



November 23, 2020

Contents

Employee News 1

- Congratulations! 1
- Welcome to VDOF 2
- Leaving VDOF 2
- Safety Message - Everyone Can Make Thanksgiving Safer..... 2

News You Can Use 2

- It is never too late to plan for your future! 2
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Applications 3
- Common Invasive Plant Samples 3

Last Week..... 3

- State Forester 3
- Forestland Conservation..... 4
- Forest Resource Management 4
- Agency Lands 5
- Fire and Emergency Response:..... 5
- Central Region 5
- News Clips..... 5

Employee News

Congratulations – Joe Cotner and Zoë Sumrall!

- ◆ Congratulations to our new senior area forester in the Blue Ridge work area – Joe Cotner. Joe was chosen from among five qualified candidates and will begin his new assignment on November 25. Joe began work with VDOF in 2014 as a forest technician and was later promoted to area forester. Before coming to VDOF, Joe worked for Eastern Forest Consultants and Bartlett Tree Experts. He holds both an A.S. in Forestry from Dabney S. Lancaster Community College and a B.S. in Forestry from West Virginia University. Joe and his family reside in Bedford County.
 - Joe’s promotion opens up an internal opportunity for an area forester position in the Blue Ridge work area. If you are interested in this possibility, please let [Chris Thomsen](#) know as we evaluate how best to fill this future vacancy.
- ◆ We are pleased to announce that Zoë Sumrall has been selected as a Water Quality Specialist in the Central Region, primarily assigned to the Shenandoah Valley and Northern Virginia areas, beginning December 10. Zoë has a Master of Natural Resources degree from Virginia Tech and a B.S. in

Environmental Science with a Resource Management option from Shepherd University in West Virginia. She has worked as a forest technician in the Shenandoah work area for the past four-and-a-half years and we look forward to working with her in her new role with the agency. Zoë is the first woman to be hired for a position within the agency's water quality program. Congratulations, Zoë, on the promotion!

Welcome to VDOF

- ◆ The VDOF would like to welcome Hayley Midkiff, who was recently selected as an area forester in the Heartland work area (Central Region). Hayley, who is a native of Buckingham County, has a B.S. in Forestry from Virginia Tech and two years of forestry experience working for a consulting forester. She will begin work with the agency on November 25.

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Lauren Whitlow (database analyst) resigned from her position with the agency for career advancement in the database administration field. Lauren has been instrumental in supporting the IFRIS application. Her knowledge and experience supporting agency applications will be missed. We wish Lauren well in the new endeavor. Her last day in the office will be December 8.


Safety Message - Everyone Can Make Thanksgiving Safer.

- ◆ Recently the Governor of Virginia shared new guidance limiting gatherings to continue our fight against the spread of COVID-19. Although many of us are optimistic about the prospect of a new vaccine, the fact is that most households will not be vaccinated prior to the upcoming holiday season.
- ◆ Thus, let us embrace CDC guidance that allows everyone to maintain heightened level of alert to enjoy a safer holiday period.
- ◆ Feel free to print these handouts and share with your loved ones.
 - [Everyone Can Make Thanksgiving Safer](#)
 - [Consider Other Thanksgiving Activities](#)
 - [CDC: Celebrating Thanksgiving](#)

Our executive team is thankful for each one of you and wish you a great holiday season – stay safe and stay alert!

News You Can Use

It is never too late to plan for your future!

- ◆ We are pleased to share [the latest issue of VRS Member News](#).
 - Remember to subscribe at varetire.org/newsletter, to receive *Member News* directly.
- ◆ **Topics:**
 - [myVRS Financial Wellness: Planning Tools You Can Use | Video](#) 
 - [Boost Your Knowledge With Member Education Webinars](#)
 - [New Design Ahead for VRS Member Website](#)
 - [A Closer Look at the VRS Trust Fund](#)
 - [Benchmarking Study on Retirement Systems Shows VRS in Good Standing](#)
 - [VRS Member Spotlight: Officer Matthew Arnold, Department of Wildlife Resources](#)

