From: Farrell, Robert
To: DOF-ALL EMPLOYEES
Subject: The Branch
Date: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 12:09:36 PM
Attachments: 2021-03-01 Branch.pdf

Hello everyone;

It looks like we might have a whole week without rain, or snow, or ice. Thanks everyone for your work responding to or being on standby for the snow and ice storms. Unfortunately, over the weekend it rained inside here at the Garner building when we had an overactive water fountain run all weekend and flood the lobby. Thanks to Joe Schaefer, Percy Ayers, Jeff Hensley, David Queen and Lora Newlin for starting their Monday morning getting that cleaned up.

The winter General Assembly session has concluded and they have sent the budget and approved legislation to the Governor for his review. This has been a landmark year for the legislature for many reasons, most importantly for us the GA approved a 5% raise for all state employees to take effect in the second half of 2021. This is an indication of - and a benefit of - the great economic condition of the Commonwealth. Governor Northam and the legislature also provided significant support for the VDOF and the work that we do. We will be sharing more information about our agency budget amendments but the highlights include new funding for:

- A hardwood forest management incentive program
- A coordinator position for the Hardwood Forest Habitat Initiative
- Four new positions to support our Chesapeake Bay water quality and land conservation programs
- New equipment to increase seedling growing capacity at our Augusta Nursery

These budget items are a tremendous success for our agency, and they are the result of several factors: there is widespread acknowledgement that forests and tree planting are critical for our quality of life; we have made the case for the importance of improved hardwood management; VDOF is known for growing great seedlings; VDOF is a responsible steward of state resources; VDOF staff can be counted on to answer the call and get the job done; we are fortunate to have our greatest advocate in Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring; Secretary Ring has raised the profile of forestry and VDOF in the administration; and Governor Northam is committed to supporting our work.

Thanks everybody for what you are doing, your individual work is important and critical to our mission. You can take pride in the fact that your work has gained the attention, appreciation and support of the Commonwealth.

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