



January 11, 2021

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Employee News

Congratulations – Sarah Parmelee!

- ◆ Rappahannock Work Area Forester Sarah Parmelee has been selected as our new Forestland Conservation Coordinator. Sarah brings a wealth of field knowledge, GIS experience and conservation work to the newly created position. Sarah will be our primary contact for stewarding our 190+ working forest easements, developing strategy for the conservation program and assisting with our

conservation grants and new property acquisition. Please congratulate Sarah on her new position. She begins on January 11.

Welcome to VDOF – Starting January 11

- ◆ VDOF would like to welcome Daniel Hosack, who has been selected as an area forester in the Mount Rogers work area. He is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and will graduate from Virginia Tech with Bachelor of Science Forest Management degree in December. He was a VDOF intern at the Matthews State Forest.
- ◆ Please welcome the latest addition to the Eastern Region's Blackwater work area, Kendall Topping. Kendall comes to the VDOF with an undergraduate degree from Lynchburg College and a Masters from the University of Pennsylvania in Natural Resources Management. She brings experience working with the City of Norfolk, Tree Pittsburgh, Philadelphia's emerald ash borer program, and as an educator with the Elizabeth River project. Kendall will be serving as a Community Forester, focusing on Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF) and Coastal Resilience while also supporting traditional VDOF forest management, wildfire, and water quality programs.
- ◆ The VDOF would like to welcome Chris Roux, who was recently selected as a forest technician in the Meherrin Work Area (Central Region). Chris is a native of Mecklenburg County and has experience as a volunteer firefighter, having served as an Assistant Chief for the Lake Gaston VFD. He also has 2 1/2 years of experience working for a consulting forester doing fireline installation, equipment maintenance, tree planting supervision, prescribed burning and herbicide application.
- ◆ The VDOF will also like to welcome Zach Long, who was recently selected as a forest technician in the Jefferson work area (Central Region). Zach has five years as a career firefighter in Henrico County and served in the U.S. Marine Corps as a Staff Sergeant. Most recently he was an Arborist Crew Leader for Bartlett Tree Experts, and currently resides in Louisa County. He also is an ISA certified arborist and a nationally registered EMT.

Condolences

- ◆ The first Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry Honorable Robert S. Bloxom, Sr. passed away December 13, 2020. Please see the link for details. <https://shoredailynews.com/obituaries/the-honorable-robert-s-bloxom/>

Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL) for 2021

- ◆ As we begin a new "Leave Year", we want to advise that effective January 10, 2021, the hours of paid leave provided in the Public Health Emergency Leave Policy (PHEL) will remain to a maximum of 80 hours per leave year.
- ◆ Our agency's generous paid leave program, which includes PHEL, helped us navigate workforce uncertainties, address employee anxieties, and allowed us the necessary time to implement workplace protections and alternative business models in a mindful way.
- ◆ Let us remember that the purpose of PHEL is to provide a temporary emergency benefit rather than an ongoing expanded leave entitlement. Based on the evolution of 2020, including the implementation of Emergency Temporary Standards for a Safe Return to Work, the stabilization and expansion of remote work, and creative scheduling adjustments to support employees and work/life balance, VDOF appears to be well prepared to anticipate and absorb COVID-19 related absences with PHEL at 80 hours in combination with annual leave, sick leave, family personal leave, Family Medical Leave (FML), and Virginia Sickness and Disability Program (VSDP) disability leave.

- ◆ In addition, the state's Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM) acknowledges the special stresses that virtual learning and unpredictable school schedules have created for parents and employees having special needs children or eldercare issues and any of a myriad of daily challenges. The following exceptions related to PHEL eligibility/usage will continue:
 - Caring for family members diagnosed with COVID-19.
 - Reasonable time to make child/dependent care/hybrid learning arrangements if related to COVID-19 business closings.
- ◆ DHRM will continue to monitor future federal and state legislation and state workforce developments related to COVID-19 throughout the 2021 – 2022 Leave Year to determine potential impact on employee leave benefits. Please send any questions you may have to our Human Resources Team.



Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry

- ◆ The finance team organized a Tree of Generosity (pictured) to help out at the holidays! In a short amount of time, thanks to many VDOF staff, 99 pounds of much-needed supplies were donated to Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry!

Action Requested

2021 State of the Forest Report

- ◆ The 2020 State of the Forest Report is an achievement we can all be proud of. Each year the report highlights many of our outstanding accomplishments and current data to tell the story of forests and forestry in Virginia. Each of us plays a role in that story and has a part to tell. Public Information invites you to share your successes and ideas for the 2021 State of the Forest throughout the year. Have you received a letter or email from a landowner recognizing your hard work or the efforts of one of your staff? Maybe a project you've worked on has yielded interesting results or data. Let's not forget photographs of projects and events. These are the kinds of things that make our story compelling. When you have an idea, a story, photos or data to share for next year's State of the Forest, please let us know. It's as easy as sending an email to publicinfo@dof.virginia.gov.

Project Updates

Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ Recently the Virginia Urban Wood Project participated in the Urban Wood Network's webinar entitled "Helping Municipalities Develop Urban Wood Management Programs". The webinar featured the Virginia Urban Wood Program's work with communities across the state and also the U&CF's development of an Urban Forest Management Plan template, and was presented by Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) and Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator). There were approximately 85 attendees from across the United States.
- ◆ The Virginia Urban Wood Project also published the fifth edition of the VA Urban Wood Newsletter which was sent to 294 recipients. Following is a link to the most recent newsletter which featured stringed musical instruments created from urban/local wood <https://conta.cc/3rac6bQ>.

News You Can Use

VDOF Infectious Disease Prevention Plan

- ◆ There is no doubt that we all hope to beat COVID-19 in 2021. Yet, more than ever we must increase our awareness of the current situation and remain vigilant of the necessary steps to prevent the spread or infection. The [VDOF Infectious Disease Prevention Plan](#) that yields general guidance on our agency's posture for safeguarding our workforce from infectious diseases is posted on the website on the Coronavirus Information page under Employee Resources.

IRS Standard Mileage Rate Change

- ◆ Beginning on January 1, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:
 - 56 cents per mile driven or business use, down 1.5 cents from the rate for 2020.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Quarantine Regulations

- ◆ The U. S. Department of Agriculture-Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will remove the federal domestic emerald ash borer (EAB) quarantine regulations, effective January 14. This means that there will no longer be federal regulations on the movement of ash wood and ash wood products. The quarantine has been unsuccessful at stopping the spread of this invasive pest. By removing the domestic quarantine regulations, APHIS can redirect available resources toward rearing and releasing tiny wasps to serve as biological control agents. The EAB quarantine in Virginia was statewide for many years (meaning no restrictions on movement of ash products within the state), so this new rule will have little impact on our activities. VDOF will continue to discourage the movement of firewood, advocate for the treatment of healthy specimen ash trees, and release biological control agents where appropriate. Please contact the Forest Health Program staff if you have questions.

Woods & Wildlife Conference

- ◆ The annual Woods & Wildlife Conference is going virtual this year! The conference will be held via Zoom on Friday, Feb. 19 from 1:30-5 PM and Saturday, Feb. 20 from 8 AM-12:45 PM. Please spread the word to landowners about this natural resource learning opportunity. All information can be found here:
<https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu/landownerprograms/ConferencesandWorkshops2/WoodsandWildlifeConferences.html>

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Jefferson Work Area Senior Area Forester David Powell has been elected as the Chairperson of the Virginia Division of the Society of American Foresters. David is a long-time member of the professional organization and was recently honored with the title of Fellow within the organization.

