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Employee Spotlight

- ◆ Kyle Manning (forest technician) assisted Amherst Fire and Rescue with rescuing two teenagers on Panther Falls Road during the night of February 10. The teenagers had been driving their Jeep Liberty on an U.S. Forest Service road when the conditions turned icy and the vehicle slid off the road. Their vehicle ended up on the edge of a steep hill, but the boys were able to get out and call 911. Amherst County dispatch called Kyle to ask if he could bring the UTV to help get the boys out. The road was impassable by regular vehicles due to ice and overall conditions of the road. So, Kyle and the Pedlar Fire Department used UTV’s to ferry the boys about 6 miles out to the main road. The UTVs had to ride in the ditch in some places to gain traction due to the icy conditions. Sam Bryant , Emergency Services Coordinator for Amherst County, expressed his appreciation for the help Kyle and VDOF provided in rescuing the two young men.

Employee News

Congratulations – Josh Shepko!

- ◆ Congratulations to Josh Shepko who has been selected to fill the recently vacated database administrator position in Information Technology. Josh has been with VDOF for about a year and half and has done a great job providing technology support to staff and agency technology systems, while learning about VDOF. We look forward to working with Josh as he takes on this new role.

Welcome to VDOF!

- ◆ Teagan O'Brien has been selected as the VDOF forest health technician. He comes with experience in forest health monitoring and invasive species treatment from his work as an AmeriCorps Resource Crew Member with Virginia State Parks. Teagan will coordinate VDOF's emerald ash borer program and assist with other forest health monitoring work. His first day is February 25.

Condolences

- ◆ A befitting tribute to Page's life can be found at the Gloucester-Matthews Gazette Journal's website at <https://www.gazettejournal.net/page-k-hutchinson/>. For those who have inquired about donations to honor Page's memory, the family suggests the Audubon Nature Institute <https://audubonnatureinstitute.org/donate> or The Nature Conservancy <https://www.nature.org/en-us/membership-and-giving/donate-to-our-mission/>. Many thanks to Lisa Deaton for sharing Page's obituary and the link to the Gazette Journal.

Last Week

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester), Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry [U&CF] program manager), Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) and Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) attended a Trees Virginia Board retreat to welcome four new board members and develop a work plan for the council for 2021.
- ◆ Joe Lehnen sent the 2020 TPO Surveys to the selected 64 Virginia sawmills. This information is used to determine outputs of Virginia's mills.
- ◆ Terry Lasher hosted a state-level coordinating committee to discuss next steps in the Sentinel Landscapes Designation process. The meeting included partners that are interested in conservation practices from across the Commonwealth.
- ◆ Terry Lasher presented the "Virginia security corridors" concept and application at the Military Veterans Caucus. The caucus is comprised of members of the Senate and House in the General Assembly that are veterans. He also presented the concept and application at the DEQ/EPA/Department of Defense Partnership meeting.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ The Virginia Association of Forest Health Professionals conference took place Feb 8- 9. The virtual meeting included speakers from different parts of the U.S. presenting information on a wide range of topics, including the Asian longhorned beetle, oak wilt, and forest health diagnoses. There were 240 attendees including 61 VDOF staff. Thanks to Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) for leading the VAFHP steering committee this year!
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health manager) and Katlin DeWitt met Justin Barnes (deputy regional forester) at Paul State Forest in Rockingham County to assess the plot where goats were allowed to graze this summer. The understory of invasive plants has been significantly reduced and follow-up plans for forest management are being discussed.
- ◆ VDOF forest health staff attended a virtual southern pine beetle (SPB) Working Group meeting on February 11th with state, federal, and university representatives from the southern states. Survey protocols and data collection methods for the spring survey were discussed. VDOF participates in this south-wide SPB survey and will place 25 traps in high risk areas this spring.

- ◆ VDOF forest health and U&CF staff wrote and produced the Virginia Tree and Forest Health Guide in 2020. Copies were distributed to all field staff, but if you missed yours, please email Lori Chamberlin lori.chamberlin@dof.virginia.gov and a copy will be mailed to you. http://www.dof.virginia.gov/infopubs/Tree-and-Forest-Health-Guide_2020.pdf
- ◆ The Southern Group of State Foresters Forest Management Committee, composed of forest management leads from each state, met virtually on February 8 and 9. Dean Cumbia (forest management director) represented VDOF. Meeting topics included updates on the on USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency programs, disaster storm response, USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry, Forest Stewardship, and Forest Action Plans, as well as updates from all southern state forestry programs. The Committee offers an excellent opportunity for idea and information sharing.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center (GGFC) has graded a total of 10,978,621 seedlings this season.
- ◆ Augusta Forestry Center has processed 1,313 orders for a sales total of \$313,018 this season.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton completed measurements on the last of three locations of the study to compare the traditional VDOF nursery packaging method for loblolly pine (open-ended bundles with seedlings dipped in a clay slurry) to packaging in lined kraft bags with seedlings either soaked in the clay, water, or nothing. After one year, there are no differences between the four packaging methods in either survival or average seedling height. Overall, survival averages 96% and height averages 1.3 feet. The three locations definitely differed in site conditions, with survival and growth greatest at Dragon Run State Forest, intermediate at Appomattox State Forest, and fairly poor in the excessively-drained old nursery field at GGFC.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton completed the year one survival assessment at the longleaf pine progeny test at GGFC. On this very well-drained deep sand soil, survival dropped considerably after the July 9, 2020 evaluation. At that time, survival averaged over 99%. As of February 10, 2021 survival has dropped to just over 80% and many seedlings are showing signs of stress. Data summary is ongoing to determine whether there are differences among the various parent trees being compared in the study.

Eastern Region

- ◆ Following winter weather and freezing rain across central Virginia over the weekend, the Eastern Region received a call for assistance opening roads in the Five Forks work area. Fallen trees blocked major roads around Nottoway and Dinwiddie counties, affecting several major thoroughfares including Interstate 85 and Route 460. Five Forks and Waverly staff, led by Tommy Nunnally (forest technician) and the Eastern Region saw crew, led by Warren Coburn (forester), responded to Dinwiddie County to reopen Route 460 while Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) focused on Interstate 85. In the first night, the crew cut over 55 trees off of route 460. The Eastern Region crew spent the next three days opening the remainder of 460, 40 and several secondary roads. Additionally, field staff assisted with opening roads in Nottoway, New Kent, and the Northern Neck. (pictured)
- ◆ Dave Slack (area forester) assisted a group from the Middle Peninsulas Master Naturalists at Sandy Point State Forest and Zoar State Forest by helping find potential sites for a study on vernal pools.



Public Information

- ◆ The following articles appeared in “Field Notes”:
 - [Field Notes: Fire Season is Coming – Be Prepared!](#)
 - [Restoring Canopy at Camp Kum-Ba-Yah](#)
 - [Native Ecosystem Restoration Expanded in Southeastern Virginia](#)
- ◆ During the past week, Public Information sent out news releases to statewide media about spring wildland fire season and the expansion of our easement holdings at Joseph Pines Preserve in Sussex County.

News Clips

- ◆ [WVU biologists uncover forests' unexpected role in climate change](#)
- ◆ [Shenandoah National Park is Growing](#)
- ◆ [Kraft Heinz Mac & Cheese develops first microwavable fiber-based cup for 2021 launch](#)
- ◆ [Scientists develop transparent wood that is stronger and lighter than glass](#)
- ◆ [America's first 3D-printed house for sale in Long Island](#)
- ◆ [Take action to recover and replant devastated forests](#)