review and allow us to better track the status of requests.
- ◆ This new process goes into effect immediately. Meetings with the OAG are scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month. The first meeting is Tuesday June 9.
- ◆ Please talk to your member of the executive leadership team if you have any questions or concerns.

Items of Note

Final Health Care Premiums

- ◆ The Department of Human Resource Management is pleased to announce the final health care premiums for the 2020-2021 plan year. The Commonwealth of Virginia state employee plan rates will remain the same as the current year. There will be no increases in rates! To find premiums for 2020-2021, click on: [Final Premiums 2020-21](#)

The 17-year cicadas are back!

- ◆ The 17-year cicadas are back! Annual cicadas emerge every summer, but periodical cicadas spend more than a decade underground and emerge in synchrony every 13 to 17 years. Each brood covers a specific geographic area, and this year Brood IX is emerging in southwest Virginia. Read this Virginia Cooperative Extension article for more information: https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2020/05/CALS-periodical_cicada_2020.html

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ The Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute is proud to share the news that one of VDOF's important partners, Ebonie Alexander, has been named the 2020 McCarthy Award recipient. The award is presented annually to an individual who has taken a leadership role in preserving and protecting Virginia's environment by fostering collaboration and conflict resolution. Ebonie is distinguished by her skills and accomplishments in conflict resolution, specifically her work navigating the interests involved in garnering support for the [Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act \(UPHPA\)](#) and her career dedicated to advocacy on behalf of underserved communities. In the fall of 2019, the Virginia Department of Forestry entered into an agreement with the Black Family Land Trust (BFLT), signed by Executive Director Ms. Alexander and State Forester Rob Farrell. The purpose of the agreement was to focus efforts on land retention by resolving heirs property issues, forest management planning and implementation of active forestry practices on properties of African American ownership in an eight-county area of southern Virginia. Through a multi-state grant from the U. S. Forest Service, VDOF is supporting BFLT in their efforts to reach out to landowners to enhance and improve their forestlands. Additional support for practice implementation by the USDA Natural

Resources Conservation Service and matching support by the U. S. Endowment for Forests and Communities has resulted in more engaged landowners and improved management for dozens of landowners in the focus area.

- ◆ Below is a note received from Tiffany Severs (Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) director of enforcement division)
 - *“I am writing today to both say thank you, and to acknowledge the work DCR, DOF, EPA, and USACE put in to assist DEQ in restoration efforts at Quarles Pond, and ultimately to bring resolve to this enforcement case.*
A brief history, which started on March 24, 2006, after a tip for the Department of Forestry, DEQ staff and representatives of the USACE, Department of Conservation and Recreation-Department of Natural Heritage Resources (DCR-DNH) conducted a site inspection at Quarles Pond in Stuarts Draft, Virginia. Quarles Pond was the largest sinkhole pond, unique to the Shenandoah Valley, and was believed to be around 15,000 years old. As a result of filling, excavating, and impacts to the wetlands at the site, DEQ executed a Consent Order that required payment of \$145,000 civil charge, and a plan to restore the area. Over the next 10+ years, DEQ conducted inspections to track progress towards fulfillment of the CAP. On May 13, 2020, DEQ conducted an inspection. The results indicated that the restoration efforts were consistently above the 80% threshold during monitoring events, hydrology remained stable, and had consistently met the CAP criteria. The results of the 2019-year ten monitoring activities demonstrate that the wetland restoration areas at Quarles Pond have successfully fulfilled the requirements of the Final CAP.
As this enforcement case is resolved for DEQ, I wanted to take the time recognize the team effort from each of you and your respective agencies, and to once again say thank you.”