Fire and Emergency Response:

- ◆ The Code of Virginia tasks the VDOF with administering a program that trains and certifies prospective prescribed burning managers in best management practices for safe burning and smoke management. Normally the agency holds a single, in-person Certified Prescribed Burn Manager course and certification each year in September. As more and more agencies, NGOs and private organizations have begun to use prescribed burning as a management tool on their lands, the demand for the course

has remained high since its inception over 20 years ago. As with many things in all areas of our lives this past year, the agency was unable to hold its normal class, despite the continuing high demand from across the Commonwealth. With so much uncertainty about when circumstances will return to normal, the agency has chosen to move the course to an online format, both for 2021 and for future courses. The course is led by VDOF Fire Prevention Program Manager Fred Turck and supported by the cadre of instructors from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia Tech, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the National Weather Service, the Nature Conservancy, the VDOF and others. Course material has been recorded in digital format and the testing material are ready for the first cohort of students. The course's first online offering will take place January 19 – 22, 2021.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ We are excited to share with you a new resource developed through the Generation NEXT program to help Virginia families plan for the future of their forestland. *Legacy Planning, A Guide for Virginia Landowners*, provides Virginia-specific support material for the Generation NEXT Legacy Planning Workshops offered by Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE). Until now, we have been using a collection of material from various sources. The Generation NEXT guidebook gives woodland owners manageable steps to move through the legacy planning process.

Our research shows that most woodland owners want their land to stay intact, in forest, and in the family. Unfortunately, land is most vulnerable to subdivision, land-use change, and being sold out of the family when it passes from one generation to the next. This is often a result of poor (or no) planning. Fortunately, with proper planning and communication, undesirable outcomes can be avoided. The new Generation NEXT publication leads families through a nine-step process to help ensure everyone's wishes for the land are met.

The publication is designed specifically for private woodland owners and natural resource professionals. The printed workbooks will be available in January. You can view the [electronic document here](#)

We hope you are as enthusiastic about this resource as we are and will share this resource anywhere it might help. Keeping land intact, in forest and in family is vital to protecting Virginia's forest resources. This new publication is a big addition to the toolbox to help families and natural resource professionals take the steps necessary to make sure that happens.

- ◆ The VA Generation NEXT Team:
 - VDOF: Andrew Fotinos, Amanda Scheps and Terry Lasher (interim)
 - VCE: Jennifer Gagnon, Bill Worrell, Jason Fisher, Neil Clark, Adam Downing
 - Program Coordinator: Karen Snape
- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) attended the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) Interagency Team meeting. At this meeting multiple agencies gathered to discuss grant applications for this round of VLCF funding. Terry ranked and reported on four different applications within the Forestry category. The group will meet again January 9 to make final decisions.
- ◆ Terry Lasher represented the VDOF at the monthly Chesapeake Bay Interagency Team meeting. Each representative updated the team on agency progress towards Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III) goal implementation.
- ◆ Terry Lasher represented the VDOF at the Chesapeake Bay Principle Staff Committee meeting. Topics covered were new advancements to gauge and address the impacts of climate change to the WIP

goals, state reports and how Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) distributes funds for the Bay strategy.

- ◆ Terry Lasher attended the Conserve Virginia 3.0 listening session. The meeting was attended by more than 100 individuals from the public and private sectors discussing agency contributions to the program, new updates and deadlines for updates.
- ◆ Terry Lasher represented the VDOF on the interagency Volunteer Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) Taskforce. The objective of the taskforce is to put together a farmer survey, compile results and develop a strategy to better utilize BMP's to improve water quality.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ On December 18, VDOF issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for forestry consultants to develop forest management plans using the hardwood assessment tool developed by VDOF and to coordinate implementation of practices <https://vendor.cgieva.com/webapp/VSSAPP/VBO>. The work will be on private forestlands in portions of Bath and Alleghany counties and is funded by a grant from the USDA Forest Service to the VDOF. The work is part of a collaborative effort to improve forest resources, habitat and water quality on all lands (private, federal, state) in the Lower Cowpasture River watershed. Given the nature of the forests in that area, the work will also support Virginia's Hardwood Initiative. This is separate from, and in addition to, the announcement shared earlier this month for a contract forester associated with mitigation for the Mountain Valley Pipeline (<https://www.usendowment.org/who-we-are/jobopportunities/>). That position is being recruited by the U. S. Endowment for Forests and Communities (closed December 31), and will assist in developing enhancement projects on public lands in counties within 50 miles of the pipeline route. It will also include use of the new hardwood assessment tool and support the Hardwood Initiative.
- ◆ The 2020 Virginia Tree Farm of the Year, owned and managed by the late John Matel and his family, was recognized with the placement of a new sign on the property located in Brunswick County. The new sign was erected at the entrance of the family tree farm. John was a self-taught and very motivated conservationist. He had a true passion for forestry and doing his part to restore longleaf pine in Virginia. John will always be remembered as a great conservationist and gentleman of leisure as he proclaimed his passion for forestry to everyone he came in contact with. (Pictured)
 
