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Employee Spotlight

Blackwater Work Area – Well Done!

- ◆ Recently, Scott Bachman (senior area forester) took a call from, Mr. Bridgers, an out of state landowner that has a property in Southampton County. Mr. Bridgers said they had a stand plan that was produced by a former VDOF employee. In the stand plan, timber management activity was suggested in 2020 or 2021. He was following up to begin the process of marketing his timber. Scott discussed the steps he should take, getting a plan, finding a consultant, reforestation after harvest and cost-share options. At the end of the call, the landowner’s wife spoke up and said she had been listening to the conversation and wanted to say that any time they had called our office that they had received great information from pleasant people.

- ◆ Scott thanked them for their kind comments and said that our only reason for being is to assist landowners with their forest management needs. Scott added that it was nice to have positive feedback from a client and that our foresters are producing plans that are being used to guide their actions.

VDOF News

Mike and Brandon Womack – Thank you!

- ◆ Mike Womack (forest management specialist) and Brandon Womack (part-timer) cut and moved a tree that fell directly across the Holiday Creek Cross Training multi-use trail/Holliday Lake State Park Lakeshore trail (shared crossing). The crossing was completely blocked by a tree and debris that was deposited by recent storms. The storms washed out the bank under the tree causing it to fall.

The below email was received from Park Manager Holliday Lake State Park Anne L. Reeder.

- "Hey Mike, just wanted to thank you for getting that huge tree off of Holiday Creek and our trail-wish I could have seen how that was done!

News You Can Use

Form 4.9 Prescribed Burn Management Plan – Updated!

- ◆ A revised [Form 4.9 Prescribed Burn Management Plan](#) has been posted to the intranet and website. Make sure you use the one dated 1/15/21 as the ventilation rate values have been changed to reflect values provided in the daily fire weather forecast.
- Please get this out to any cooperators who may utilize our form. If you have any questions please contact [Fred Turck](#).

4PM Road signs

- ◆ Please remember to turn your roadside wildfire prevention signs around to the 4PM side. Over the last two years, many replacement signs have been distributed to the regions; make sure your signs are in good shape, as they are a representation of you and the agency. There is not currently a supply of new signs at headquarters, but some may still be available in each regional office. Please work with your regional fire specialist if new signs are needed.

Prevention Messaging

- ◆ As spring wildfire season progresses, if you have a need for any specific prevention messaging please connect with [Fred Turck](#). Please take every opportunity to promote our Law Enforcement Program AND, as part of that, our Smokey Bear Prevention Program. Remember the “3 Es and an A of Prevention”: Engineering, Education and Enforcement and the A stands for Administration.

1099-G Tax Forms

- ◆ Finance has completed mailing 1099-G forms for our cost-share program recipients as they get ready to file their 2020 taxes. In case you receive any questions from landowners:
 - These forms were mailed the week of January 25th.
 - If the landowner participated in multiple programs, s/he will receive only one 1099 showing a total incentive amount from VDOF.
 - Everyone who participated in a cost-share program in 2020 will receive a 1099; however, using the 1099 will depend on the recipient's filing status. Please refer landowners to their tax

consultant if they have tax related questions. Resources to assist landowners in handling taxes related to their cost share incentives are available at www.timbertax.org and www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/tax

- Landowners who used their incentive to cover the cost of VDOF services may notice the amount shown on their 1099 is higher than the check they received. The full incentive amount is reportable income, regardless of payments made to VDOF.
- ◆ If you have any questions, please contact [Amanda Jones](#).

Project Updates

FiResponse - Updated Mobile App now available

- ◆ A new version of the app is available in the Google Play Store.
- ◆ The updates include:
 - Resolves operational issues on a couple of models of agency phones.
 - Improves app operation in low or no cell coverage areas by adding a “My Edits” button to the home screen.
 - The apps access to the supplemental maps on the included microSD card has been repaired, which resolves a known issue in poor cell coverage areas.
 - The resource dispatching process within the mobile app has been refined to improve functionality. Dispatching can now only occur within the Resources tab of an incident, including self-dispatching. This change improves the workflow of this process.
 - GPS use and functionality has been improved.
- ◆ Users are strongly encouraged to perform a complete uninstall of the old app, including deletion of the fiResponseCP folder on the phone, prior to downloading and installing the new app. Anyone having questions on that process should contact fire staff for help.

