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Employee Spotlight

Area Forester Bill Sweeney – Great Job!

- ◆ Below is a note from landowner Brad Howells.
 - “Just wanted to send a quick note about the support I have received from Bill on developing my Forest Stewardship Plan which was recently completed. This was my first involvement with the state and development of a forestry plan and Bill guided me through the process, answered all my question and provided valuable information on all the aspects of forest and wildlife management. With the development of the plan I feel I have the information necessary and the support from Bill to execute the plan to meet the goals for our property. So thanks to Bill for all his support, even with the current COVID-19 crisis, and to the State for offering this program.”

Employee News

Congratulations!

- ◆ Congratulations to newlyweds Stephen Jasenak (Blackwater area forester) and Hannah Mason; they were married July 29th.

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Charlie Becker has announced his intended retirement from VDOF. Charlie has been a valued member of the VDOF team for 33 years. Charlie's commitment to the Commonwealth and forest industry will be sorely missed. His final day will be October 1, 2020.
- ◆ Mike Salyer, Forest Technician for the Clinch Work Area, is resigning to accept an opportunity with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). His last day of official employment is August 27.

News You Can Use

Central Region Quarters

- ◆ Due to COVID-19 safety concerns related to the handling and laundering of linens used in quarters, beginning immediately, anyone that stays in the Central Region quarters located in Charlottesville will need to provide their own linens. The Charlottesville quarters are open and can be reserved by contacting the Central Regional Office.

Project Updates

Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ One of the greatest challenges facing Virginia urban wood businesses has been the ability to dry lumber fast enough to meet the demands of customers. This is especially true for those customers who have a tree removed from their yard and wish to create a dining room table by next month – not going to happen!
- ◆ Wood drying kiln capacity has been a statewide issue since the inception of the urban/local wood movement. Fortunately, during the past year the trend has turned in a positive direction with *seven* new iDRY vacuum kilns being installed across Virginia.
- ◆ The smallest model of iDRY kilns has a kiln capacity of 2,000 board feet and a drying time of one week per inch thickness of the boards. Using a combination of heat and vacuum, an iDRY kiln dries lumber five to ten times faster than conventional kilns. These newly installed kilns have provided enough capacity that the owners can offer custom drying services for other urban/local wood users.
- ◆ For more information on iDRY kilns, including their locations in Virginia, visit their website: <https://idrywood.com/>
- ◆ The Virginia Urban Wood Group was also featured in the nationally distributed Urban Wood Network's July e-newsletter! Here's a link >> <https://conta.cc/2CFclKlN>

Items of Note

- ◆ [Dominion Power Completes First Offshore Wind Power Project in Virginia](#)

Breastfeeding Awareness Month

- ◆ It is no secret that August is Breastfeeding Awareness Month. Virginians shall be proud of the efforts continuously made to ensure that mothers are afforded ample opportunity to support their breastfeeding children while at work. Earlier this year, The Virginia Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, *Code of Virginia* § [2.2-3905](#) passed, requiring employers to make reasonable accommodations for lactating workers. More importantly, VDOF has been at the forefront for years continually meeting or exceeding Federal and the newly established State standards. Our Human Resources team strives to accommodate the needs of our new and future mothers, and we are eager to address any questions.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ VDOF hosted a virtual webinar for planners and urban foresters from urban and developing communities around Virginia as the first step in a process to improve policy tools for localities to maintain trees and tree cover during development. Rob Farrell, Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry program manager), and Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) participated in the meeting facilitated by the Green Infrastructure Center. VDOF is leading this process in an attempt to ensure that localities are utilizing existing policy tools, and then to identify policy gaps and potential legislation proposals to address gaps.
- ◆ Rob Farrell, John Miller (fire and emergency management director) and Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) had a virtual meeting with Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) Director Curtis Brown. Director Brown thanked VDOF for our support of the state Incident Management Team (IMT) in response to COVID-19. Farrell suggested that VDOF could further support the state IMT with training of other state agency personnel.
- ◆ On Monday, Rob Farrell spent the day with the members of the VDOF Blue Ridge Work Area, discussing the recent hardwood management training session and visiting with landowner Jerry Fraley in Botetourt County.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Charlie Becker (utilization & marketing manager) participated on a USFS conference call related to next steps to address the China ban on southern yellow pine (SYP) logs from Virginia and South Carolina. Secretary Ring, Rob Farrell, Terry Lasher, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) International Marketing Specialist Caitlin Clark, South Carolina State Forester Scott Phillips, South Carolina Resource Development Director Tim Adams, and Acting Wood Innovations Program Manager Kevin Naranjo also participated in the call. Next steps will be to setup inspection and treatment protocol based on approved North Carolina program and submit to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to develop a potential pilot test.
- ◆ Charlie Becker participated in the quarterly VEDP International Trade Plan Working Group conference call. This group includes members of state agencies that deal with international trade. Although several projects and trade events have been canceled due to COVID-19, virtual efforts such as online conferences and marketplaces, promotional videos, and webinars are being developed. Virginia ports have seen a 10 percent decline in activity this year.
- ◆ Joe Lehnen (utilization & marketing specialist) and Charlie Becker participated in a conference call with Barry New and Robert Ross (NC Forest Service) on the bi-state wood fuels grant project on which Virginia is the lead. The call was to review the timetable for the wood fuel use survey that Virginia Tech and James Madison Universities will administer, along with firewood workshops, wood fuel promotions and other project activity planning.