- ◆ On December 16, Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) attended a Virginia Resilient Coastal Forests State Advisory Committee conference call. The meeting was facilitated by the Green Infrastructure Center and attended by several other state natural resource agency staff. The group reviewed the status of the project in Virginia and then discussed threats to coastal forested landscapes including fire, sea level rise, storm surge, urban development, disturbance, and invasive species.
- ◆ Student Intern Michelle Page from Virginia Tech has been compiling historical data about the Reforestation of Timberlands Program (RT). She has summarized information on the original legislation, first meetings of the RT Committee, first RT projects, and helping to draft information as VDOF commemorates the 50th anniversary of the RT Program. She also worked on the trail that circles the Headquarters property. She inventoried and assessed the existing interpretive signs and markers, offered suggestions for new signs, performed maintenance on water bars, and policed the area around the trailhead.
- ◆ Student Intern Amelia Kahle from James Madison University is compiling landowner contact information in the Lower Cowpasture Watershed and helping to draft outreach materials. This will

assist in VDOF's efforts to engage landowners in forest management planning and practices. The project area is in Bath and Alleghany Counties and part of the Joint Chiefs project and grant.

- ◆ Katlin Dewitt (forest health specialist) and Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) participated in a planning meeting for the annual Virginia Association of Forest Health Professionals virtual conference which will take place on Feb 8 and 9. More information about this event can be found here: <https://www.vafhp.org/>. Interested VDOF staff should first coordinate with their supervisors and then notify [Katlin](#) of their interest in attending.
- ◆ VDOF Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) crews have completed 15 percent of field work on the VA2020 panel of plots. Southern Research Station Forest Inventory staff are continuing to process the results of the VA2019 panel data collection, which will then be sent to VDOF for a 30 day review.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center (GGFC) lifted 1,023,000 seedlings during the week of December 14-18, despite some weather-related delays and the implementation of numerous changes in nursery operation to assure COVID-19 safety. The seedlings that were lifted accumulated more than 400 chilling hours, which is a common standard among nurseries. GGFC will utilize several cold storages this year, including both units at New Kent Forestry Center, contractor cold storages, and a rented unit in Courtland.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) completed data entry and a short summary for the eight locations of the Virginia Tech Forest Modeling Research Cooperative's (FMRC) thinning study plots located on Appomattox-Buckingham and Prince Edward State Forests. The data have been forwarded to the FMRC. The results are ultimately intended to help update and improve the models we use to forecast the growth of stands under different silvicultural regimes; but they also document the exceptional growth we are getting from stands established with seedlings from our second generation seed orchards without current competition control practices. The trees now average 29 years old with a measured site index (base age 25) that averages 80 feet (77 on ABSF, 83 on PESF). Two of the three unthinned plots at Prince Edward are carrying nearly 300 sq. ft. of basal area at age 30. Historically, site indices were believed to be closer to 60 in central VA and a basal area of 200 would have been exceptional. Today's stands (established with superior selections from our third cycle orchards and earlier hardwood control - are growing even more wood at a faster pace. Here is an overall summary from these stands:

Treatment	DBH	Total Height	Crown Height	D/CD Height	Crown Length (%)	Approx. Site Index
No Thin	10.0	82	58	87	29%	79
Light Thin	12.4	85	53	88	37%	81
Heavy Thin	14.2	83	47	86	44%	80

- ◆ Jerre Creighton, Jack Kaufman (forester specialist), Jonathan Banton (winter intern), and Adam Downing (VCE forester) visited properties along the Roach River in Greene County where landowners have found numerous surviving butternut trees. Butternut is another tree species that has greatly diminished due to a fungal pathogen that was likely introduced from outside the species' native range. The group discussed options for preserving and possibly securing nuts from these trees to use to establish a small planting to evaluate their resistance to the disease. We may also reach out to USFS researchers who are working to preserve the species (https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/disturbance/invasive_species/butternut_canker/).

