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To:	DOF-ALL EMPLOYEES
Subject:	The Branch
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Hello Everyone;

Good news this week, we have not had any additional cases of coronavirus reported at VDOF in the past few days. Hopefully we can keep it that way and get everyone healthy and out of quarantine. There was a statewide Agency Heads conference call last week to discuss vaccination plans for state employees. There weren't any significant updates, just trying to clarify how prioritization is being done based on job duties or roles. As Ed described last week we have very few positions in our agency that meet the requirements of the highest prioritization at this time. Our best strategy is to continue to wear masks and maintain social distancing until vaccine supplies can be increased significantly. Thanks again to our folks working with VDEM and VDH to improve coordination and logistics for vaccine distribution.

Last week Ed Zimmer and I met with some of the leadership at the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) to discuss cooperation on law enforcement, the hardwood habitat initiative, and prescribed burning training. It was a very positive meeting and I think we are equally committed to helping each other out however we can. Their head of law enforcement mentioned again how much he enjoyed being part of our all-agency meeting a few years ago.

The rest of this message is about the General Assembly session so jump off here if you want to. I understand. Totally.

I was thinking this would be a calm GA session for us because we didn't have any significant legislation of our own to work on. I was wrong. This has been the most hectic GA session I have ever seen, due to the compressed schedule and to the number of bills that relate to trees and forests. Great to be a part of the action, but it's a lot of action. Discussion of the budget will probably occur in a special session after the regular session ends so no news there yet. There is a lot of effort around tree retention during development and urban tree planting for tree canopy. It looks like VDOF will be leading a study of this in the coming year to bring all the stakeholders together, a great challenge and a great opportunity for us to lead. Also lots of discussion about solar development, land conservation, environmental justice, neonicotinoid pesticides, carbon sequestration, wildlife corridors, and other stuff.

Have a good week and stay safe.

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