- ◆ Lara Johnson co-hosted a webinar called Respect Your Trees with Laurie Fox of the Hampton Roads Agricultural and Research Extension Center (AREC) for Tree Stewards.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy (urban & community forestry partnership coordinator) and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forester) did a site visit with Virginia Beach staff to provide recommendations for a coastal resilience planting project happening this fall.
- ◆ Terry Lasher represented VDOF on the Chesapeake Bay Interagency Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) meeting. Terry made a presentation to the group regarding the development of a new "Watershed Prioritization Tool". This tool serves as a GIS-based system that will be used by VDOF field staff to select areas of high priority for management based upon criteria provided by Regional Foresters. This will allow for local supervisors to pinpoint areas within watersheds to efficiently deliver on Watershed Implementation Plan goals. This project is nearing completion and has an expected roll out date of September.
- ◆ Terry Lasher met virtually with members of the Sentinel Landscapes Team (SLT) and the PEW Charitable Trust to discuss the potential addition of the PEW to the State Level Coordinating Committee. Their role would be to add expertise in the areas of coastal marine habitats, tidal concerns and sea level rise. In addition to Terry, the SLT for the meeting consisted of Admiral Ann Phillips from the Office of Governor Northam and Mike Coleman, from the Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs.
- ◆ Terry Lasher participated in a joint call with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources Ann Jennings, members of VDACS, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to discuss acceptance and comments from the EPA of the Commonwealth's goals for the Two Year Milestones report regarding the WIP and Bay clean-up efforts.
- ◆ Terry Lasher hosted a virtual meet and greet between Director of the Water Equity Task Force (WET) Sarah Holland and Deputy Director of Legislative and Community Services Nathan Burrell to discuss DCR's participation in WET's program to address water equity concerns in Virginia. Terry and other members are currently drafting a "roadmap" document that discusses water equity concerns, forested watersheds importance to water quality and quantity, as well as access to fluoridated water. This project is moving forward with an anticipated completion of a draft by the end of August.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Each quarter, the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF), Southern Research Station (SRS), and State Forest Inventory and Analysis (FAI) coordinators jointly track FIA state agreement balances, plot production and billing frequency to ensure efficient use of funds and timely completion of the field program. This quarterly update is meant to identify emerging issues and address them collaboratively. Virginia was one of only four of the 13 southern states that met all targets in plot measurement production, balances and billing. This was done in spite of challenges with COVID-19 during this period.
- ◆ Forest inventory crews have completed 80 percent of the current cycle of inventory plots, and this information has been transmitted to the U. S. Forest Service for processing. FIA staff had completed 69 percent as of July 1. Dan Herbert (forest inventory field assistant) will be working on a special ash inventory project for several months.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) and Lori Chamberlin (forest health manager) participated (virtually) in the 2020 Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Manager's meeting along with many other forest health professionals in eastern North America that have hemlock conservation programs. The group discussed biological control efforts, chemical treatment and silvicultural management research. VDOF

submitted a report summarizing the hemlock treatments and biological control releases that have taken place in Virginia.

- ◆ Lori Chamberlin passed the recurrent knowledge exam for Part 107 recertification with the Federal Aviation Administration to maintain status as a commercially certified drone operator.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt completed stewardship plan monitoring visits with the Capital work area and re-measured a sassafras monitoring plot for laurel wilt disease in Williamsburg.
- ◆ On July 29, Todd Groh (forest resource management program coordinator) and Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management) made a virtual presentation to the R. E. Lee Chapter of the Society of American Foresters. The presentation outlined the history and methodology of the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program, which is 50 years old in 2020.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Shannon Lewis (forest management forester) met with John Harrison and Catherine Fleischman of Deep Run Hunt Club to discuss forest use and the location of mitigation buffers on parts of the Cumberland State Forest.
- ◆ Mike Womack (forest management specialist) finished up a lengthy on-and-off assignment with VDEM for the Commonwealth's COVID-19 response. Thank you, Mike, for your service!
- ◆ Two staff members from IFCO nursery operations visited the VDOF Garland Gray Forestry Center to see the operation and share ideas. They were impressed with the quality and professionalism of the operation.
- ◆ As national and international issues continue to raise concerns about the availability of H2B visa workers, Josh Bennicoff (forestry centers manager) discussed the issue with our nursery labor contractor. He was assured they would not be affected as they utilize local labor for their operations.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) surveyed recently thinned loblolly pine stands at Appomattox-Buckingham and Prince Edward State Forests to identify a potential pilot study area for the VPI Forest Modeling co-op's new effort to develop data to refine their growth and yield models. Each study location will include plots representing one of four post-thin scenarios: fertilize; hardwood control; fertilizer plus hardwood control, and no treatment. If the pilot location proves feasible and the rest of the co-op members approve, the plots will be repeated in operationally thinned loblolly stands from Texas to Virginia and the data will be used to more accurately project growth responses to those treatments. The best site found was at Prince Edward, and the co-op staff will visit it in mid-August to inspect it and possibly begin plot layout.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton and Heather Dowling (senior area forester) visited with Biology Professor Dr. Shawn Holt, Biology Assistant Professor Dr. Eric Miller and Director of Operations Eric Kondzielawa of Richard Bland College to discuss ideas for education/demonstration plots on a recently harvested area adjacent to campus. Among the likely activities that may occur on sections of the area are loblolly pine planting, shortleaf pine planting, natural succession (no further activity), recreation of a burning regime on a historic return interval, hardwood regeneration/crop tree release, volunteer pine removal, planting hardwoods, and pre-commercial thinning of an adjacent older loblolly stand. The plots will be used for student projects and labs, as well as for education and demonstration for the general public. Spring of 2021 is the target start date for the effort.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton relocated 25 regeneration plots in the 2016 hardwood harvest demonstration area at Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest. These one-acre areas demonstrate a regeneration harvest (clearcut), traditional shelterwood, lower basal area shelterwood, and a timber stand improvement cut along with the undisturbed original stand condition. The plan is to re-inventory the regeneration,