- [Who Are Your Beneficiaries? How to Set Your Beneficiary Designations](#)
- [Hybrid Plan Members: Why Make Voluntary Contributions Now?](#)
- [Online Retirement Coming in 2021](#)
- [FAQ: How Do I Roll Over Funds Into My DC Plan Accounts?](#)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Applications

- The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced that the Virginia NRCS is accepting landowner applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) until December 18, 2020 for their 2021 program year. The EQIP is very popular among landowners and there may not be another signup for 2021. Currently, the forestry EQIP offerings are for longleaf and shortleaf pine establishment and hardwood management. VDOF foresters work closely with the NRCS field staff to manage the forestry-related projects, from preparing plans to certifying final practice completion. VDOF has a contribution agreement with the NRCS to provide technical assistance on Farm Bill Programs, so VDOF will be reimbursed for our time assisting with these projects. Therefore, it is very important for VDOF staff to record their time accurately in IFRIS. If you have questions, contact Todd Groh (forest resource management program coordinator and NRCS forestry liaison).

Common Invasive Plant Samples

- Each work area will soon receive a notebook containing pressed specimens of common invasive plants. Pages can be removed and used in exhibits, presentations, Master Naturalist trainings, and other educational programs. Work teams are welcome to customize their book by adding locally invasive species, fruit and flower samples, etc.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell met with Secretary of Forestry and Agriculture Bettina Ring, Michelle Stoll (public information director), Kevin Dawson (water quality specialist), Donnie Reaves and Binky Tapscott (loggers) on a harvesting site in the City of Lynchburg to review a temporary steel bridge crossing. The bridge was purchased through funding from the VDOF Logging Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost-share Program. Tapscott Brothers Logging, Inc. manufactured the bridges. Topics discussed included pre-harvest assistance and planning that VDOF offers as well as the importance of communications with all involved parties. Michelle and Kevin will prepare an article for the Virginia Loggers Association magazine.
- ◆ Rob Farrell and Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) convened a meeting of the Virginia Forest Conservation Partnership (VFCP). VFCP is an informal team of state natural resources agency staff that collaborate on land conservation and forest mitigation efforts. This meeting was requested by Nikki Rovner of the Virginia chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in order to share a solar energy development siting selection model that TNC has developed. This initial version of the model identifies where likely sites for solar development overlap with Virginia's conservation priority areas as identified in ConserveVirginia. The model also identified where sites suitable for solar development also overlapped with mined lands and other brownfield sites. The group agreed that the model has tremendous potential to help avoid conflicts between solar development and natural resources conservation and provided feedback for further improvements which are planned by TNC.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry program manager) assisted Hopewell Parks & Recreation staff and the Hopewell tree stewards with planting an urban orchard at the Woodlawn Learning Center. This project was funded by Chesapeake Bay Rappahannock from the Virginia Trees for Clean Water Program.
- ◆ Lara Johnson and Katlin Dewitt (forest health specialist) held a training for 20 state partners on the Urban Forest Strike Team deployment for spotted lanternfly in February 2021.
- ◆ Lara Johnson attended a virtual environmental justice interagency work group meeting and a Trees Virginia board meeting.
- ◆ Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) was one of the featured speakers for the fourth webinar in the Natural Areas Management Series. The goal of this four-part webinar series is to increase the number and availability of service providers for small parcel landowners. This is a cooperative project involving VDOF, Penn State Extension, University of Maryland Extension, Virginia Tech Extension and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Average attendance for the series was 180 participants, approximately 65 from Virginia.
- ◆ Terry Lasher participated in the Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) Survey Workgroup. The purpose of the work group is to create a survey for farmers that will help gauge their use of BMPs and determine how to better serve them.
- ◆ Terry Lasher participated in an interagency meeting with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to discuss what technical assistance is needed by Virginia from the EPA to achieve the Commonwealth's WIP III goals.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ The Forest Stewardship Program turned 30 years old this year and Virginia has a lot to be proud of. Throughout those years, Virginia foresters have developed a total of 11,424 plans on 1,730,868 acres statewide. About 10 years ago, the U.S. Congress tasked the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to provide accomplishment metrics on these nationwide plans to determine the number of landowners that are following their plan and implementing the recommended practices.
- ◆ This was the start of our annual Forest Stewardship Monitoring process. The USFS randomly selects current stewardship plans for each state and asks us to report "yes" or "no" whether the landowners are following their plans. Todd Groh identifies additional randomly selected plans to monitor for each region and compiles the responses received. The following table shows the results of this year's monitoring accomplishments.

