



September 7, 2020

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Employee Spotlight

Jeremy Falkenau, Clint Phegley and Paul Reier - THANK YOU!

- ◆ Farmer Stephanie from Holly Fork Farm sent the below message.

- “Thanks so so much for the items for the camp. It really helped to make it a huge success. Please tell Paul Thanks again for bringing the items by to me. It was greatly appreciated.”
- ◆ Holly Fork Farm is a local, family-owned farm in the Capital work area that contacted VDOF to inquire about Smokey items for their week-long Farm Day Camp. Due to COVID-19, each student/camper needed their own supply kit. Jeremy Falkenau (senior area forester) and Clint Phegley (area forester) gathered Smokey pens, pencils, coloring books, rulers, lanyards, stickers and tattoos. Clint delivered the items to the New Kent office and Paul Reier (forest technician) delivered the items to Holly Fork Farm, as he lives a few miles away from the farm. The Smokey items were appreciated and the camp kids sent a big thank you card! (pictured)



Employee News

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Aaron Rosenbalm (Headwaters work area forest technician) is resigning his position on September 24 to pursue a new opportunity. Best of luck on your new adventure.

Coming Up

Seedling Store Opening

- ◆ The VDOF seedling store will open October 1 at 8:00 a.m. Please direct all orders to the online store www.buyvatrees.com or one of the nurseries.

Request for Assistance

Looking for Field Notes

- ◆ **Attention all staff:** We want your field notes! Did you participate in a successful event lately? Provide an innovative solution to a forest management problem? See something unique or just plain interesting in the woods? If you haven't read our Field Notes blog lately, take a look at www.myvaforest.org to see the variety of recent posts. We're looking for all sorts of articles of general public interest.
- ◆ Posts need not be formal; in fact, we love casual first-person narratives. The blog is also a great place to highlight timely information in an accessible way. For example, how about a firefighting story told from the perspective of a first-time firefighter as a way to share information about the upcoming fire season?
- ◆ Public information staff will happily edit and post your articles if you provide us a rough draft and a few pictures. A good rule of thumb is 500-600 words, but we can work with shorter or longer posts. Any staff member can be a VDOF blogger. You'll even get a by-line! We will also accept occasional submissions from partner groups and volunteers, but prospective external contributors should contact us first.
- ◆ Please send material for Field Notes to publicinfo@dof.virginia.gov. If you have questions before submitting, just ask!

News You Can Use

Wildland Fire - Tactical Pause

- ◆ This is a little delayed in making it into your hands, however it provides relevant information and is a good reminder for us all. On September 2, 2020, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) pushed for a national “Tactical Pause” for safety. Here are a few excerpts from that announcement, including some good questions to consider during our next stretch of fire activity here at home:
 - We are in the height of the 2020 Western fire season and we have been reminded that the wildland fire environment is dangerous whether you are on the ground or in the air. Along with the increase in fire activity, there has been an increase in close calls, serious accidents, injuries, and fatalities. Please honor those that have fallen, most recently our aviators, by actively managing risk. It is now late August and long-term fatigue is setting in, which exacerbates the complexity of a fire season made even more difficult by COVID-19.
 - We ask you to take a tactical pause at some point ... to discuss current risks to which you are exposed. The timing and length of this tactical pause is at your discretion. During this time stop, think, and talk about how you assess and mitigate risk.
 - a. Ask yourself, your coworkers, or your crew what, if anything, is different from your previous experience and how are you dealing with it?
 - b. What is concerning you specifically when it comes to your safety and those you work with or lead?
 - c. What might you be missing?
 - It is all too easy to be task oriented so take this opportunity to discuss some simple reminders or measures you can take to reduce your exposure to the inherent hazards of our occupation or COVID-19, which can reduce the probability of the next accident or illness.
 - Use references such as the Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG) to aid you in your discussions. The latest interagency wildland fire COVID-19 information can be found on the Medical and Public Health Advisory Team (MPHAT) webpage. The value of this tactical pause will be in the discussions you engage in so make it count. Reviewing and discussing these job aids will better prepare you to respond to an accident or medical emergency if one does occur.
 - Finally, NMAC wants to be clear that we care about the health and welfare of our responders. We are asking you to take this time to discuss risk management and do everything possible to ensure you return home safely at the end of each shift and each fire assignment.

