



October 5, 2020

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Employee News

Thank You – Dennis Gaston (state forest forester)

- ◆ Below is a letter received from Assistant Scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 562 Matt Smonlik.
 - “On behalf of Boy Scout Troop 562 from Quinton, VA, I would like to thank you for allowing us to camp at Sandy Point State Forest this past weekend. There were 17 scouts who attended the trip plus 10 adult leaders. As the Outdoor Activities Chair for the troop, I am always looking for ways to challenge the young men of our troop and with this particular trip, they learned how to prepare, pack and camp with all their needed gear stowed in their packs and then hiked into a campsite.
- The scouts focused on knife and axe safety, fire building and simplified cooking methods on backpacking stoves over the weekend. As Boy Scouts, we pledge to leave a campsite in better condition than we found it upon our arrival. In total, the troop ended up collecting three large trash bags of litter from the trails and in and around the field/pavilion.
- We were able to clear the better part of two trails during our stay (pictured). The northern trail along the Mattaponi River needed minimal clearing and it offered spectacular views of the river.

The eastern trail was cleared from either end (the field and Meadow Forest Road) but we could not clear the entire trail due to excessive water from the remnants of Hurricane Sally.

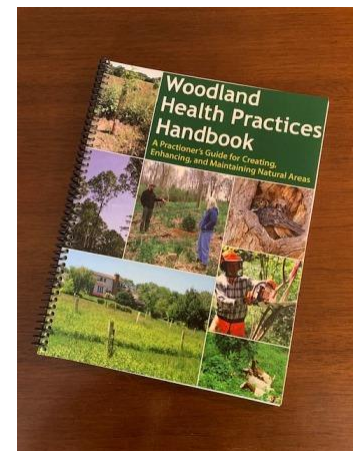


Troop 562 is a youth-led and adult guided troop and we participate in some type of activity each and every month throughout the year. The scouts typically plan their monthly trips at the beginning of each calendar year and based on the feedback that I have received from youth and adults alike; we would be more than willing to perform additional volunteer hours with the Virginia Department of Forestry in return for the ability to camp once again at Sandy Point State Forest in the coming years. Until such time, I want to once again express my gratitude for giving the youth this wonderful outdoor experience. Have a wonderful day!"

Project Updates

Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ As many of you know, the full scope of the Virginia Urban Wood Project also includes the development of a service providers cadre to serve the needs of the small parcel forest landowners across the Commonwealth.
- ◆ Recently VDOF partnered with Penn State Extension, University of Maryland Extension, Virginia Tech Extension and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay on the development of a "Woodland Health Practices Handbook - A Practitioner's Guide for Creating, Enhancing, and Maintaining Natural Areas". This book (pictured) will serve as the participant's training manual for green industry professionals to gain knowledge and skills useful for providing additional services to small parcel clientele.
- ◆ The registration for this four-week training course, which begins October 22, is now open via the Trees Virginia Constant Contact site. Here's a link>> <https://conta.cc/3heIYty>



Policy and Procedures

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 17-1 Urban and Community Forestry Programs](#) has been updated to reflect current funding and the pilot testing of two new tools, Department of Environment Quality's (DEQ) EJSscreen tool and VDOF's "My Tree Counts" app.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell participated in the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) virtual annual meeting. This meeting was previously planned to be in Pittsburgh to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the NASF.
- ◆ Rob Farrell worked with Sweet Briar College professor Lisa Powell to plan the next several weeks of classes for the forestry segment of the natural resources sustainability class.

Human Resources:

- ◆ Despite a challenging 2020 year, we've kept a steady-state in Department of Human Resource Management's (DHRM) goal to reduce mean hire (average) days to 50 days. In the final FY20 quarterly snapshot VDOF averaged 46 days to hire for 3 filled jobs. This was 46 days less than the state's average of 92 mean days.