Important: Edits within the app no longer sync automatically and must be manually pushed after completion within the app. This change was needed to resolve a number of issues experienced in poor cell coverage areas.

Policy and Procedures

Policy and Procedure 6-2 Emerald Ash Borer Cost-Share Program

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 6-2, Emerald Ash Borer Cost-Share Program](#), has been edited for 2021. This is the last year of the cost-share program and funds are significantly reduced, so cost-share will be allocated as follows:
 - Eastern Region: \$20,000 available for all applicants (landowners and organizations)
 - Central Region: \$10,000 available for organizations only
 - Western Region: \$10,000 available for organizations only
 - No more than \$5,000 per federal fiscal year will be allocated per locality.
- ◆ More information will be sent out prior to open enrollment on April 12.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell and Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) met with Department Wildlife Resources (DWR) Director Ryan Brown, and DWR Head of Law Enforcement Major Scott Neff to discuss further agency collaboration in law enforcement. DWR is seeking a formal acknowledgment from VDOF for DWR to conduct law enforcement on state forest properties, primarily to set decoys to catch deer poachers.
 - VDOF and DWR also discussed the Virginia Hardwood Forest Habitat Initiative and the potential of collaborating to expand the amount of habitat-improvement work currently conducted on Wildlife Management Areas
- ◆ Rob Farrell participated in the 2021 Legislative Forestry Briefing hosted by the Virginia Forestry Association and the Virginia Forest Products Association and provided an update on agency legislative matters and priorities for 2021.

Fire Emergency and Response

- ◆ The first ever offering of the completely virtual Virginia Certified Prescribed Burn Managers course was completed January 22. Eighty students from Virginia, North Carolina, District of Columbia, Illinois, and Texas participated. Roughly 75% of the students took the course because they were interested in better managing of their own property, as opposed to being agency burn cooperators and professional land managers.
 - Plans are underway to collaborate with the Southern states to develop a generic virtual version of this course which can then be used by any state through the simple addition of a state specific add-on. Additionally, there is interest in developing a shorter virtual offering which provides information for the public, rather than the complete formal course leading to certification.
- ◆ Eight VDOF employees are currently providing Incident Management Team support to Virginia Department Emergency Management (VDEM) and Virginia Department Health (VDH) as part of the ongoing COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Filling a role in what VDEM is now calling the Commonwealth of Virginia Incident Management Team (COVIMT), the team is coordinating vaccine distribution at 10 mass vaccination sites around the Commonwealth.
- ◆ In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the agency has extended its self-imposed moratorium on issuing citations for normal, minor fire law violations, including 4PM violations. Instead, our staff will work to educate landowners who appear to violate safe debris laws. This moratorium does not apply to our collection of suppression costs, which in itself serves as a deterrent to unsafe fire practices.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) conducted a business development visit to Po' Critter Farm & Lumber near Barboursville. Larry Sappington and his wife own the business, which specializes in lumber drying and sales. We were able to help him with log transportation solutions for their clients and business development options.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ John Pemberton (forest inventory manager) attended a virtual Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) Committee meeting for the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) on January 20- 21. Topics included budget; staffing changes; re-instituting a Regional FIA Management Team; training issues; remote training tools; data collection equipment upgrades; and cyber-security requirements.

