



**July 20, 2020**

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**Employee Spotlight**

***Rick Butler and B.J Butler – Congratulations!***

- ◆ The below note was received from Agricultural Educator/Future Farmers of America (FFA) Advisor Elizabeth Duncan of Appomattox County High School.
  - “Rick Butler (forester specialist) and B.J. Butler (forester) have been long time supporters of Appomattox FFA through their involvement in our Forestry Judging teams, hosting federation and area Forestry Judging CDEs, Little Farmers’ Day, classroom guest speakers, and land lab wildfire education workshops. The father and son pair are always eager to help our FFA members learn about forestry and natural resources.

Rick and BJ are a staple of our Little Farmers' Day by bringing Smokey Bear to see his first grade friends since the inception of the event. Their participation in this outreach event and other school programs provide continuity to students becoming involved in the forestry program at the high school. They have taught over 1,600 students how to plant trees and the importance of forestry and fire safety to our community.

- Their friendly personalities make them great mentors to our students. Most of our FFA members know them on a first name basis because of their regular presence in the agricultural department. Rick and BJ develop authentic relationships with students because of their character, servant leadership, and welcoming demeanor. For these reasons we would like to honor both of them as our 2019-2020 Distinguished Service award winners and present to them embroidered Appomattox FFA Carhartt Jackets. We thank you for your years of service and look forward to many more. “

## Employee News

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### *Thank you*

- ◆ “I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of the help and support in getting the Mountain Valley Team moved into a new office space at the Augusta Forestry Center. Thank you to Dave Queen and Greg Farrish with Buildings and Grounds, for their excellent work on the interior to update the downstairs bathroom and make it ADA compliant, to Keith Brown and Joe Schaefer for helping get all of the wiring and cables run for computers and internet, for working with a contractor to install heating and AC, to Chris Thomsen and Harvey Darden for seeing the opportunity and supporting the idea, and to the Mountain Valley and August Forestry Center staff for helping move furniture, Smokey rulers, shovels, and fire rakes into the new office. It's taken a lot of work and effort to make this happen, and we are all very grateful to have enough space where every person has a desk and adequate storage for educational materials and fire tools. The front porch is also a pretty great spot for lunch!!”

Patti Nylander  
Senior Area Forester - Mountain Valley Area

## Coming Up

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### *Virginia Forestry Summit registration is now open!*

- ◆ The first ever virtual Virginia Forestry Summit will take place **August 12 and 13**. The meeting planners have an exciting lineup of speakers planned, including Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring, and VDOF's own forest entomologist Lori Chamberlain, among others.
- ◆ Registration is free to Virginia Forestry Association (VFA) and Society of American Foresters (SAF) members, and Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) encourages everyone who is a member of those organizations to consider taking advantage of this opportunity. Follow these links to register or for more information:
  - Registration: [register](#)
  - Schedule: [here](#)

### *Seedling Store*

- ◆ The seedling store will open on October 1.

## Project Updates

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### *Policy and Procedures*

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 7-7 Timber Transaction Complaints](#) – Please review this new policy and procedure it provides guidance and direction for responding to, investigating and enforcing reports of timber transaction complaints.

## Items of Note

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### *Internship Program*

- ◆ Randolph College recently published an article about student Mitchell Doss and his four-week internship with VDOF this summer. Mitchell gained invaluable experience during field work with his VDOF supervisors. It's rewarding to see the three-year-old internship program continually meeting its intent! Thank you to all the VDOF staff that continue to make this program a success. [Forestry Internship Gives Randolph Student a Taste of Field Work](#)

## Last Week

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### *Agency Matters/Operations:*

- ◆ Sadly, a deceased individual was found on Whitney State Forest on Thursday, after apparently taking their own life. VDOF staff provided law enforcement access to the location. No additional involvement from VDOF is anticipated.

### *State Forester*

- ◆ Rob Farrell and Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) participated in the Watershed Implementation Plan agency collaboration improvement call. Rob and Terry provided input into areas of programming, education and project alignment to accomplish a cleaner Chesapeake Bay more efficiently.

### *Forestland Conservation*

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry program manager) and Molly O'Liddy (urban & community forestry partnership coordinator) worked with Amelia Kahle (forest management intern) to inventory all the trees within the arboretum on the VDOF headquarters campus. The inventory is a piece of a larger management plan that Amelia will be writing for the grounds.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy ranked a number of emerald ash borer (EAB) treatment grant applications for funding in 2020. The program is in the process of comparing all rankings and issuing awards.
- ◆ Terry Lasher contributed and provided feedback to the "Programming" document of the Water Equity Taskforce regarding the importance of forested watersheds to public drinking supply quantity and quality.
- ◆ Terry Lasher and the Forestland Conservation team provided comments to Appalachian Electric Power regarding potential impacts to a VDOF easement as a result of a transmission line expansion project.

### *Forest Resource Management*

- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health manager), Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist), Patti Nylander (Mountain Valley senior area forester), and Walker Wolff (Mountain Valley forester) visited sites in Alleghany County with oak damage that had previously been reported by Clint Folks (Mountain Valley forester). The group observed thinning canopies with brown curled leaves. Shot-holes were present on

leaves, but there was no sign of gypsy moth. It appears that this damage is a result of late spring freeze events in these high elevation areas.