Tick App

- ◆ Here is an opportunity for field staff to contribute to tick research. [Tick App](#) users can submit photos of ticks for identification and contribute to data collection about tick exposure in high-risk Lyme disease areas. Columbia University’s Eco-epidemiology lab is leading the northeast effort for this project.

Virginia Trees for Clean Water Request For Proposal

- ◆ Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) staff have distributed a Virginia Trees for Clean Water Request For Proposal for fall 2020 and spring 2021 tree planting projects. Applications must be emailed to U&CF by **4:30 pm on October 2nd**. Grant funds will be reimbursed based on a “match what you can” basis due to COVID-19. Providing matching funds (including in-kind) is recommended but due to the limitations in congregating volunteers for planting projects will not be required for this cycle. Project applications should be from \$1,000 to \$15,000. Also, as part of the application process we are requiring a letter of recommendation for the project from our local VDOF staff.

Please reach out to Lara and Molly with any questions about the request for proposal (RFP) or potential projects.

Project Updates

Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ Recently the Virginia Urban Wood Group published its third Virginia Urban Wood newsletter. The e-newsletter is distributed through the Trees Virginia Constant Contact platform.
- ◆ Over 275 people received this edition, including VDOF personnel who have been involved in the Urban Wood program. Many thanks to Molly O'Liddy (urban & community forestry partnership coordinator) and Becky Woodson (forest management programs coordinator) for their editorial assistance with this project.
- ◆ Following is a link that will take you to the latest edition of the Virginia Urban Wood newsletter. Please contact Joe Lehnen (joe.lehnen@dof.virginia.gov) if you would like to be included on the distribution list: <https://conta.cc/2EnxgyY>
- ◆ The Virginia Urban Wood Program also participated in an Urban Wood project installation event in the Town of Woodstock. This cooperative project helped to utilize some emerald ash borer-killed ash from within the municipality. Woodstock created the following Facebook post covering this event: <https://www.facebook.com/woodstock.enhancement/posts/2656773924563062>

Items of Note

VDOF Out-of-State Wildfire Deployments (As of 08/30/2020) Total Personnel: 15

- ◆ In Texas
 - Adam Smith – Incident Commander, Type 4
 - David Bryan – Helicopter Manager
 - Zoë Sumrall – Engine Boss
 - Kyle Manning – Hand Crew Sawyer
 - 3 - VDOF Part-time Firefighters – Hand Crew members
- ◆ In California
 - Mike Womack – Operations Branch Director
 - Steve Counts – Safety Officer
 - Jon Willoughby – Task Force Leader
- ◆ In Arizona
 - Tom Burke – Hand Crew Squad Boss
 - Daniel Cloeter – Hand Crew Squad Boss
 - Grayson Coleman – Hand Crew EMT
 - 2 - VDOF Part-time Firefighters – Hand Crew members