Central Region

- ◆ Jim McGlone (urban forest conservationist) participated in a meeting of the Washington Council of Governments Regional Tree Canopy Management subcommittee. The group has been charged with developing guidance for the establishment and strengthening of urban forestry programs in the region. Jim is the lead on two documents related to Tree Planting Programs and urban forest plans.
- ◆ Below is a short article included that was in the Pittsylvania Soil and Water Conservation District's (PSWCD) quarterly newsletter regarding the 2020 Ag-Day at Heritage Academy in which Drew Arnn (senior area forester) participated.
 - This year has been a little different for everyone due to COVID-19. The PSWCD decided to cancel our annual two day 'Ag Day' event. However, this did not stop us from having a smaller 'Ag Day' at Heritage Academy in Dry Fork on September 10. We were able to involve the entire school, grades pre-k through 8th, in this year's event. Students and teachers were able to rotate through seven different stations and learned about forestry, crops, horses, conservation, livestock, dairy, and wildlife. There were lots of learning, fun, masks, hand sanitizer, and social distancing to make sure everyone was safe. The event was a success and we hope to partner up more with Heritage Academy for educational events in the future. Thank you to all of our presenters, volunteers, sponsors, and teachers who helped make this day such a success! (Pictured)



Public Information

- ◆ VDOF is sponsoring the Wildlife Center of Virginia's weekly program, "Untamed." The one-hour program, which airs on public television in Richmond, Charlottesville and the Valley, begins its 2021 season this April. A 15-second message will run during each episode, each encore episode, and online for a total of nearly 100 messages. This sponsorship is one segment of VDOF's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the RT program.
- ◆ The following stories in "Field Notes" have been particularly popular:
 - [Longleaf Pine Planting at Big Woods](#)
 - [Disturbance Ecology in the Swamp](#)

News Clips

- ◆ [As solar farms multiply across Virginia, officials reckon with land use challenges](#)
- ◆ [Governor Northam Awards Grants to Fauquier, Pulaski, and Roanoke Counties to Advance Local Agriculture and Forestry Initiatives](#)
- ◆ [December is proclaimed as Virginia Christmas Tree Month](#)
- ◆ [Christmas tree farm brightens customers' holidays](#)
- ◆ [White Paper: Family-owned Forests and Carbon Markets](#)
- ◆ [Movement turns abandoned housing into beautiful furniture, fighting climate change and growing jobs in the process](#)
- ◆ [Builders Embrace the Rebirth of Wood Through Mass Timber](#)
- ◆ [How Mass Timber Could Help Reduce Wildfire Risk](#)

- ◆ [Seedling farm in Augusta County aims to keep Virginia green](#)
- ◆ [APHIS Changes Approach to Fight Emerald Ash Borer \(EAB\)](#)
- ◆ [Pacific Biochar Secures First U.S. Biochar Carbon Credits](#)
- ◆ [COVID-19 Impacts On The Forest Sector: 2020 And Beyond](#)
- ◆ [North American Softwood Lumber Capacity Continues to Shift South](#)
- ◆ [Binderholz Group wins auction of Klausner Lumber Two in North Carolina, USA and thus expands further in the USA](#)
- ◆ [Mankind's Next Killer App: Wood](#)
- ◆ [Study shows benefits of wooden surfaces in fight against spread of coronavirus](#)
- ◆ [Reforestation in Richmond](#)
- ◆ [Advocacy group presses for culling of deer population in Arlington](#)
- ◆ [Virginia's Big Tree Program Finds Balance Between Tree Science and Community Engagement](#)
- ◆ [This retired couple made 1,400 toys to give away this Christmas](#)
- ◆ [Why do we have Christmas trees? The surprising history behind this holiday tradition.](#)
- ◆ [Walmart grows its commitment to forest conservation](#)
- ◆ [Restoring longleaf pines, keystone of once vast ecosystems](#)
- ◆ [Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation purchases over 800 acres in Giles, Bland Counties](#)
- ◆ [Peggy Sanner column: Trees are improving communities. Virginia legislators can help.](#)