Fire Emergency and Response:

- ◆ June 1 marked the 75th day of the VDOF’s IMT virtual deployment in support of the state Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The agency’s IMT is providing planning assistance and support of the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST), working out of the state EOC. The IMT currently produces the periodic Incident Support Plan, which is used by VDEM to capture and share all of the information related to the ongoing activities of the state EOC, as well as providing leadership for the various branches working to support state operations. In addition to specific efforts focused on the Commonwealth’s COVID-19 response, the VDOF’s IMT members have also filled tasks assisting VDEM with hurricane preparations ahead of the 2020 season, as well as providing one Deputy Operations Chief to support the state response to recent civil unrest events.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry coordinator) and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forester) worked with City of Virginia Beach staff to locate pumpkin ash, a rare species in Virginia, in Stumpy Lake. These trees will be treated later this year to save the seed source of this rare species.
- ◆ Lara Johnson attended the virtual Council for Environmental Justice meeting as a representative for VDOF. The council was finalizing their report and recommendations for 2020.
- ◆ Charlie Becker (utilization & marketing program manager), Rodney Newlin (water quality engineer) and Jim Pugh (GIS/remote sensing analyst) participated in a conference call with Tracy Tynan and Jay Willmott with Center for Innovative Technology (CIT). The purpose was to try to identify potential pilot projects utilizing unmanned systems related to forests/natural resources to assist businesses or economic development in Virginia.
- ◆ Charlie Becker reviewed updates to the Timber Supply Analysis program that now includes states bordering the 13 southern states. This update now allows ability to look at timber supplies that

companies may be interested in that occur in non-southern states. The updated version is now publicly available at: <https://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/tsa/>

- ◆ The annual summary of volumes and estimated values for Virginia timber harvests for Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) (July 2018 to June 2019), based on the Forest Products Tax data has been completed. The total harvested volume in FY19 declined by 4.5 percent, and the total estimated stumpage values (the value paid to landowners for the standing trees) declined by 2.6 percent. The results show that during the last few years the estimated total value of timber harvested has decreased. The likely drivers for this decrease are the loss of markets for high value hardwood products due to trade issues and the abundant supply of pine timber. Pine sawtimber harvest volume was at record level at over 880 million board feet. As usual, the top counties for harvest volumes were Brunswick, Southampton, Halifax, Charlotte, Pittsylvania, Sussex, Buckingham, Mecklenburg, Lunenburg and Campbell. The top counties for estimated harvest values were Brunswick, Southampton, Charlotte, Louisa, Mecklenburg, Halifax, Buckingham, Pittsylvania, Franklin and Lunenburg. The total estimated stumpage value received by Virginia forest landowners for their timber in FY19 was more than \$324 million, slightly below previous year values.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ VDOF Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) crews have completed and transmitted 59 percent of the inventory plots in the current panel of work as of June 1 (FIA staff had completed 51 percent as of May 1).
- ◆ Meredith Bean (emerald ash borer coordinator) released parasitoid wasps at Montpelier as biological control of the emerald ash borer. She also coordinated the release of parasitoids at Highland Grayson State Park in southwest Virginia. These releases will continue throughout the summer in an effort to establish a population of parasitoids that will combat the invasive emerald ash borer and protect the next generation of ash trees.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Mike Womack (Appomattox-Buckingham & Prince Edward-Gallion state forest manager) continues to serve on the VDOF COVID-19 IMT response to assist VDEM/EOC.
- ◆ Jonathan Fosbury, a senior at James Madison University submitted his thesis, *Surveying First Mountain State Forest for the Restoration of Brook Trout in Boone's Run in Rockingham County, Virginia*, to the Geographic Science program regarding Jonathan's capstone course which captured professional grade GPS data for all the trails, streams and points of interest on the First Mountain State Forest.
- ◆ K9 Alert conducted training at Sandy Point State Forest.

Central Region

- ◆ B.J. Butler (area forester) assisted Lynchburg City in treating several trees for emerald ash borer. Sara Hagan (previously with VDOF, now the Lynchburg City Arborist) headed up the project. Several news outlets covered the event and links to the various news stories are included below:
 - [Lynchburg to Protect Historic Ash Trees](#)
 - [Lynchburg Working to Save Ash Trees Across City](#)
 - [Treating Ash Against Beetles](#)