- ◆ Katlin DeWitt and Meredith Bean (emerald ash borer coordinator) worked with Shenandoah National Park staff and volunteers on July 8 to help treat ash trees at the High Top Appalachian Trail shelter. In total, 31 ash trees were treated around the shelter, campsites and trail.

## Agency Lands

- ◆ Seedling inventory is complete at Garland Gray. Inventory shows that we have 28,500,000 trees that we will have available for sale. For comparison, last year we graded 26,000,000. Of these, approximately 3,000,000 will be Premium, 12,600,000 Elite, 11,700,000 Virginia Best and 350,000 CP. In addition, we anticipate having approximately 400,000 shortleaf and 140,000 longleaf.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) completed 90-day survival evaluations on the study of four options for storing and shipping our nursery's loblolly seedlings. The objective is to compare VDOF's current "clay-dip and bundle" system to three treatments using polyethylene-lined kraft bags (seedlings were either dipped in clay, sprayed with water, or placed in bags directly after grading with no added clay or water). Virginia's Best seedlings from the same bed were lifted on the same day in early March and planted between April 6 - 8 after approximately 30 days in the cooler. There are four replications of 10-tree row plots at each of three locations, Dragon Run State Forest, Garland Gray Forestry Center, and an industry property just east of Appomattox. Of the 480 total seedlings planted, 99 percent are alive and growing 90 days after planting. There has been no effect of storage type (bundle vs bag), and bagged seedlings survived equally well whether clay, water, or nothing was applied to the roots. Note - these seedlings were handled and planted with care after leaving the cooler so that only effects of the study treatments would be impacting survival; operational planting scenarios could add other stresses and lead to higher mortality.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton used data from the Dragon Run State Forest location of the study of alternative planting layouts to look for patterns in mortality and growth of loblolly pine trees that have fusiform rust. This was not the objective of the study and the data are not statistically testable - but the hope is that the anecdotal evidence might provide some insight into the impacts of different levels of infection. Over 40 percent of the eight-year-old loblolly pines (290 trees) at this site have fusiform rust, which was graded into three categories: branch galls only, "minor" stem galls (affecting less than half of the stem circumference), and "major" stem (involving more than half of the stem circumference). Compared to stems with no rust, only those with the most severe galls (>50 percent of the stem) show signs of reduced mortality and growth. The average survival, height, and diameter of trees with no galls, branch galls, or minor stem galls was 93 percent, 30 feet, and 4.8 inches but the trees with severe stem galls averaged 71 percent, 25 feet and 3.6 inches. These observations suggest that some fusiform-infected trees may survive and grow long enough to be thinned for pulpwood even though the galls might make them unacceptable for an eventual sawtimber stand.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton tallied mid-season survival on VDOF's first native Virginia longleaf pine progeny test, which includes 20 open-pollinated parent genotypes from the surviving native trees located at South Quay Sandhills Natural Area Preserve. The test was planted in mid-November of 2019, and survival is currently more than 99 percent. Monitoring of survival, emergence from the grass stage, and growth over the coming years may help us to identify any parents in the remaining population that perform better (or worse) than others.

## Eastern Region

- ◆ Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forester) worked with Alicia Garcia, a natural resource specialist with Joint Base Langley-Eustis to identify and flag 45 pumpkin ash on property controlled by the U.S. Air Force. Pumpkin ash is an uncommon species in Virginia. The aim is to treat at least some of these

trees against EAB and to protect the seed source for future generations. This wetland area may have been “protected” prior to the Civil War due to the wet nature of the site. During the visit, several large trees were discovered and measured for submittal to the Virginia Big Tree Registry. While the site is not open to the public, it is nice to know that there are still big trees out there to be discovered.

- ◆ Rich Reuse (area forester) was recently asked to speak on a National Public Information Officer Incident Management Remote Response/Covid-19 Coordination Zoom call. This is a weekly call initiated approximately one month ago by a National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) to share information, tips and technology for handling Information duties differently on Incidents this year due to Covid-19. The call is primarily meant for Type 1 and Type 2 Public Information Officer (PIO) leads on Incident Management Teams. One of the purposes of the call is to learn from PIOs who have been on incidents this year in order to help other teams that will be working on other incidents later this year. The calls are recorded and available to PIOs online. Rich Reuse also contributed valuable notes that were added to a living “lessons learned” document also available online. Rich recently worked virtually from Virginia on the Bighorn Fire near Tucson, Arizona.

