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Employee News

Congratulations – Cole Young!

- ◆ Cole Young has been promoted to Water Quality Specialist for the most northern area of the Western Region. Cole was selected from a strong pool of both internal and external candidates. He has a four-year degree from Virginia Tech in fish and wildlife with a minor in forestry. Cole previously served as a forest technician in the Mountain Valley Work Area. He began his official duties on December 10. Cole will be covering the area previously worked by Andrew Vinson; Andrew laterally transferred to the area David Tolliver patrolled prior to his 2020 retirement.

Lateral Transfer – Andrew Vinson

- ◆ Andrew Vinson (water quality specialist) has laterally transferred within the Western Region. He previously worked the northern portion of the region and now works David Tolliver's former area including sections of Blue Ridge, Headwaters, and Mount Rogers work areas.

Welcome to VDOF

- ◆ VDOF would like to welcome Lara Wilson who has been selected as the program support technician in Salem. Lara was selected from among 27 applicants. She has more than 17 years of administrative experience working with the Madison County government court system in Ohio and a B.A. in English from Ohio Wesleyan University. She and her husband recently settled in Botetourt County. Lara is eager to blend her love of the outdoors with her VDOF employment opportunity. Her first day with the agency will be December 28.
- ◆ VDOF is excited to welcome five interns into our first-ever VDOF internship winter program. In an unprecedented 2020 year, sponsoring students that will enter the workforce in the near future is always a top priority. Our winter program will require students to complete projects impacting immediate agency needs to springboard projects in a busy 2021 year. Join us in welcoming:
 - Amelia Kahle a James Madison University Senior sponsored by Dean Cumbia, who will be gathering stand level data and field testing the new hardwood assessment tool.
 - Grace Dho a William & Mary Sophomore sponsored by Michelle Stoll. Grace will be developing a social media plan to promote key messages of the Forest Action Plan and assisting with Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) 50th Anniversary planning.
 - Michelle Page a Virginia Tech Senior sponsored by Dean Cumbia, who will be assisting with plans to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Reforestation of Timberlands program.
 - Jonathan Banton a West Virginia University Junior sponsored by Jack Kauffman and Ed Zimmer.
 - Merrick Elim a William and Mary Senior sponsored by Jeremy Falkenau, Meghan Mulroy and Terry Lasher.

Coming Up

Virginia Association of Forest Health Professionals Meeting

- ◆ The 2021 Virginia Association of Forest Health Professionals meeting will be held virtually February 8 and 9. Any interested VDOF employees should first get their supervisor's approval, then send an email Katlin DeWitt (katlin.mooneyham@dof.virginia.gov) by January 15, 2021 and the forest health team will do a group registration. Once registered, each person will be sent a Zoom link for the meeting. Virginia pesticide recertification, Society of American Foresters (SAF) and International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) credits will be offered. If you are attending the conference to obtain recertification credits, you MUST access the conference from your own dedicated terminal (e.g., using a smart phone, computer, laptop, i-Pad, etc.). You may not share a screen with others. This will allow us to confirm your presence to approve your credits. To view the agenda visit: <https://www.vafhp.org/agenda>.

Project Updates

File Retention

- ◆ The Eastern Region is working on draft protocol to guide field staff on updating paper files that are kept at field offices. This protocol will guide staff on which files need to be retained and which can be removed in accordance with Library of Virginia guidelines. Updating and removing outdated or

sensitive files will ensure that personal information provided by landowners is kept secure and will reduce the volume of paper files stored in VDOF offices. This winter, two work areas in the Eastern Region will evaluate their offices' files based on the draft protocol, and the guidance will be adjusted based on these tests. The final protocol will then be sent to the regions for implementation.

Virginia Tree Steward Manual

- ◆ The fourth edition of the Virginia Tree Steward Manual is complete after two years of hard work by Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) staff and partners. It is used as the main training manual for Tree Steward groups from across the state. View and download the manual: <https://treesvirginia.org/outreach/tree-stewards>.

