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Contents

Employee News 1

 Welcome to VDOF – Winter Interns 1

Coming Up..... 1

 Upgraded Security System “Goes Live” 1

Training Opportunity 2

 Certified Prescribed Burn Manager (CPBM) – Virtual Offering 2

 American Chestnut Interactive Course..... 2

Last Week..... 2

 State Forester 2

 Administration 2

 Forestland Conservation..... 3

 Agency Lands 3

 Eastern Region 4

 Central Region 4

 News Clips..... 5

Employee News

Welcome to VDOF – Winter Interns

- ◆ Merrick Ellim will be working alongside field staff in the Eastern Region throughout the month of December as our first winter intern. Merrick is a senior at William & Mary majoring in business with a minor in environmental studies. Most of his time with VDOF will be spent in the Capital and Blackwater work areas with some time at Headquarters as well. Welcome aboard, Merrick!

Coming Up

Upgraded Security System “Goes Live”

- ◆ The upgraded headquarters building security system will “go live” on December 30. All HQ building personnel both VDOF and other agencies have been provided access cards for the upgraded system. We will be issuing access cards to all remaining VDOF staff during the first quarter of 2021. Between now and then if non-HQ staff come to HQ’s please use the front doors to enter the building. Other building doors will be secure. Please address any questions through your manager.

Training Opportunity

Certified Prescribed Burn Manager (CPBM) – Virtual Offering

- ◆ The VDOF's CPBM course will be offered virtually January 19 – 21, 2021.
 - Registration is now open with no fee for VDOF employees.
 - RX Burn Task Books are still required before you start the course on January 19. You can register before submitting them, but if not received prior to the 19th you will be removed from the course roster.
 - This will be a self-paced virtual offering. Computer and internet access required.
 - You **MUST** allocate the necessary time to complete all components of this course and pass the final exam for certification.
 - Register at <https://cvent.me/bVKLMA>
 - Anyone with questions contact [Fred Turck](#) (course) or [Sandy Mills](#) (registration).

American Chestnut Interactive Course

- ◆ VDOF has a long history and commitment to American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) restoration, with significant and ongoing efforts at the Lesesne and Matthews State Forests. A new online, interactive course on the American chestnut has been developed by Stacy Clark, Research Forester with the USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station. The course is available for free to anyone through a simple registration process. The learner will be introduced to the basic ecology and silvics, historical significance, and the demise of the tree species that once occupied 200 million acres in the eastern United States. The course contains a glossary and links to dendrology tables, external webpages, and published scientific papers. A certificate of completion at the end of the course qualifies for one Continued Forestry Education (CFE) credit with the Society of American Foresters. Please visit this website (<https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/products/courses/#chestnut>) or contact Stacy Clark (stacy.l.clark@usda.gov; 865-318-8391) for more information on how to access the course. Jerre Creighton (research program manager) reviewed the course and notes that the course is a basic (but good) overview of American chestnut and its history. There is some information on current breeding and restoration efforts, but that will be covered in more depth in a future course. The course would be interesting and beneficial to interested VDOF staff and does not take much time (about an hour).

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell joined Secretary Ring, Secretary Ball, and Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Waynesboro Dwayne Jones for a tour of the Crozet Tunnel Trail. VDOF will be assisting with a potential grant application to expand the trail beyond the tunnel.

Administration

- ◆ VDOF has ordered mobile printers for all home- and field-based staff to allow for greater flexibility and independence in performing their daily responsibilities. They will be deployed through the regional offices over the next few weeks.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Michelle Stoll (director of public information), Grace Dho (public information intern) and Molly O'Liddy (urban & community forestry [U&CF] partnership coordinator) went to James Monroe's Highland to take photos and video of ash trees being removed on the grounds as part of the ash removal cost-share. The visuals will be part of a larger story about historic trees and the ash tree removal cost-share program.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Jerre Creighton attended the week-long virtual strategic planning meeting of the Forest Productivity Research Cooperative's North American loblolly pine working group. The meeting's purpose was to identify and prioritize the important research objectives for the five-year period from 2021-2025. Between 30 and 45 (depending on the day) co-op members from across the country participated in the daily Zoom conferences which began with an overview of current and ongoing co-op efforts, followed by focused breakout sessions on vegetation management, density management, early silvicultural treatments, remote sensing (LiDAR and satellite) tools, and decision support applications. Jerre led three of the breakout groups. The meetings concluded with an open discussion of priorities. Moving forward, VDOF will support efforts to better understand the responses and relative value of different times and combinations of thinning, hardwood control and fertilizer in loblolly pine, and develop and refine tools (one soil-based, one financial) to inform silvicultural decision making.
- ◆ The North Carolina State Cooperative Tree Improvement Program has divided the effort of extracting and processing seeds from their fifth-cycle loblolly pine crosses bred at the Arrowhead, Georgia Breeding Center among several of the co-op's members. VDOF was assigned 32 clones totaling 731 cones. In addition, VDOF tree improvement personnel collected open-pollinated cones from 18 clones selected for different research projects. Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester) completed processing, cleaning, counting and labelling all of this material in preparation to ship it back to North Carolina State University (NCSU) for propagation and distribution for planting in future progeny tests.
- ◆ Jeff Stout (tree improvement technician) and Ones Bitoki finished the measurement of the 2016 fourth-cycle progeny test at Hockley, punched data into the computer and downloaded it to the Tree Improvement Program database for analysis. Selections of new families from this test will be done in March-February 2021, then grafted at New Kent and Arrowhead, Georgia orchards.
- ◆ Jim Schroering (longleaf/shortleaf pine beetle [SPB] prevention coordinator) finished de-seeding the longleaf pine cones collected in this year's crop, worked with Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management) on finalizing a spending plan and reports for the 2017 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant, and helped Garland Gray Forestry Center (GGFC) staff get ready for loblolly lifting set to begin this week.
- ◆ John Scrivani and David Crouch (part-time research technicians) have finished measuring all but one of the scheduled VT Forest Modeling Co-op thinning locations due this year, and about half of the data is entered.
- ◆ Mike Womack (forest management specialist) attended the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Equipment and Technology Committee two-day Fall 2020 Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams. Mike gave the NWCG ground ignition subcommittee presentation and the Eastern states update. Mike is the outgoing Chair of the ground ignition subcommittee (since 2015) and is moving to a primary member position on the equipment and technology committee as the National Association State Foresters (NASF) Eastern states representative.

