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Contents

Employee News	1
Leaving VDOF.....	1
Project Updates	2
Tractor Sheds.....	2
Policy and Procedures	2
Items of Note	2
Pictures Posted on Flickr.....	2
Last Week.....	2
Governor's Initiatives/Special Projects.....	2
State Forester	3
Forestland Conservation.....	3
Forest Resource Management	4
Agency Lands	4
State-Owned Lands.....	5
Central Region	5
Pubic Information	5
News Clips.....	5

Employee News

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Meredith Bean (emerald ash borer coordinator) is leaving VDOF to pursue a master's degree at Clemson University. Meredith will be researching the Asian longhorned beetle, an invasive forest pest that was recently found in South Carolina. Her last day with VDOF is August 12. After that, please forward all EAB treatment cost-share questions and paperwork to Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist). We wish Meredith all the best!
- ◆ Joe Boswell (Blue Ridge senior area forester) has resigned his position on September 9 to pursue a new opportunity. Best of luck on your new adventure.
- ◆ Charlie Becker (marketing & utilization program manager) is retiring from VDOF on October 1 after 33 years of service. Congratulations Charlie, enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Project Updates

Tractor Sheds

- ◆ This is a photo of the soon-to-be-completed, first tractor shed located in Goochland at the County fire training center. Completion of the Fluvanna shed is coming up close behind.
- ◆ Thanks to Joe Schaeffer. We're looking forward to more of these photos in the months ahead.



Policy and Procedures

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 5-1 Fleet Care Management and Maintenance:](#) Updated policy and procedure reflects the elimination of the agency's use of the VMCC maintenance program, placing the responsibility for agency equipment maintenance back on the assigned operator. The maintenance schedule portion of the document also contains a number of updates and revisions that better reflect the maintenance requirements of our newer vehicles and equipment.

Items of Note

Pictures Posted on Flickr

- ◆ Governor Northam Signs Heirship Bill 07/20/2020
https://www.flickr.com/photos/vdof_photos/albums/72157715262471016
- ◆ 2020 Service Awards 07/16/2020
https://www.flickr.com/photos/vdof_photos/albums/72157715263559363

Last Week

Governor's Initiatives/Special Projects

- ◆ In response to COVID-19, VDOF staff were assigned to support the state Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in multiple Incident Management Team (IMT) roles. This assignment lasted for 134 straight days, our agency's single longest incident assignment ever. When this assignment comes to a close at the end of the day on Thursday, July 30, the VDOF will have provided 1,304 staff-days of assistance to Virginia Department of Emergency Management. (One staff-day is equivalent to one person working one 12-hour shift.)
- ◆ VDOF utilized two identical alternating IMTs, with each team working a two-weeks on, two-weeks off type of schedule. This alternating schedule helped to support the team member's commitment to continuing their normal VDOF-assigned duties on a local level.
 - During each two-week period where they were assigned to VDEM, VDOF team members worked 14 straight days, typically running a 12- to 14-hour daily shift.
 - The assignment initially began with seven VDOF employees, although as our expertise became apparent, VDEM's request for our assistance expanded, with a total of ten VDOF IMT members committed to the effort before the end of the first week.
 - After the first two-week rotation, the Virginia Defense Force became interested in our operation and started a shadowing experience with our team members to learn how we operated. The addition of the Virginia Defense Force participants allowed us to drop back to nine VDOF IMT members for each two-week rotation.

- We continued to provide nine IMT members up through this past weekend, when we dropped our commitment back four IMT members to handle this week's close out activities, including the production of the final Incident Support Plan on Thursday, July 30.
- Twenty-two different VDOF employees served at least one two-week rotation during this incident.
- Thirteen different VDOF employees worked the entire duration of the incident, working a total of five different two-week rotations.