	ACRES "YES"	ACRES "NO"	% ACRES MANAGED SUSTAINABLY	# PLANS "YES"	# PLANS "NO"	% PLANS MANAGED SUSTAINABLY
CENTRAL REGION	1,430	1,028	54%	17	6	71%
EASTERN REGION	2,629	247	91%	20	3	87%
WESTERN REGION	2,458	685	77%	16	7	67%
STATEWIDE TOTAL	6,518	1,960	75%	53	16	75%

- ◆ Todd Groh met Matt Wolanski (senior area forester) at the Strasburg River Walk to discuss potential riparian forest buffer establishment using grant funding from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Mountains to Bay (M2B) Grazing Initiative. The River Walk runs along the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and connects Strasburg's Town Park to the Strasburg High School. While the M2B grant is primarily for improvement of livestock grazing issues, this grant also has funding for establishing 50 acres of new or improved riparian forest buffers in the Shenandoah Valley and surrounding counties.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Mike Womack is assessing damage on the Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest caused by heavy rains last week that damaged forest roads in multiple places and downed trees across roads. Staff will continue to survey damage this week, remove trees blocking roads, and repair impassable areas.
- ◆ The State Forests are currently advertising timber on the Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest, the Cumberland State Forest and the Dragon Run State Forest. Interested buyers should go to the Business Center on the VDOF website for particulars.

Fire and Emergency Response:

- ◆ On November 10, a company called Drone Amplified gave a presentation of its IGNIS firing system. The system provides a drone-mountable distribution of fire ignition spheres (aka "fire ping pong balls") to provide a new tool for the ignition of fires, in support of both prescribed burning and wildfire suppression. The system relies on Android-based smartphone technology using GPS to deliver firing balls as an alternative to hand ignition of fires using a drip torch. The system does show great promise both in terms of its delivery speed and its potential increase in firefighter safety, since the manpower needs associated with traditional on-the-ground burning projects are almost eliminated. (Pictured)



Central Region

- ◆ Jim McGlone (urban forest conservationist) taught Urban Ecology to the Banshee Reeks Master Naturalists basic training class. The 20 or so students learned how urbanization affects ecosystems and what can be done to minimize these effects.

News Clips

- ◆ [LAWSUIT OVER BULLDOZING OF MD. FOREST THROWN OUT, CLEARING WAY FOR BUSINESS PARK](#)
- ◆ [White Paper: Family-owned Forests and Carbon Markets](#)
- ◆ [US researchers produce "windows of tomorrow" out of transparent wood](#)
- ◆ [Luminescent wood can light up a room](#)
- ◆ [Hotel made from CLT opens at Fort Jackson, S.C.](#)
- ◆ [Benefits of Building With Wood](#)
- ◆ [Study aims to increase mass timber use in health care construction](#)

- ◆ [Watch Faces of the Forest: Meet the Town of Ticonderoga, New York](#)
- ◆ [Study: Switching from heating oil to local wood cuts greenhouse gasses](#)
- ◆ [Virtual reality forests could help understanding of climate change](#)
- ◆ [New program pays landowners to protect forests on their farms in Brazil](#)
- ◆ [Never a Bad Time to Plant a Tree](#)
- ◆ [Lucky to live here](#)
- ◆ [Tyson Foods Announces Global Forest Protection Standard](#)
- ◆ [Landowners sought for survey on forestry](#)