From: Farrell, Robert
To: DOF-ALL EMPLOYEES
Subject: The Branch
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Happy New Year everyone,

I wanted to share how thankful I am for all of you that make up the DOF. I am very hopeful about the opportunities we have in the year ahead and thankful for everything that you all have done to get us here. In Sunday's Richmond Times Dispatch, the front page of the Commentary section was an editorial by Peggy Sanner of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation extolling all the benefits of trees and the need for localities to plant more trees. Trees are in the headlines these days and that is great news. It means opportunities for us but also increased expectations, these are two opposing forces that we have to try to balance.

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Virginia Senator Ben Chafin. Senator Chafin was a cattle farmer from Russell County and a strong supporter of the VDOF. He was one of the champions of the significant funding for our new firefighting equipment and our law improvements related to timber theft. With his passing the legislature has lost another rural landowner and the knowledge of working lands that comes with it. This means more pressure on us to tell others what we do and why it is important.

Senator Chafin died from complications related to COVID-19. This is a reminder that the New Year doesn't start with a clean slate. The risk from COVID-19 is as high today as it has ever been. We have to continue to be careful and do everything we can to protect each other, our loved ones and those we serve. This week may be one of the riskiest for us as we come back together after the holidays, be extra careful to avoid contact as much as possible.

We did not submit weekly reports to Secretary Ring over the holidays so there is no Branch attachment this week.

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