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Employee News

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ **Harvey Darden** (director of agency lands) is retiring from VDOF after 12 years of service. June 26 will be his last day of work. Congratulations Harvey, enjoy your retirement.
- ◆ **Greg Evans** (voluntary mitigation coordinator) is retiring from VDOF as of July 1 with seven years of service. Congratulations Greg, enjoy your retirement.

Thank You

- ◆ The Southampton Corrections Timber Sale #1 and #2 bid opening was June 9 at New Kent. Both sales had two bidders with the winning bid for both sales being Robert E Carroll Logging, Inc. at a total purchase price of \$192,826.00. **Thank you** to several Eastern Region staff, specifically Scott Bachman (senior area forester), Jim Schroering (longleaf/southern pine beetle prevention coordinator) and Dennis Gaston (state forests forester), for their help in getting the sale laid out and cruised. Job well done!

Coming Up

Virginia Forestry Summit – August 10

- ◆ This year's Virginia Forestry Summit will be presented in an all-virtual format during the week of August 10. While the opportunities for networking, field trips and great food will be greatly diminished or not possible, the good news is that participation will be free for Virginia Forestry Association (VFA) members and members of the Society of American Foresters (SAF).
- ◆ The agency encourages all VFA and SAF members to participate in this exciting educational opportunity. Once registration details are available, we will be sure to share them in a future edition of The Branch.

Project Updates

Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ Ten minutes! Once the item was posted on Instagram, it only took 10 minutes for Black Forest Sawmill in Augusta County to sell these slabs (pictured) for \$90.00 to a customer in Texas. Sean Black, the owner of Black Forest Sawmill, has come to embrace the effectiveness and reach of Instagram to market some of his urban/local wood products. Be sure to look for an article about using social media for marketing local wood products in the next edition of the Virginia Urban Wood Group's e-newsletter, which will be published in two weeks.



News You Can Use

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- ◆ On Tuesday, June 2, more than 80 federal and state conservation agency staff members were part of a joint agency conference call to bring everyone up-to-date with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Program managers from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) all made presentations concerning their rolls in the programs and then walked through the process list for landowner enrollment. A key takeaway for VDOF is that our process remains relatively the same. We visit the site, help determine eligibility, prepare a reforestation plan, assist landowner with locating contractors, complete planting quality and reinspection exams, and report our findings to the landowner, the FSA and the NRCS. Questions about CRP or CREP should be directed to the local USDA Service Center staff or Todd Groh (forest resource management program coordinator).

CommonHealth YouTube Channel

- ◆ The CommonHealth team recently released a new YouTube channel, CommonHealthVA. The purpose of this channel is to give state employees the ability to watch CommonHealth programs in an "on demand" format. The educational videos, broken down into three- to five-minute segments, compliment the in-person classes that CommonHealth offers across the state. The library of videos on health and wellness topics will continue to grow. The channel also offers mini sessions on stress management techniques, including guided imagery and meditation. All of these videos can be

viewed on any smart device or computer with internet access. The link is:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbg3xNG7Senlv6uH5DpNbpA>

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell participated in the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) virtual summer meeting instead of the planned meeting in Puerto Rico. Primary discussion topics included developing better processes for rapidly assessing the extent of forest damage caused by significant weather events, plans for COVID-19 safety measures related to out-of-state wildfire deployments this year, and the budget reductions anticipated in the southern states due to the COVID-19 economic impacts.
- ◆ Rob Farrell and Lara Johnson (urban and community forestry program manager) held a conference call with legislative representatives from several Northern Virginia localities as well as Virginia Association of Counties and Virginia Municipal League to get their support for a process to move forward with a stakeholder engagement on potentially developing legislation for tree preservation during development.
- ◆ Rob Farrell submitted a letter to the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors expressing concern for a planned pedestrian trail that would likely impact a community tree planting project that was partially funded by the VDOF.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Charlie Becker (utilization & marketing manager) participated in a video conference of the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance Forest Utilization Committee. Topics covered included updates on Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) and Timber Product Output (TPO), nationally and within the Northeast-Midwest, updates from Forest Service and other partners, COVID-19 impacts, review of regional grant projects “No Markets, No Management and Forest Industry Economic Contributions”, work plan development and future activities. Charlie has represented the SGSF Services, Utilization and Marketing (SUM) Committee at this meeting for several years and provided the group with information on the updated Southern Timber Supply Analysis program and other activities.
- ◆ Lara Johnson, Drew Arnn (senior area forester) and Mike Aherron (area forester) treated two ash trees in the Town of Chatham using trunk injection.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy (urban and community forestry partnership coordinator) and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forester) completed an urban management plan site visit at Mirasol in Virginia Beach to update their current Home Owners Association (HOA) tree management plan.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman spoke with the City of Norfolk arborist to discuss a collaboration for the Healthy Trees Healthy Lives initiative. The city has an extensive “food forest” that focuses on planting fruit trees on city property. Emphasis has been on providing fruits to areas labeled as 'food deserts'.
- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) hosted a meeting with Wild Virginia Executive Director Misty Boos and Friends of the Rappahannock River Deputy Director Bryan Hofmann to discuss potential collaborative projects and support for the Sentinel Landscapes application in Virginia.
- ◆ Terry Lasher participated in a meeting with the Water Equity Taskforce. The call centered on next steps in the development of a comprehensive document regarding public drinking water, its health benefits, and concerns with equity surrounding availability.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) and Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) joined members of the Blue Ridge Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) and the Virginia Forestry and Wildlife Group to survey for wavyleaf grass in Albemarle County. Wavyleaf grass is an invasive plant that grows on forest floors and prevents the regeneration of native plants. A USFS Emerging Pest grant awarded to VDOF will be used to fund the removal of significant wavyleaf grass populations on public and private land surrounding Shenandoah National Park. You can find more information on wavyleaf grass here: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/fswavy.pdf>.
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin gave a presentation on the spotted lanternfly during the June 4 Nutrient Vegetation Management Webinar. There were more than 100 attendees on the webinar, including 30 VDOF employees.
- ◆ Meredith Bean (emerald ash borer coordinator) assisted DCR park staff treating ash trees at Sky Meadows State Park. VDOF's EAB program plans to treat more than 100 ash trees on public land this year.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester), Gary Heiser (state forests manager), Tammy Ingle (administrative staff assistant), Tom Zaebst (assistant state forests manager), Dennis Gaston, Shannon Lewis (Cumberland State Forest manager) and Harvey Darden participated in a Google Meet conference with National Science Foundation auditor Norman Boatwright for the annual surveillance audit for the state forests' Sustainable Forestry Initiative and American Tree Farm System certification. Documentation was reviewed during the virtual audit. The three-day field audit that was scheduled to occur in June has been rescheduled for September due to COVID-19.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) with assistance from the Augusta Forestry Center staff, planted the 2020 chestnut crop, which was nearly 1,500 nuts from 19 genetic sources. Some were control pollinated crosses and others were open pollinated nuts from either our best hybrids or native American chestnut trees from Lesesne State Forest.
- ◆ Ones Bitoki (tree improvement manager) participated via Zoom in the NCSU-Tree Improvement Program 64th advisory committee meeting. There were 40 participants and the group reviewed Cooperative activities of testing and selection, grafting, seed extraction, seedlings, database update and 2020-21 budget.
- ◆ Josh Bennicoff (forestry centers manager) and Harvey Darden attended the virtual vegetation management workshop held by Nutrien Solutions and coordinated by VA Cooperative Extension. Participants received credit for various pesticide applicator license recertifications (including forestry) through the multiple virtual presentations, including one given by Lori Chamberlin on the invasive spotted lanternfly, one by Jerre Creighton called "*The Glyphosate Conversation, Revisited*" and a video on hardwood management featuring Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management). The approximately 150 participants were mainly from Virginia and the southeast, but there were attendees from as far north as Minnesota, as far south as Mexico and as far west as Oregon.