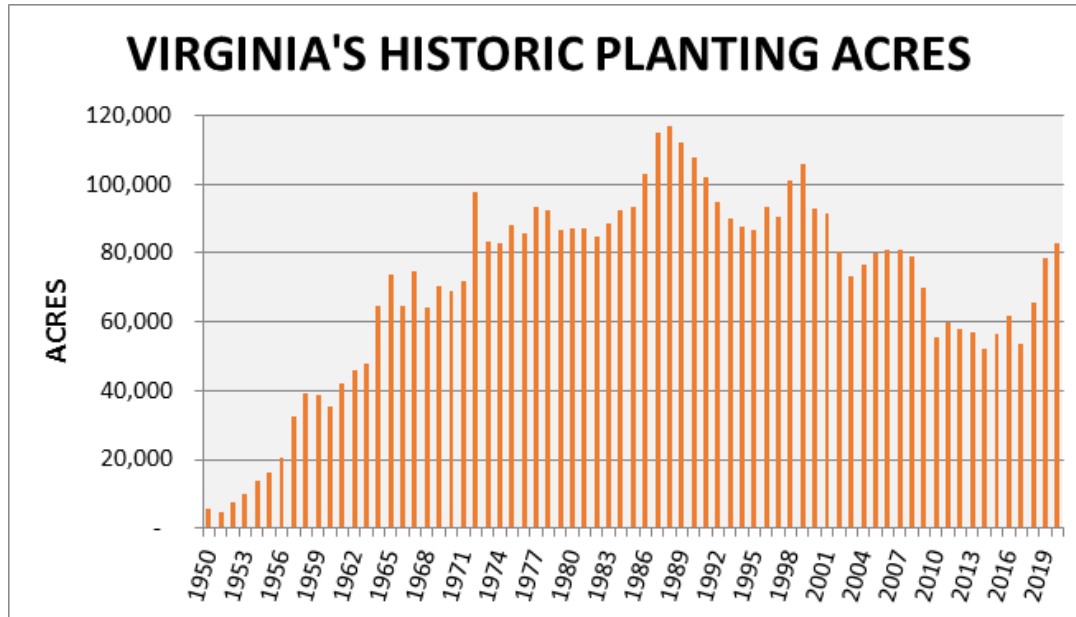
Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry [U&CF] program manager) Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) Katlin Dewitt (forest health specialist) and Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) ranked more than 20 applications for the Ash Removal & Replacement cost share. Funding awards and notifications will be given to the communities this week.
- ◆ The Waynesboro workshop held its fourth of five webinars last week. The webinar focused on expanding businesses with Woodland Health services, and featured Virginia Tech Extension agent, Adam Downing, and VDOF's Joe Lehnen. More than 130 people attended the webinar.
- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) participated in the Virginia Water Monitoring Conference. Topics discussed were sea level rise, coastal resiliency and potential solutions.
- ◆ Terry Lasher and Andrew Fotinos (forestland conservation specialist) participated in the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board meeting. Andrew gave a presentation to the group regarding Forest Legacy.
- ◆ Terry Lasher represented the VDOF at the Virginia Outdoors Foundation Board meeting. The meeting had a presentation by Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler discussing recent updates to Conserve Virginia and proposed deed language updates for projects in Conserve Virginia.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ The forest health and U&CF programs, with help from the Forest Health and Invasive Species Extension lab at Clemson University and Janet Muncy (VDOF integrated media manager), created a new ["Tree and Forest Health Guide"](#). This serves as a handbook to diagnose insects, diseases, and abiotic factors commonly seen in Virginia trees and forests. Hard copies were printed for all VDOF staff and are being distributed through the senior area foresters. For each entry there are management considerations and images as well as an index detailing what pests are implicated with each common and native tree species in Virginia. This is an excellent source of information and reference. A big "Thanks!" to all who made this happen.
- ◆ Each year, VDOF summarizes statewide rural tree planting. The work is a collaborative effort of forest landowners, contractors, consulting foresters, forest industry, and VDOF. For the 2019-20 planting season, a total of 83,118 acres were planted in Virginia. This is the highest level in over 10

years. Nearly 60,000 of these acres were reported by VDOF, with the remainder reported by other private and agency entities. Much of the work is a result of VDOF involvement—field staff in conjunction with the nurseries—and is reported through IFRIS. Additionally, the forest management branch (Becky Woodson, program support technician; Todd Groh, rural program manager; and Dean Cumbia, director) reaches out to partners in the private sector and other agencies to collect information on their accomplishments.



- ◆ The Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program subcommittee met on September 24. This group is a subcommittee of the Board of Forestry and currently there are two Board members, Greg Scheerer (WestRock) and Beth Hutchins (Flippo Lumber), who met along with Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester), John Colligan (chief of administration), Dean Cumbia, and Todd Groh. The subcommittee discussed the FY2020 and 2021 RT Program accomplishments, Regional allocations and budget, seedling survival, the Seed Tree Law, and commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the RT Program. In the spring meetings, the subcommittee recommends the annual RT practice prescription rates for the coming year to the State Forester.

Agency Lands



- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) and Kyle Manning (James River work area forestry technician), with help from American Chestnut Foundation (ACF) staff and volunteers Tom Saielli, John Scrivani, David Crouch and Bobi Thornhill, completed the largest-ever harvest of hybrid and pure American chestnut burs at Lesesne State Forest. Over a two-week period, the team collected more than 3,000 open-pollinated burs from 36 parent trees. At a conservative yield of two viable nuts per bur, this will yield more than 6,000 seedlings for future research efforts; in collaboration with the ACF, they will be planted in progeny tests and used for small stem blight resistance assays. In addition, each parent tree will be genotyped to identify their pedigree (i.e. percent American chestnut). In addition to the research collection, surplus burs from each tree were gathered and sent to the Augusta Forestry Center to be sown for next year's nursery crop. In total, this was more than 20 bushels of burs that could yield up to 10,000 seedlings depending on viability and germination rates.
- ◆ State Forest staff assisted Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Natural Heritage staff in site prep burn at South Quay Natural Area Preserve for additional longleaf pine planting.

- ◆ Virginia Tech Extension COVID-19-compliant Fall Forestry & Wildlife Field Tour will be conducted on the Sandy Point State Forest in October. Folks attending will drive separately and the tour will be a walking outdoor tour with adherence to mask and social distancing practices.