Did You Know

FIA Developed the One-Click Factsheet

- ◆ VDOF has partnered with the U.S. Forest Service – Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) program since 1997, with staff from both agencies interacting to coordinate FIA data collection and dissemination.
 - **FIA was recently recognized with the Chief's and Under Secretary's Honor Award for 2020 for development of the "One-Click Factsheet"**. The state-of-the-forest factsheets include the most frequently requested data: forest land area, number of live trees, volume of live trees, forest land ownership (private, federal, state, local), plot counts, and sampling frequency. The factsheets are available for 49 states, including Virginia, as well as Puerto Rico and a number of Pacific islands.
 - This state-level summary is updated regularly, pulling in new survey data as often as they're available.
 - "One-click" products are part of an effort by FIA to make the data more available to non-traditional users.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ VDOF increased the number of State Forests last week from 25 to 26 with the acquisition of the 2,531-acre Phase 1 of the Charlotte State Forest (formerly Stanley Land & Lumber Property) in Charlotte County. Huge "thank you" to Andrew Fotinos, forest conservation specialist, who led VDOF efforts to obtain the property using a total of four different grants to fund the purchase. Phase 2, with an additional 2,500 acres, will hopefully be acquired after July 1, 2021, and a celebratory "grand opening" is tentatively scheduled for October.
- ◆ Rob Farrell and the Jefferson work area cut and delivered this year's Christmas tree to the State Capitol. The tree was provided by John Carroll (former VDOF deputy state forester) and his family from their farm in Louisa County. David Powell (senior area forester) did the felling, new area foresters Jonah Fielding and Michael Downey helped get it wrapped up, John loaded it with his tractor and Michael and Rob delivered it to the Capitol. Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) was on hand to capture the event for social media.
- ◆ Michael Downey and Adam Downing (Virginia Community Extension forester) arranged this year's annual Society of American Foresters (SAF) Skyline Chapter firewood cutting last Friday morning in Madison County. VDOF participants included Rob Farrell, Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester), Rodney Newlin (water quality engineer), Matthew Hutchins (forest technician), and Jonah Fielding. Herb Reynolds (VDOF retiree) had felled a very big, very dead oak for us to convert into firewood for a local family.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ As a result of the National Urban Wood Academy (part of the Partners in Community Forestry Conference), the Virginia Urban Wood Program provided information on launching urban wood programs in Pinellas County, Florida and Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.
- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) spoke to the Rappahannock River Basin Commission about the Commonwealth's progress toward acquiring a Sentinel Landscapes Designation.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ The VDOF hardwood training group met virtually on December 5. Topics included reports on field testing of the hardwood assessment tool (and tally sheet) and instructions for making nominations for potential hardwood demonstration areas around the state.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Jim Schroering (longleaf/shortleaf pine beetle [SPB] prevention coordinator) compiled the annual report for the 2017 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Longleaf Pine Stewardship grant. VDOF and the Virginia Longleaf Cooperators' Group (VLCG), consisting of Department of Wildlife Resources, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Old Dominion University, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Isle of Wight County, Meadowview Biological Research Station and private landowners reported the following accomplishments: 1,749 acres of prescribed burning; 325 acres of planting; 112 acres of chemical release; 1,466 acres of new land acquisitions; and outreach to 661 individuals through field tours, meetings, seminars, speaking engagements and individual contacts. The most notable outreach event during the reporting period was the Longleaf Alliance's (LLA) first Virginia Longleaf 101 Academy in November, 2019. This is a substantial set of achievements given the restrictions the group faced due to the COVID-19 coronavirus and an abnormally wet summer and fall. Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester) attended the annual North Carolina State Cooperative Tree Improvement Program Contact meeting December 2-3. The meeting was conducted via Zoom with 46 participants.
- ◆ Lifting at Garland Gray Forestry Center (GGFC) was delayed a week due to the unavailability of contracted workers. GGFC is set to begin lifting next week.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) attended the virtual annual meeting of the Forest Modeling Research Cooperative. Several of the existing and planned studies are on VDOF state forests, and the agency figured heavily in the discussion. In particular, plans for studies of 1) lumber yield and quality from mature stands that have been thinned and fertilized and 2) projecting growth effects of fertilizer and competing vegetation control in operationally-thinned stands are moving forward on Appomattox-Buckingham and Prince Edward State Forests.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton provided a recorded presentation on the herbicide glyphosate which will be part of the upcoming meeting of the Virginia Christmas Tree Growers' Association.

State Forest

- ◆ Several folks aided in locating and fixing an underground power line issue with a line coming into the Cumberland State Forest office last week. One of the existing lines was faulty and a portion of new line was spliced in place after folks found where the issue existed. Thank you to Willie Shumaker (lead worker), David Queen (carpenter senior), and at times Shannon Lewis (forest management forester), Gary Heiser (state forests manager), and Robert Miles (part-timer) for helping to fix the power issue.