- ◆ Cumberland State Forest sold approximately 272.5 MBF of mostly hardwood sawtimber and 299 tons of pulpwood on December 9, attracting six bidders for the sale which sold to Blue Ridge Lumber at a lump sum bid price of \$173,173.00.
- ◆ Dragon Run State Forest sold an estimated 15,424 tons of pine pulpwood, 372 tons of hardwood pulpwood and 7,272 tons of pine sawtimber as part of a thinning on over 500 acres. The sale attracted three bidders on December 9, with Canal Wood LLC the high bidder at \$10.00/ton for pine pulpwood, and \$20.00/ton for pine sawtimber.

Eastern Region

- ◆ Representing the Honor Guard, Robbie Lewis (senior area forester) and Dave Houttekier (assistant director fire and emergency response) attended a funeral on the Eastern Shore to support Bloxom and Parksley Volunteer Fire Departments. The funeral was for a young firefighter that was a member of both companies. The young man being honored was highly regarded by the Eastern Shore fire community. The funeral involved Accomack and Northampton Department of Public Safety and volunteer fire companies, as well as fire departments from Worcester and Somerset counties just to the north in Maryland.
- ◆ Eli Podyma (community forest specialist) attended a meeting of the East End Green Infrastructure Collaborative and presented agency updates.
- ◆ Dave Slack (area forester) represented VDOF at a "Virtual Life Ready Expo: Natural Resources & Agriculture" for Henrico County Schools. Dave interacted with several students from grades 7 – 12 and spoke with them about VDOF, how to become a forester, and what it is like to have a career in natural resources management
- ◆ Associate Professor of Urban Forestry at Virginia Tech P. Eric Wiseman, Ph.D., asked Rich Reuse (area forester) to measure a large cottonwood which hadn't been measured since 2008. It turns out it is now the second largest tree in Virginia. Kathleen Ogilvy (area forester) helped Rich with measuring the tree located in Chesterfield. It measured in at a circumference of 325 inches, height of 85 feet, and crown of 109 feet. The tree is located on property at Bermuda Hundred in Chesterfield County. John Smith first visited the site in 1607. The Union Army used the property as a base of operations for the Bermuda Hundred campaign during the Civil War. The property is directly across the James River from Shirley Plantation. The updated Big Tree record can be found here: <http://bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/detail.cfm?AutofieldforPrimaryKey=1351>

Central Region

- ◆ Joe Rossetti and Jordan Herring (senior area foresters), Sarah Parmelee (area forester), Kinner Ingram (community forestry specialist), and Darwin Rhodes (forest technician) conducted a prescribed burn in Rappahannock County on a riparian grassland site. This was the third (previous burns in 2009 and 2012), and probably final burn on the same site, as the landowner has decided to change management here from grassland to riparian forest. VDOF is working with Friends of the Rappahannock to conduct the tree planting in the spring of 2021. (Pictured)



- ◆ Joe Rossetti was the first emergency responder on scene of a two vehicle accident at a busy intersection in Culpeper County. The scene came into view as both vehicles were coming to a rest. Joe was able to secure the scene, make initial assessment of the three vehicle occupants, communicate

the situation to county dispatch, and direct traffic until police, ambulance, and fire department resources arrived. Luckily, none of the three occupants were seriously injured.

News Clips

- ◆ [Seedling farm in Augusta County aims to keep Virginia green](#)
- ◆ [In Virginia Beach, city and environmentalists turn to planting trees to slow flooding woes](#)
- ◆ [Fun Fact: More Than 75 National Forests Will Let You Chop Down Your Own Christmas Tree](#)
- ◆ [Innovative Finance for National Forests Grant Program Fosters New Ideas, Partnerships](#)
- ◆ [For love of nature: 500-Year Forests for the future](#)
- ◆ [Forest Service begins making biochar at wildfire recovery site](#)
- ◆ [Country's forest cover: When green turns to red](#)
- ◆ [Forest management could reduce carbon dioxide emissions by billions of tons a year: Study](#)
- ◆ [Wood-based wound care product with exceptional benefits](#)
- ◆ [Walmart's Acres for America Program Aims to Protect an Additional 113,500+ Acres of Wildlife Habitat Through New Grants](#)
- ◆ [Cape Charles Natural Area Expands, Reopens](#)
- ◆ [Harrisonburg honored once again as Tree City USA](#)
- ◆ [Only 40% of world's forests have high ecological integrity, a new index reveals](#)
- ◆ [Sylvacurl: Reduces waste, supports healthy forests and local economy](#)
- ◆ [Above the Waterline: Signs of hope in new forest preserve, tree protection efforts](#)
- ◆ [Forest Service report supports pipeline's route through the Jefferson National Forest](#)