State-Owned Lands

- ◆ H & H Forestry completed site preparation spraying on the Richard Bland College tract consisting of 159 acres. Site preparation spray work will be completed on the Patrick Henry Corrections tract by October 9 consisting of 29 acres.
- ◆ Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) met with Zach Dowling, Austin Dillon and Kenny Raiford with Department of Corrections (DOC) on the Greensville Corrections Property. Plans will be moving forward for doing a timber sale on the property this winter, covering 174 acres pending approvals.

Western Region

- ◆ After logistical challenges that would sometimes match those of a forest fire, two sets of portable logging bridges were successfully picked up at Long Island Lumber in Campbell County and delivered to the WestRock Mill in Covington. These three-panel bridges, purchased with federal funding from a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Joint Chiefs Grant with the goal of improving forest management in the Lower Cowpasture River Watershed, will be loaned out at no cost to loggers working in the targeted area. Loggers wishing to use these bridges will need to obtain a pre-harvest plan recommending bridge use from a Mountain Valley team member and not have any unresolved water quality issues. Patti Nylander (senior area forester) will maintain a check-out list and communicate pick-up with WestRock – Covington where the bridges will be stored. Bringing this to fruition was truly a team effort and thanks go out to the forest management program for purchasing the bridges, State Forest personnel—especially Ben Duke (state forest technician)—for delivery services, WestRock for agreeing to store them, and numerous Western Region personnel for making contacts and logistical planning. (pictured)
 
- ◆ Stuart Sours (water quality specialist) assisted with the first face-to-face SHARP training session since pre-COVID-19. The first of the three-part CORE course (Sustainable Forestry) was held at historic Reynold's Homestead in Patrick County back in the spring; then classes were postponed. The second portion (Safety) was held via ZOOM a few weeks ago, and the final class (BMPs & Pre-harvest Planning) was held at Reynolds on September 18, with a dozen attendees distancing indoors, then mask-less for the outdoor session in the woods. Two Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Associates provided assistance—Karen Snape with SHARP and Clay Sawyers with Reynolds Homestead, both former VDOF. (pictured)
 
- ◆ Stuart Sours conducted an annual Water Quality Calibration session for field staff in order to strengthen consistency in recognizing, addressing and reporting water quality concerns (and providing pre-harvest advice) during harvest inspections. The usual classroom morning session was replaced with a tailgate-style talk before heading to the field to look at a site with multiple

harvests and stream crossings in rather steep terrain. Personnel from Blue Ridge, Piedmont and Mount Rogers were in attendance, as well as Chad Austin (water quality engineer).

Public Information

- ◆ Ellen Powell (conservation educator) conducted an outdoor, socially-distanced tree ID course for 16 seventh grade Girl Scouts and their parents.
- ◆ Ellen Powell coordinated with Leslie Boby from Southern Regional Extension Forestry (SREF) on the development of Virginia infographics that help visually communicate the amount of forestland and the economic benefit of forests in Virginia. This is a Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) project and each partner state will have comparable deliverables.

New USFS technical guides and videos for urban tree monitoring:

- ◆ The USFS has just released two new technical guides for urban tree monitoring. These two documents grew from the input of many arborists and researchers affiliated with the Urban Tree Growth & Longevity Working Group of the International Society of Arboriculture. The *Urban Tree Monitoring: A Field Guide* provides detailed protocols for urban tree monitoring data collection. Specifically, it includes the core variables necessary for field-based monitoring projects, including field crew identification, field crew experience level, tree record identifier, location, site type, land use, species, mortality status, crown vigor, and trunk diameter. The Field Guide includes a cheat sheet and sample data collection sheet. To download the guide, [click here](#). The second guide, *Urban Tree Monitoring: A Resource Guide* provides an in-depth discussion of tips and strategies for designing and implementing a monitoring project. The resource guide includes support about consistently defining “tree”, potential, ways to expand beyond the Minimum Data Set, training field crews, and structuring longitudinal databases. To download the resource guide, [click here](#)

News Clips:

- ◆ [Plant trees or let forests regrow? New studies probe two ways to fight climate change](#)
- ◆ [Biomass Power Market Booming Demand Leading To Exponential CAGR Growth By 2026](#)
- ◆ [Natural Debate: Do Forests Grow Better With Our Help or Without?](#)
- ◆ [How the Redwoods are Battling Climate Change Europe's Odd Role in America's Wildfires](#)
- ◆ [Controlled burns can have positive effects on forests](#)
- ◆ [2020 Fall Foliage: Hints Of Color In Southwest VA, Alleghenies](#)
- ◆ [Gerald Winegrad: We must save the forest to save the Chesapeake | COMMENTARY](#)
- ◆ [Treeswift to automate forestry with swarms of drones](#)
- ◆ [Wildfires throw harsh light on forest management](#)
- ◆ [Michigan DNR to launch carbon dioxide credit program on state forestland](#)
- ◆ [SGSF Launches New educational campaign website Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives](#)