- ◆ Zach Olinger (forest management & education specialist) negotiated a small timber sale on the Matthews State Forest with approximately 99,800 board feet of timber sold along with 108.9 cords of pulpwood.
- ◆ An Appomattox-Buckingham timber sale containing 627.1 MBF of pine sawtimber and 890 tons of pulpwood sold for \$95,776.00 with three bidders bidding on the timber. Winning bidder was Emerson & Clements Woodyard, Inc.
- ◆ The Bear Creek 10K race was held on the Cumberland State Forest on December 6. Average race time to complete the 10.31 mile race was 2 hours 4 minutes and 36 seconds.

State-Owned Lands

- ◆ The College of William & Mary Ash Lawn Timber Sale and William & Mary Ash Lawn Foundation timber sales received no bidders last week. The sales are now open for negotiation, and interested buyers need to contact David Powell (senior area forester) or Chuck Wright (area forester). While this is disappointing, one reason might have been the limited ability to access the site or the fact that the one sale is not very conducive to winter logging due to wet ground conditions.
- ◆ Personnel will start preparing for a timber sale on Virginia Tech's McCormick Farm property next week.

Eastern Region

- ◆ On Wednesday, December 2, Waverly work area personnel Zach Dowling (senior area forester), Travis Tindell, Austin Babb (area foresters), Jim Blackwell and Jay Bassett (forest technicians), and Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager) and Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) completed an urban tree planting project in the Town of Stony Creek's park. Brian Lacy (pine resource specialist) and Jim Schroering also assisted. The project came about after Zach initiated conversations with town council about providing much-needed shade in the park and taking the first step in establishing a riparian buffer along Stony Creek, which flows into the Nottoway River. Lara Johnson and Molly



O'Liddy were able to use Water Quality Impact Assessment (WQIA) funds to support the purchase of containerized trees, mulch, stakes, cages, and allowed for a contractor to pre-dig the holes. The group (pictured) was able to plant, mulch, and stake 25 trees in three hours.

Western Region

- ◆ Rocky Wood is working with the Dickenson County Sheriff's office on a potential wildland fire and home invasion case linked to the same possible perpetrator. They have collaborated on sending evidence to the crime lab and reviewing security camera footage.

Public Information

- ◆ The VDOF Camp Woods & Wildlife planning team met to evaluate the 2021 camp season. The group took into account risk factors to staff and campers, logistics required to observe social distancing and disinfectant guidelines and the timeline for raising funds. Based on the many unknowns and potential risks, the group recommended suspending an in-person camp for 2021, and suggested instead providing a virtual student learning experience that will potentially include synchronous and asynchronous activities. We hope Camp Woods & Wildlife will return in 2022, but in the meantime this offering will provide a forestry education experience for students who would otherwise miss out as a result of COVID-19 challenges.
- ◆ The VDOF public information office coordinated with The Conservation Fund and other partners to announce the completion of Phase 1 of Charlotte State Forest with a news release to statewide media partners.
http://dof.virginia.gov/press/News%20Release_Charlotte%20State%20Forest_Phase%201_FINAL.pdf
- ◆ Public Information Director Michelle Stoll worked with Kevin Dawson (water quality specialist) to write an article for the Virginia Loggers Association's magazine. The article uses a bridge project in Lynchburg as an example of how working together results in positive outcomes for all stakeholders. The article will appear in this month's publication.

News Clips:

- ◆ [Invasive species wreaking havoc on nation's forests](#)
- ◆ [Climate change heats up fire risk in forests](#)
- ◆ [\\$2.7M effort to help landowners plant tree buffers across upper, middle James River watersheds](#)
- ◆ [Commonwealth proclaims December 'Virginia Christmas Tree Month'](#)
- ◆ [JAMES RIVER TREE PLANTING EFFORT EXPANDS TO \\$2.7 MILLION; VOLUNTEERS NEEDED](#)
- ◆ [VetsWork AmeriCorps – a steward for the land](#)
- ◆ [Nancy Pfund's New Investment Strategy Involves Forests and Funerals](#)
- ◆ [U. S. Forest Service, national forests, celebrates 115 years in existence](#)
- ◆ [Virginia State Capitol tree comes from local farm](#)
- ◆ [NRCS helps Sweet Briar rediscover its roots in agriculture](#)
- ◆ [This company is using drones to replant forests devastated by wildfires](#)
- ◆ [New Initiative Promotes Research into Fire and Forests](#)
- ◆ [Into the woods: The benefits of diversity](#)
- ◆ [Land Secured for VA's Newest State Forest Along Roanoke River in Charlotte County](#)
- ◆ [Logging to Begin on Bucks Elbow Mountain](#)
- ◆ [FAMILY FOREST OWNERS COULD CHAMPION CARBON DRAWDOWN](#)
- ◆ [The Sunday Read: 'The Social Life of Forests'](#)