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ This week, Rob Farrell spent a day in the field with the staff from the Five Forks work area. The team performed field data collection on the forested portion of the Virginia State Police (VSP) Driving Training Range in Blackstone. The data collected will be used to create a forest management plan to support VSP use of the property.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) hosted the Virginia Urban Wood Group regular meeting of the board of directors
- ◆ Joe Lehnen conducted an urban wood/urban & community forestry (U&CF) field visit with Molly O'Liddy and Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager) to Harrisonburg, which is facing the removal of 700 ash trees that have been impacted by the emerald ash borer (EAB). The city is participating in the VDOF remove & replace cost-share program and will also sell merchantable logs via their regular outlet, <http://www.publicsurplus.com>. The VDOF team toured Hillandale Park and discussed the declining ash canopy management plan. Harrisonburg staff also showed VDOF staff their small nursery operation that was started recently as a response to ash decline. Next to the nursery, logs removed from city property were being processed to be sold as firewood or lumber for urban wood mills. The group also visited urban wood bench installations on the Northend Greenway project. The unique feature of these benches is that they were preserved using the [shou sugi ban](#) method of preservation which involves charring the wood.
- ◆ Joe Lehnen attended the unveiling of the Town of Woodstock's urban wood project in the new town parking lot/activity space. The space is a large urban stormwater best management practice (BMP) project. The urban wood project involved the construction and placement of two stand-up tables in the area where people can enjoy lunch or drinks.
- ◆ The fall 2020 U&CF program grants have been ranked. A team of urban forestry professionals ranked and reviewed 25 applications from communities across the state via Google Meet. All award recipients have been notified and the official award paperwork will be sent out to them this week. Project ideas ranged from urban orchard installation to historical tree preservation. Lara Johnson, Molly O'Liddy and Eli Podyman (community forester) represented VDOF in the ranking process.
- ◆ In the wake of COVID-19, VDOF, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and Trees Virginia are hosting the annual Waynesboro Tree Workshop virtually! Every Wednesday in the month of September there will be an hour-long webinar (Waynesboro Wednesdays) on various topics. Registration is free. Waynesboro Wednesday webinars start this week. Announcements pertaining to signing up for the zoom meetings will continue to be sent out to encourage participation. Continuing education units for the event are approved for International Society of Arboriculture, Society of American (SAF) and Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association. More than 300 participants attended the webinar on September 2. The full schedule and descriptions are available here: <https://treesvirginia.org/events>
- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) and Andrew Fotinos (forest conservation specialist) hosted a virtual meeting with the Ward Burton Foundation (Ward Burton and Thom Inge) to discuss working land conservation projects in Southside, the Sentinel Landscapes (SL) application and the Foundation's participation on the SL Statewide Coordination Committee.
- ◆ Terry Lasher and Charlie Becker (utilization & marketing program manager) met with partners from Virginia Tech to discuss status and updates regarding grants, staffing and next year's project delivery timeline.

- ◆ Terry Lasher held a conference call with Caitlin Clark of Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to discuss potential solutions and pilot projects for a USDA-APHIS grant to remove barriers to Virginia's southern yellow pine log exports to China. They explored past pilot projects, outcomes and new approaches.
- ◆ Terry Lasher held a conference call with David Neumann of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources regarding participation in a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant exploring bioenergy and biomass industry impacts in 30 states which currently have IMPLAN data. Currently, approximately 15 of the 30 states have agreed to participate in the analysis.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ On August 26, Deya Ramsden (James River buffer coordinator) led a riparian forest buffer seminar/training at VDOF headquarters. The seminar highlighted the James River buffer program, with presentations by Deya and Anne Marie Roberts of the James River Association. Other presentations included vegetation control by Jerre Creighton (research program manager), best management practices for concentrated water flow by Rodney Newlin (water quality engineer), buffer financial assistance programs by Todd Groh (forest resource management coordinator) and buffer definition and forest regeneration by Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management). A follow-up field day was held on September 2. Approximately 25 were in attendance online and in person.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forester) conducted sassafras monitoring and redbay ambrosia beetle trap set up at Sandy Bottom Nature Park in Hampton, Virginia on August 24. All sassafras still looked healthy and the traps will be up for eight weeks to monitor for any redbay ambrosia beetle activity.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt did final spotted lanternfly (SLF) trap checks at four locations in Albemarle and Nelson County on August 28. No SLF were found in any of the traps monitored by forest health staff since May.
- ◆ VDOF Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) crews have completed 89 percent of the current panel plot workload. They will begin transitioning to the next panel workload in September.
- ◆ Ryan Hewitt (forest inventory specialist) and John Pemberton (forest inventory manager) attended portions of the virtual Forest Inventory & Analysis Users Group conference hosted by SAF and National Council for Air & Stream Improvement (NCASI) during the week of August 17.