- ◆ On January 20, Jessica Carroll (fiscal technician) and Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management) opened the Requests for Proposals (RFP) for the Forest Management Planning/Practices using the Hardwood Assessment Tool in the Lower Cowpasture Watershed area (Bath/Alleghany County). Four proposals from consulting foresters were received. Patti Nylander (senior area forester) and Clint Folks (area forester) in the Mountain Valley Work Area reviewed the proposals on January 21. The review team will gather additional information from the submitters before any decisions are made.
- ◆ On January 21, each of the three regional VDOF hardwood training groups met via phone and computer. The group has nominated over 20 demonstration sites from across the Commonwealth. Each site will have a local VDOF lead that will take stand data using the Hardwood Assessment Tool to document and score initial stand conditions, based upon management objective. The leads will begin developing more specific plans for implementation. Many of the sites are on state forests or state land, with a few on private land. Demonstrating hardwood practices is an important element of our emerging Hardwood Initiative.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) was recertified as a drone pilot. The forest health program uses drones to assess the canopy of damaged stands. This technique has been used for beetle spots, defoliators, and thinning projects.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt met with Lisa Deaton (area forester) on January 22 to look at dead and dying pines at three locations in Gloucester County. Evidence of southern pine beetle, ips, and black turpentine were found at these locations on mature, stressed pine trees. Tree mortality was spotty and no large beetle spots were detected. Landowners were informed of the dead and dying trees and will cut them down to stop the beetles from spreading.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) worked with a Forest Productivity Research Cooperative crew from Virginia Tech and North Carolina State to apply fertilizer treatments for a new study designed to estimate soil water and nitrogen fertilizer usage of competing vegetation as compared to crop pine trees in a mid-rotation loblolly pine stand. This trial is reusing the plots of the completed study of site preparation and release at Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest (ABSF). Pictured (left to right) are Megan Van-Spanje and Zach Grover (NC State), Creighton, Alexander Byers (VT), and Drs. Rachel Cook and David Carter (coop co-directors from NC State and VT, respectively)



- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center (GGFC) has graded 3,981,000 trees this season. The total GGFC inventory sold is 28,874,890.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton assisted Forest Modeling Research Cooperative staff with baseline measurements of the newly-installed post-thin competition control and fertilizer study at Prince Edward State Forest.
- ◆ Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester) collected field data at Hockley to verify northern breeding region loblolly pine selection candidates for the North Carolina State Cooperative Tree Improvement Program. Tree Improvement Program (TIP) staff identified 116 trees for this in-field evaluation across

the 4th-Cycle Piedmont/Northern progeny tests measured through fall 2020. The data Ones gathered confirmed all candidates from Virginia.

- ◆ Jeff Stout (tree improvement technician) finalized site prep for the 2021 progeny test planting site at New Kent.
- ◆ In the pursuit for the white pine orchard rehabilitation at ABSF, Ones Bitoki met with William Pepper of the Woodland Renovation company on Friday January 22 to assess the feasibility and cost. William estimated that it would take two hours per acre to clean and mulch all dead and fallen trees. The total cost would be close to \$20,000.

Central Region

- ◆ Jordan Herring (senior area forester) led a virtual workshop on tree pruning for residents of Purcellville. The presentation touched on different methods of pruning, how to safely prune depending on the objective, and common mistakes made when pruning trees. The next virtual workshop will be held in February and it will educate the residents on tree planting.

News Clips

- ◆ [Remembrance Forests in Brazil: 200,000 trees for 200,000 COVID-19 victims](#)
- ◆ [New podcast explains how prescribed fire helps plants, animals and people](#)
- ◆ [The forests that won't grow back](#)
- ◆ [VANCOUVER LADDER FACTORY MAKES ITS LAST WOODEN LADDER](#)
- ◆ [Wood products manufacturer will create 73 jobs in Russell County](#)
- ◆ [The Art of Saving America's Endangered Forests](#)
- ◆ [Letter: Nick Clemente, Leesburg Editor: Fun Forest and farming facts](#)
- ◆ [Senate panel backs bill exempting carbon agreements from Freedom of Information Act](#)
- ◆ [Forests Absorb Twice As Much Carbon As They Emit Each Year](#)
- ◆ [One of the most biodiverse regions in the US is also its least protected](#)
- ◆ [Tree Rings Reveal How Ancient Forests Were Managed](#)
- ◆ [Conservation Fund's Green Bonds Pay Off: Eight Forests And 220,000 Acres](#)