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell and John Miller (director of fire and emergency response) participated in the VDEM Agency Head Hurricane Exercise.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Molly O'Liddy (urban & community forestry partnership coordinator) and Eli Podyma, (Capital community forester) met with the grounds maintenance supervisor at the McGuire VA Hospital in Richmond. Molly and Eli assisted in some maintenance of the arboretum that was established on the property a number of years ago.
- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry program manager) attended a virtual public meeting for the Town of Bedford discussing the new downtown tree planting plan.
- ◆ Lara Johnson and Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) assisted Arborjet and City of Alexandria staff in treating the state champion green ash known as "Abigail".
<http://myvaforest.org/2020/07/30/abigail-the-green-ash-in-alexandria/>
- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) attended the virtual version of the Virginia United Land Trusts (VAULT) Greenway's Conference. The meeting was attended by members from around the Commonwealth. Topics discussed were environmental justice policies and actions, the importance of greenways to localities for economic success, flood abatement, health and habitat.
- ◆ Terry Lasher and Lara Johnson hosted a meeting with employees from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) to discuss VDOF's new "My Tree Counts" tracking program. The program allows citizens, local arborists, Master Naturalist and others to record tree planting projects from around the Commonwealth. The app creates efficiencies and better methods of tracking for small scale projects. VDH is considering utilizing a similar process and application to track septic hookups.
- ◆ Terry Lasher and Deya Ramsden (James River buffer coordinator) discussed project possibilities and proposals with the leadership of the Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE). The purpose of the meeting was to provide VEE with updates and choices regarding funding strategies for project implementation using VEE grant funds. This project is a multi-agency effort to improve water quality and land management practices on the Department of Corrections properties in Goochland and Fluvanna Counties. The project will use a combination of VEE grant funds, state lands fund, potential contributions from The Nature Conservancy, the James River Association and technical assistance from the Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District.
- ◆ Charlie Becker (utilization & marketing manager) attended a webinar on Moving to Virtual Platforms: Lessons Learned from Natural Resource Professionals. The webinar included multiple speakers discussing their experiences holding webinars and virtual meetings and multi day conferences, highlighting the dos and don'ts that they learned.
- ◆ Charlie Becker and partner states participated in a conference call on the development of the Hardwood Sub-Regional Timber Supply (SRTS) model with North Carolina State University. Virginia is

the lead state on the project along with North Carolina and Kentucky. NC State plans for initial testing of the model to begin this fall.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Hardwood forests make up 80 percent of Virginia's forests and provide a multitude of benefits. VDOF has recognized the importance of improving management of these forests, and along with many partners is developing the Hardwood Initiative. One of the cornerstone strategies of the Initiative is training for forestry professionals. The U. S. Forest Service, Southern Research Station's Bent Creek Experimental Forest is located near Asheville, NC. Here, leading scientists have been conducting hardwood research for more than 80 years, and have hosted an Upland Hardwood Silvicultural Training course, also for many years. In the past, VDOF was only able to send a small number each year. Due to COVID19, the training this year was offered virtually, so the training was available to a larger number of students. VDOF staff and leadership collaborated to create a hybrid virtual/in-person training experience on July 21-24, with topics ranging from regeneration, invasive species, inventory, fire effects, and wildlife management. The Tuesday and Thursday sessions were held in each region, with five students per region, while the Wednesday and Friday the attendees participated remotely. The training included an outside field session in each region, a joint VDOF Google Meet discussion, and a keynote address on Thursday by State Forester Rob Farrell, highlighting the Hardwood Initiative. Thanks to the planning committee Jerre Creighton (research program manager), Todd Groh (forest resource management program coordinator), and Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management), and the regional coordinators Eastern Regional Forester Bryant Bays, Central Region Forester Specialist Jack Kauffman and Western Region Deputy Regional Forester Brad Carico and technical support from Assets and Infrastructure Manager Joe Schaefer and Communications and Facilities Coordinator Lora Newlin.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt met with Kevin Dawson (water quality specialist) in Campbell County to investigate a stand of pine trees with a few declining trees following a thinning. Pine beetles were suspected but luckily none were found. Katlin then visited a nearby landowner who reported gypsy moth activity on their oak trees. A few egg masses were found and some light defoliation was noticed but no major damage was observed. Please report any gypsy moth activity in your work area to the forest health program!
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health manager) and Katlin DeWitt measured a sassafras plot in Shenandoah National Park to monitor the site for Laurel Wilt Disease. Although some branch dieback was noted, there was no evidence of the tree disease.