measure light levels at each plot and look for patterns relating light to species composition of the regenerating stand.

- ◆ White pine cone collection is underway at the Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest orchard. Thanks to the efforts of Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester), Jeff Stout (tree improvement technician), and Larry Estes (VDOF retiree) the orchard was mowed and cone crates were moved to the orchard and distributed throughout; as of August 1, more than 500 bushels have been collected. The work began three days earlier than planned because recent high temperatures and dry conditions had accelerated cone ripening.

USFS Good Neighbor Agreement

- ◆ Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) met with USFS staff near Cripple Creek in Wythe County to look at what the USFS call the Pellbridge Project as a possible next Good Neighbor Authority Project Supplemental Project Agreement. The project would treat about 40 acres of white pine units for Wildlife Habitat Improvement Restoration.

Central Region

- ◆ Tom Snoddy (area forester) met with the Buckingham County Emergency Services Coordinator to discuss the VDOF's wildland fire program, fire resources, communication and training in Buckingham County.

Eastern Region

- ◆ Andy Teeling (Master Naturalist/volunteer) and Robbie Lewis (senior area forester) re-measured the champion loblolly pine tree at the head of Hungars Creek, in Northampton County. The old loblolly has been standing for many, many years at the edge of a branch bottom, with a more-than-adequate water supply. It's also been repeatedly overlooked when the nearby area was cleared for agriculture and when



logging has been done over the years. Close by in the same branch bottom is another loblolly – not quite as big as the champion, but probably just as old. As of right now, both appear to be doing well.

- ◆ Ed Zimmer, Kenny Midgett (forest technician), and Robbie Lewis took the ferry to Tangier Island to meet with the town administrator and mayor to begin planning a major planting project to help the community address coastal resiliency issues on the threatened island. During this trip, sites were chosen for riparian buffer strip plantings to help mitigate the effects of erosion and coastal flooding. The actual planting project is currently planned for February 2021.

- ◆ Caroline County landowner Karen Greenaway wanted to learn more about best management practices (BMPs) for her property on Portabago Bay, in Port Royal. She reached out to the David Houttekier (area forester), who recommended a partnership with Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR). After meeting with Ms. Greenaway, representatives from VDOF and FOR suggested a tree-planting project for her property. Through an agreement with Hanover-Caroline Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), FOR was able to help Ms. Greenaway qualify for cost-share with the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program. A 10-year plan was developed to convert a five-and-a-half-acre field, previously kept as mowed turf, back to hardwood forest. In May, SWCD staff and volunteers from FOR worked side-by-side with Ms. Greenaway to plant more than 1,700 native hardwood tree saplings, connecting two large blocks of riparian forest buffer.



Public Information

- ◆ Read about [Abigail the Green Ash in Alexandria](#) in *Field Notes*.
- ◆ Public Information continues to create tools to support at-home learning. Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) and Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) finished filming for a short series of tree ID videos for the general public. The final products will be available on the VDOF website and shared on social media.
- ◆ The first two blended (video conferencing calls and online course work) Project Learning Tree (PLT) workshops have been completed for a total of 72 teachers trained in PLT's Environmental Education Activities for grades K-8. Another workshop for Energy in Ecosystems targeting teachers of grades 5-8 is scheduled to start on August 12.

News Clips

- ◆ [Virginia Department of Forestry offers cost-share to remove ash trees from public property](#) (also mentioned CBS19, DNR online, numerous social media accounts)
- ◆ [James River Program Provides a Buffer](#)
- ◆ [Enviva Completes Acquisition of Georgia Biomass and its Waycross Production Plant](#)