Public Information

- ◆ The public information team kicked off Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week with an [Opinion Piece by Rob Farrell](#) in the Saturday edition of the Richmond Times Dispatch. The article was also highlighted in the Governor's Week in Review as well as the National Association of State Foresters weekly newsletter.

- ◆ We will continue to share forest-bay messages via Field Notes ([Forestry for Water Quality](#) and [riparian buffer story](#)), a [virtual tour of Dragon Run State Forest](#), virtual activities for families and children (e.g., [Riparian Buffer Measurement](#)) as well as key messages on all social media platforms.
- ◆ Recent Field Notes stories: [When Volunteers Go Bad](#), [Fantastic Ferns](#), and [Saving Pumpkin Ash](#).
- ◆ Page Hutchinson wrote an article, "*Summer Fun in the Forest*," for the Virginia Forest Landowner Update, Summer 2020 issue.
- ◆ The first blended (synchronous and asynchronous) K-8 PLT workshop will be held on June 25 with Page Hutchinson facilitating. We're hoping this is one of many of these blended workshops to be held until in-person workshops can be resumed.
- ◆ Page Hutchinson is co-leading with Anne Petersen, Virginia Department of Education, and the Virginia delegation of the Chesapeake Bay Education Workgroup to ensure that the goals of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement are being implemented. The entire Chesapeake Bay Ed Workgroup met last week via video conferencing to review the annual work plans. The Virginia delegation will be meeting this week via video conferencing to review the Virginia commitments to the work plans.
- ◆ Page Hutchinson participated in a webinar, "Effective Environmental Outreach Strategies" held by Penn State Extension. She also participated in the webinar presented by Kevin Dawson for Virginia Master Naturalists on "Virginia Department of Forestry and Water Quality".
- ◆ Ellen Powel (conservation educator) and Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) produced videos to profile two common riparian tree species for Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week - [American sycamore](#) and box elder.

News Clips

- ◆ [The Old, Rugged Cork](#) (Page 18-19, June 2020 issue)
- ◆ [State Foresters, Partners Rally Behind Great American Outdoors Act](#)
- ◆ [State Foresters Reiterate Support for Comprehensive Surface Transportation Bill](#)
- ◆ [Cash Crops from the Woods; Forest Farming Economy to Shoot Up](#)
- ◆ [Prescribed burns to resume in SC national forests](#)
- ◆ [Nikki Fried asks Donald Trump to continue processing timber worker visas](#)
- ◆ [Arizona wildfire season is already ahead of previous year's pace](#) (multiple articles echoing this situation from several Western states)
- ◆ [The case of the missing toilet paper: How the coronavirus exposed U.S. supply chain flaws](#)
- ◆ [Lumber sees surprise win as shut-in Americans fix up their homes](#)
- ◆ [How Small Family Forests Can Help Meet the Climate Challenge](#)
- ◆ [Planting trees helps climate change and creates jobs](#)
- ◆ [Virginia State Parks reopening cabins and lodges on June 11](#)
- ◆ [Virginia Conservation Community Statements on the Deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and Nationwide Protests](#)