Agency Lands

- ◆ The Big Woods State Forest recently (July 22nd) took bids for an estimated 314.5 MBF of pine sawtimber, 153.9 MBF of pine chip-n-saw, 3,848 tons of pine pulpwood, and 429 tons of hardwood pulpwood on 60.4 acres. High bidder was Gasburg Land & Timber with a bid value of \$67,711.00. Second place bidder was PineCrest Timber Company at \$52,700.00. Thank you to Dennis Gaston (state forests forester) and Ben Duke (state forest technician) for getting the sale prepared for bid.
- ◆ Zach Olinger (forest management and education specialist) recently gave a tour of Matthews House to representatives from USDA- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA). The Local NRCS and FSA office are expressing interest in available office space in the area for possible relocation. The relocation of NRCS and FSA offices to Matthews would fit in with the long-range business plan for the Matthews State Forest and create a "One Stop Shop" for citizens seeking farm and forestry assistance. The local Soil & Water Conservation District is already located at the Matthews House.

- ◆ Zach Olinger recently participated in a virtual meeting with a silviculture professor at Virginia Tech to discuss white pine management options and a possible grant for use on the State Forest.
- ◆ State Forest Foresters along with State Forest Manager Gary Heiser, Assistant State Forest Manager Tom Zaebst, and Acting Director of Agency Lands Ed Stoots participated in a State Forest Certification & Sustainability meeting last week to review recent internal field reviews of sites for the certification review upcoming in August and September.

State-Owned Lands

- ◆ Contract was signed for Phase 2 of Invasive Species Control Work on the Catawba Hospital Timber Sale project. Treatment of existing invasives missed after the first treatment with some expansion into areas just outside the originally treated area. Treatment is being done in advance of the timber harvest in an effort to control invasives prior to harvesting.

Central Region

- ◆ Martha Warring (senior area forester) participated in a video being produced by Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension and VDOF regarding silvopastures. This is part of a larger project, but it featured a silvopasture established in Nelson County utilizing goats and hardwood forest management. The project was started in 2015 and now supports approximately 20 goats.
- ◆ Joe Rossetti (senior area forester), Joan Allen (Fairfax County Urban Forestry Department), and Ron Hughes (Department of Wildlife Resources Biologist) treated 16 black ash trees at the Thompson Wildlife Management Area in Fauquier County. The Thompson Wildlife Management Area has a 30-acre area of a unique landform resulting in conditions for moist site, cool climate, northern hardwoods to continue to hold on in Virginia following the end of the last ice age. The population of black ash is part of that remnant of northern hardwoods and is being treated to preserve that species in Virginia in this era of emerald ash borer. This is the second treatment for many of these trees.

Pubic Information

- ◆ Public Information & Outreach staff assisted with the Governor's ceremonial signing of heirs' property legislation July 20. Additional resources and support were provided by Robbie Talbert (regional forester), Justin Barnes (deputy regional forester), Matt Wolanski (senior area forester), Darwin Rhodes (forestry tech) and Rob Farrell.
- ◆ Michelle Stoll (public information director) participated in a virtual Southern Group of State Foresters Communications subcommittee to discuss infographic development related to prescribed fires and citizen environmental engagement.
- ◆ Field Notes posts: [Abigail the Green Ash in Alexandria](#)

News Clips

- ◆ [Northam Signs Heirship Bill On McGaheysville Farm](#)
- ◆ [James River Program Provides a Buffer](#)
- ◆ [Bettina Ring column: Keeping land intact, in farm and forestland, and in the family](#)
- ◆ [Public Asked To Report Receipt of any Unsolicited Packages of Seeds](#)
- ◆ [The Great American Outdoors Act is good both for Virginia and for future generations](#)
- ◆ [Wave of solar worries farm, forest advocates](#)