Eastern Region

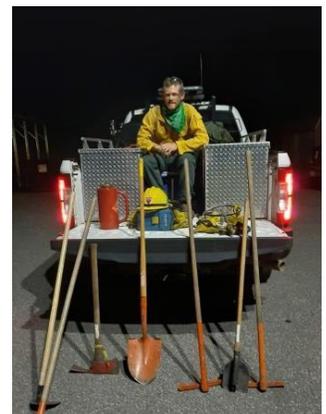
- ◆ Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forester) delivered an American chestnut hybrid seedling to Michelle Bandanza, Curator of Herbaceous Plants at the Norfolk Botanical Garden. The tree will be placed in the garden with an identifying sign. According to Jerre Creighton (research program manager), this seedling is from one of the best phenotypes on the Lesesne State Forest. Through a series of crosses of the original seedlings from Connecticut, we have produced a tree with many of the characteristics of American chestnut and some level of resistance to the chestnut blight. This tree will be cared for by the staff of the Botanical Garden and perhaps one day will develop with American chestnut form and resistance to the disease. We are sure that the Gardens will keep the VDOF posted on the growth of this seedling. (pictured)



- ◆ Meghan Mulroy-Goldman delivered her Community Forest plan for the Nolan Trail park. This nearly 470-acre privately owned park (300 acres is wooded) is open to the public (during non-pandemic times!) It is highly utilized for walking, birding, running and getting away from the noise of the city. The plan addresses forest health, invasive species and water resource protection, as well as some active timber management. The park managers, like all private landowners, are concerned about finances. The plan has recommendations for harvest and reforestation with diminished species. It is hoped that a harvest and reforestation could be an educational opportunity for the park users.

Western Region

- ◆ Aaron Rosenbalm and Rocky Wood (forest technicians) assisted Russell County Public Service Authority with reclaiming an old school site for future use as a campground. The site had a lot of rubble that needed smoothing out and then fill dirt was spread over the top. Not only did Aaron and Rocky help our county partners, but their efforts provided needed exercise time for our area dozers.
- ◆ Chad Austin (forest engineer and Carroll County resident) was asked by local officials to serve on their Land Use Committee evaluating the future of land use in Carroll County. At their first scheduled meeting he shared a PowerPoint presentation (developed by Dean Cumbia, director forest resource management) with the committee and answered questions regarding the importance of forestry, forest management and harvesting. The consensus of the group is to maintain land use, if fiscally possible, for forestry and agriculture, but the committee will meet again to discuss possible changes in per-acre values. Their ultimate decision will be sent to the Board of Supervisors this summer and put to a vote.
- ◆ As Stay-at-Home Restrictions eased, Bedford County Fire & Rescue resumed their FF1 Training for 2020. David Tompkins (forest technician) assisted Richard Miles (Bedford County Fire & Rescue - Wildland Division and VDOF retiree) in conducting the Ground Fire Training Module for 15 recruits. Engine 608,



BED 50 tractor-pLOW, and a VDOF pickup were provided for Show & Tell Learning. Social distancing practices were observed by splitting into smaller groups, spreading out, minimizing touch-points, and hand washing. Gene-Paul Matson and Todd Ramsey (long time P-14 FF) assisted in the instruction. (pictured)

News Clips

- ◆ [Conservation group plots solar potential for retired Appalachian coal mine land](#)
- ◆ [Proctor: Community revitalization as a catalyst for conservation in the Clinch River Valley of Southwest Virginia](#)
- ◆ [Virginia study finds Rockingham County farmers are behind livestock fencing goals](#)
- ◆ [Lynchburg City treats ash trees as invasive beetle infestation continues](#)
- ◆ [What happens when freshwater fish hook up with forests?](#)
- ◆ [STATE FORESTERS SUPPORT \\$3B STIMULUS TO PUT FOREST ACTION PLAN WORK INTO OVERDRIVE](#)
- ◆ [Wood the material of choice at schools](#)
- ◆ [Southern forests: A resource worth protecting](#)
- ◆ [Nine-story mass timber apartment complex to be country's largest wood building](#)
- ◆ [COVID-19 is putting the world's forests at risk - here's how](#)
- ◆ [Lumber industry highlights job opportunities in essential industry](#)
- ◆ [EPA Could Face Suits on State Bay Plans](#)
- ◆ [Can forest therapy enhance health and well-being?](#)