- ◆ Lara Johnson and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman re-measured the state champion sassafras and an eastern red cedar on the state big tree registry. Both trees are located in Suffolk and are healthy



and grew quite a bit in the last ten years. The Sassafras is 169 inches in circumference, 67.5 ft. tall, and has a crown spread of 56ft. The eastern red cedar is 209 inches in

circumference, 57ft tall, and has a 50ft. crown spread. (pictured)



- ◆ A presentation to the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission on Coastal Resiliency by Robbie Lewis (senior area forester) resulted in a contact by the City of Suffolk Storm Water Division to Meghan Mulroy-Goldman. The manager of the Storm Water division heard the presentation and is interested in working with VDOF to learn more about how trees can help manage their storm water. Thanks to Robbie for breaking through a silo! VDOF has worked with other divisions in the City of Suffolk in the past. This shows that the good word about trees may need to be spread in different ways than just Parks and Recreation!
- ◆ Manij Upadhyay (area forester) and Scott Bachman (senior area forester) utilized exercise time on two tractor units to install and refresh some fire lines on the Big Woods State Forest. Thanks to Dennis Gaston (state forest forester) for giving us a place, while not in the work unit, to get some good hands on time with our tractors. Manij and especially Scott really appreciated the enclosed cab dozers in the 95 degree heat of early July!
- ◆ Jeremy Falkenau (senior area forester) gave a virtual presentation to a local Cub Scout den reviewing the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace. During the presentation the five Cub Scouts were able to learn about both core values of the Boy Scout of America program, and complete their "Tigers in the Wild" adventure.

- ◆ Jeremy Falkenau found this interactive map that shows all known mass commercial timber projects either already constructed or in progress: <https://www.woodworks.org/mass-timber-interactive-map/>
- ◆ Lisa Deaton (area forester) led a ZOOM program for the Middle Peninsula Master Naturalists titled "News from the Woods." Twenty Master Naturalists participated, and topics included partnership opportunities such as the Virginia Big Tree Program, the Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project, growing native live oak, local forest health concerns, and tree care.

## Western Region

- ◆ David Tompkins (forest technician) and Joe Boswell (senior area forester) spent a day on a very large tract of private forestland adjoining federal land planning future management projects. In addition to assessing several areas of upland hardwoods for forest stand improvement, they began planning for a prescribed burn immediately adjacent to the George Washington/Jefferson National Forest. While the first burn unit will be relatively small (25 acres), this will likely be the first of many burns utilizing VDOF's Community Assistance Grant program on this property, which shares more than nine miles of boundary with the national forest.
- ◆ While returning from a water quality complaint, Andrew Vinson, Adam Cumpston (water quality specialists), and Chad Austin (water quality engineer) were witness to a car accident involving two vehicles. Both vehicles sustained heavy damage. While Adam and Andrew checked on occupants of each vehicle, Chad notified 911 and directed traffic at the busy intersection until Smyth County first responders arrived to take over the scene.
- ◆ Jon Perry (forest technician) provided a basic wildland firefighting/groundcover fire training session to the Town of Tazewell Volunteer Fire Department (VFD). During the drills session, Jon provided training on a Structure Triage Assessment tool that was developed in cooperation with Rockingham County Fire & Emergency Medical Services, as well as, part-time VDOF fire-fighter John Coaker. It is centered around volunteer fire departments providing structure triage to Incident Command in an urban interface setting. In addition, the training included the use of progressive hose lays, construction of hand lines, and the usage of small equipment such as backpack blowers and chainsaws. The Headwaters Type-6 Engine, E603, was on scene so that the members of the VFD could see its capabilities compared to their own equipment.

## Pubic Information

- ◆ Page Hutchinson (project learning tree (PLT) coordinator) has been actively involved in the process of creating the Virginia version of the Facilitator's Guide to the Meaning Watershed Educational Experience which is now in final draft form and ready for public comment/feedback before being published. This Guide will get into the hands of all teachers across the Commonwealth.
- ◆ Page Hutchinson led the committee that has created the Environmental Literacy Plan Template for each school division to use in planning field investigations for each grade level in a manner that builds on knowledge each year K - high school. The final draft of this template has now been sent to the Virginia Department of Education for their science leaders to comment. Once the comment period is over the template will be published and posted on websites, and sent to individual school divisions for use.
- ◆ The first Virginia blended PLT K-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide workshop began with a video conferencing call on June 25 with 37 teachers, and a dozen or so observers (PLT facilitators and other state coordinators who want to learn how to lead a virtual workshop). The teachers will finish the online portion on July 17. There will be two follow up video conferencing calls to debrief and reflect on what they learned and how they can use PLT to support their curriculum, share ideas and adaptations and ask questions.

- ◆ Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) wrote two articles for the Virginia Forests magazine, with assistance from intern Jake Galla. The topics include prescribed fire on the Graves Family Forest and an interview with prescribed fire practitioners.
- ◆ Raina DeFonza collaborated with Eva Rondon, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), on their VDOF Partner Spotlight. The project includes “baseball cards” that feature NRCS’ partners and some key “stats.”
- ◆ Raina DeFonza met with the Urban & Community Forestry team to begin outlining a communication plan.
- ◆ Michelle Stoll (public information director) began coordination of translation of Urban Strike Team materials with the help of Memo Maquivar, Virginia Department Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) director of marketing and development.

### **News Clips**

- ◆ [The Wood Pellet Business is Booming. Scientists Say That's Not Good for the Climate.](#)
- ◆ [H-2B Visa Ban to Impact Forest Industry](#)
- ◆ [Why are environmental advocates down on the Forest Stewardship Council?](#)
- ◆ [Investing in conservation generates huge returns for economy](#)