Fire Emergency Response:

- ◆ The U.S. Fire Administration recently highlighted Draper Mountain Estates in Pulaski, Virginia, and the Falls Creek area of Durango, Colorado, as "success stories". [The visual story](#) documents the steps each community took prior to wildfires to mitigate property damage and loss of life and provides guidance for other communities to follow suit. Kudos to Fred Turck (prevention program manager) and our field personnel for all the work they do with FireWise communities. The results show and have been recognized at the federal level.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Shannon Lewis completed an eight-acre prescribed burn on the Cumberland State Forest assisted by Dennis Gaston (state forests forester), Tom Zaesbt, Willie Shumaker (trades technician), Avond Randolph (lead worker), and Ian Morris (part-time). More would have been completed but humidity levels remained too high.
- ◆ Agreement was reached with The Nature Conservancy concerning the final sales price for the purchase of approximately 198 acres that joins Big Woods State Forest. The "Turlington tract" acquisition will

hopefully be finalized by November 23. Thank you to Andrew Fotinos, Gary Heiser (state forests manager), Dennis Gaston, and others who worked on this acquisition.

State-Owned Lands:

- ◆ Contracts have been developed for spraying invasive species on the College of William & Mary Ash Lawn property and the Goochland Women's Center. Treatment on Ash Lawn will include a patch of Kudzu that is climbing the trees to be harvested. Treatment will be prior to timber harvesting and will span several years to ensure eradication. On the Women's Center, spraying will occur within the timber harvest area that was sold earlier this year but will happen before actual harvest to control several invasives present within the stand.
- ◆ A contractor performed invasive species control treatment on the Paul State Forest, which was completed on August 30. A contractor will be doing site preparation work on Devil's Backbone before the end of September, and planting will occur this winter. Photo attached shows areas on Devils Backbone to be site prepared.
- ◆ Jack Colyer (forest technician) assisted in a Safety & Pre-harvest plan meeting with the buyer of the Central State Hospital Timber Sale this past Friday, along with Ed Stoots, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) personnel and Department General Services (DGS) personnel overseeing the activity on the property. The timber harvest is the first step in preparing the property for eventual construction of a new Central State Hospital. Some of the wood harvested might be used in some elements for the construction of the new hospital.
- ◆ Chuck Wright will be assisting with spraying approximately 35 acres on the Goochland Women's Center in preparation for planting this winter into a large riparian buffer project along the James River. DOC staff mowed the field in the past two weeks; spraying is the next step to control various grasses prior to planting this winter. The project will help to improve water quality of the upper James as well as the Chesapeake Bay.



Central Region

- ◆ Sarah Parmelee (area forester) organized a training for three part-time dozer operators in preparation for fall fire season. The activity consisted of re-opening an old road on the Department of Wildlife Resources' Phelps Wildlife Management Area. This served two purposes – to get our operators some much-needed time in the bulldozers before fire season, and to help prepare the road as a fireline for regular prescribed burning to improve the habitat for wildlife. (pictured)



Public Information

- ◆ Michelle Stoll (director of public information) participated in an all-agency public information call hosted by the Department of Emergency Management. The call focused on preparation for Hurricane Laura and introduced Deputy of External Affairs Jason Elrod. Lauren Opett, who was not on the call, is VDEM's new Director of External Affairs. Both she and Jason are new hires and Jason expressed their

desire to foster more mutual support among state public information officers. Ongoing virtual meetings are planned.

- ◆ VDOF's riparian buffer program was referenced in July issue of Appalachian Woodlands (print only).
- ◆ To help Urban Forest Strike Team members build stronger rapport with community members, Hector Rivera (HR director) assisted public information staff and, U&CF staff and the Southern Group State Foresters (SGSF) Communications Committee by translating a community flier into Spanish ahead of Hurricane Laura's landfall.

News Clips

- ◆ [Open land preserved in Spotsylvania](#)
- ◆ [Conservation group plots solar potential for retired Appalachian coal mine land](#)
- ◆ [The COVID-19 pandemic has produced the largest economic downturn in the United States since the Great Depression.](#)