



March 01, 2021

Contents

Employee News	1
Congratulations – Jesse Bander!	1
Welcome to VDOF!	1
Condolences	1
Last Week.....	2
Agency Matters/Operations	2
State Forester	2
Fire and Emergency Response.....	2
Forestland Conservation.....	3
Forest Resource Management	3
Agency Lands	4
Central Region	4
Eastern Region.....	5
Public Information	5
News Clips.....	5

Employee News

Congratulations – Jesse Bander!

- ◆ Jesse Bander has been selected as the new Capital area forester. Jesse has worked with VDOF for 3.5 years in the Capital forest technician role and is one of the current regional forest health liaisons. Jesse began his new role on February 25.

Welcome to VDOF!

- ◆ Please welcome Jose Alejandro Zuniga as a new area forester in the Meherrin Work Area. Jose is a native of Mexico and has a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from the University of Guadalajara. He has over 18 years of experience in forestry working for national forestry agencies in Mexico and Canada, engaged in leadership positions in wildland fire suppression, prevention, and forest restoration. Jose will begin his role with the VDOF on March 10.

Condolences

- ◆ It is with sadness that we announce Garland Gray Forestry Center lost a long time P-14 employee – Mr. Crenshaw Turner passed way in recent days. He was a part-time employee that worked at the nursery for more than 20 years. Anyone that has ever handled our seedlings has seen his handiwork. He was

the gentleman that put rubber bands on all the seedlings. Every year before grading season he would come by, eager to work the next season. He never complained and will be sorely missed.

Last Week

Agency Matters/Operations

- ◆ The agency has established a replacement rotation for VDOF Incident Management Team (IMT) members providing assistance to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM). Initially this will begin with a rotation of our current Command and General Staff positions, but will ultimately include our field-level Task Force leaders.
- The transition to the new team members is loosely planned for this Friday. Because of work schedules and other standing commitments, this first rotation will look a bit staggered, beginning as early as tomorrow for a couple of positions, and lasting into the middle of next week for a couple of others. Ultimately, the current plan is for the two teams to rotate on and off of duty on the last Friday of each month going forward (one month on the IMT effort, and one month off), for the duration of the event.

	Current Team	Team 2
Deputy IC:	John Miller	Fred Turck
Operations:	Dave Houttekier	Mike Womack
Plans:	Ken Sterner	Dave Milby
Assist. Plans:	Rodney Newlin	Heather Tuck
Logistics:	Todd Groh	John Hisghman
Liaison:	Jason Braunstein	Rich Reuse

State Forester

- ◆ Letter of appreciation from State Coordinator, Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) Curtis Brown:
 - “I'm reaching out to recognize the Department of Forestry, under the leadership of State Forester Farrell, for their continued support responding to COVID-19. VDOF has been instrumental to staffing the Commonwealth of Virginia's Incident Management Team (COV-IMT). COV-IMT has been essential to the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) planning, situational awareness, and overall coordination of the various state agencies throughout the response. Their skill-sets are being leveraged even more now as we move forward with the Vaccinate Virginia Campaign and setting up Community Vaccination Centers.
 - We'll identify ways to formally recognize these talented VDOF professionals, but I wanted to take time to share my appreciation for State Forrester Farrell's leadership and VDOF's support to the VEST and VDEM. Thanks. “

Fire and Emergency Response

- ◆ While still playing a key role in the Vaccine IMT, VDOF staff has also been called to respond to the “crisis-within-a-crisis” that the recent ice storms have caused in parts of the state. Our work includes:
 - County-level assistance:
 - Nottoway County* – Kirby Woolfolk (area forester) and Bill Elliott (part-timer) assisted in managing county emergency operations within the county Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Brunswick County – Adam Smith has provided assistance to the county emergency manager, within that county's EOC.

- Saw Crews:

VDOF readied three 10-person saw crews, one from each region. Initially, there were anticipatory requests from multiple counties, but the relatively minor severity of the second ice storm led all counties to rescind their requests before they were deployed.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Rachel Harris (utilization & marketing specialist) and Joe Lehnen (urban utilization forester) attended the two-day, Southern Group of State Foresters State Utilization & Marketing (SUM) Committee's 2021 annual meeting. They reported on VDOF's progress with partnerships, Landscape Scale Restoration Grants, Wood Innovation and Southern Resource Timber Supply grants.
- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry [U&CF] program manager) attended the Virginia Council for Environmental Justice meeting as new council members were introduced. The council has been operating on a temporary basis but this was the first meeting of the permanent advisory body to the executive branch.
- ◆ Lara Johnson and Joe Cotner (senior area forester) met with representatives of the Town and County of Bedford to discuss a greening project in the downtown area.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) teamed up with Joe Lehnen to present the idea of 'holistic urban forest management' to a Dabney Lancaster Community College class. Molly discussed urban forest management plans and Joe gave specific examples of communities that have exemplified the 'holistic' idea with their successful urban wood programs. The students in the class were interested in starting careers in the arboriculture field.
- ◆ U&CF staff received 28 applications for the Virginia Trees for Clean Water grant program. Applications were submitted from communities of all sizes, as well as from various non-profit entities. Lara Johnson, Molly O'Liddy, Meghan Mulroy-Goldman and Kendall Topping (community foresters) participated in the ranking process for all 28 applications. There were a number of new applicants and a variety of interesting projects proposed. Initial award information will be sent out to applicants within the next week.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ The Virginia Longleaf Cooperators Group met virtually on February 19. The group is comprised of state, federal, and private individuals that are interested in and engaged in longleaf pine management. Longleaf is native to southeast Virginia, but greatly diminished; group members and their agencies have been active in restoration efforts. The meeting featured updates on the six major restoration sites. Restoration activities include prescribed burning, planting, seed and cone collection, seedling production, and intermediate stand treatments. A number of personnel in VDOF are involved in longleaf restoration and were represented at the meeting: Jim Schroering (longleaf pine coordinator), Bryant Bays (regional forester), Dennis Gaston (state forest forester), Brian Lacey (pine resource forester), Todd Groh (forest management program manager), Lori Chamberlin (forest health manager), Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester), and Dean Cumbia (forest management director).
- ◆ Katlin Mooneyham (forest health specialist) conducted surveys for spotted lanternfly egg masses at high-risk sites in Albemarle County. High-risk sites include anywhere with frequent human/vehicle traffic and/or high concentrations of tree-of-heaven. VDOF forest health liaisons are conducting surveys in other areas of the state.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Garland Gray Forestry Center has graded 12,911,621 loblolly seedlings this season, which is 49 percent of the crop at the nursery. Currently we have had 4,884,415 seedlings invoiced.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) delivered a presentation on "Woodland Site Productivity" for the virtual 17th Annual Landowners' Woods and Wildlife Conference.
- ◆ Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester) and Jerre Creighton responded to an inquiry from Dr. Steve McKeand (Professor Emeritus at NCSU, Tree Improvement Program) regarding loblolly pine planting acres in Virginia. Steve is updating a publication that assesses the impact of tree improvement on the financial value of our loblolly pine forests. The five-year running average of loblolly planting acreage is 67,035 acres - 98 percent of the total area planted in Virginia.
- ◆ Ones Bitoki cut, prepared and shipped loblolly scion requested as part of our membership in the Cooperative Tree Improvement Program by International Forest Company. A total of 210 scions was gathered from seven selections.
- ◆ Jim Schroering attended a virtual prescribed burn partnership meeting and the virtual Longleaf Cooperators meeting.

Central Region

- ◆ Kenny Midgett (forest technician) and Robbie Lewis (senior area forester) made the trip to Tangier Island to perform coastal resiliency work. Half of the day was spent assessing the two dry hydrants the Maritime Work Area team built in 2017. Both dry hydrants are fastened to wooden bridges crossing a tidal marsh and ditches. Salt water and weather have been tough on the fasteners and fittings, but they are still operational and in surprisingly good shape after four years. The inspections had to be timed with a low tide to be able to fully assess what new parts are needed. Tangier Volunteer Fire Company brought out their pumper to help test the dry hydrants (pictured)
- ◆ Kenny and Robbie also spent time looking at all of the town property with the town manager and mayor, gathering information for a community forestry plan and identifying sites for future coastal resiliency tree planting projects.
- ◆ Miller Adams (area forester) conducted an interview with *Dogwood* regarding spring fire season and Virginia's 4 PM Burning Law. The following is the link to the article: <https://vadogwood.com/2021/02/12/4-p-m-fire-ban-set-to-take-effect/>
- ◆ Joe Rossetti (senior area forester), Zoe Sumrall (water quality specialist), Jordan Herring (senior area forester), David Powell (senior area forester), Chad Stover (regional fire specialist), and Justin Barnes (deputy regional forester) participated in the last of four webinars in the *Fueling Collaboration* series sponsored by the Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers & Scientists. This particular webinar was on the topic of fire and timber management, and how prescribed fire can be utilized productively on central Appalachian hardwood forests where timber income is a management goal. The entire series has been useful and helped grow our knowledge on the application of prescribed fire. Recordings of the whole series of webinars can be found here: <https://apfire.wixsite.com/fuelingcollaboration>.



- ◆ Chuck Wright (area forester) and David Powell presented a program about forestry in Fluvanna County to the annual Fluvanna County Leadership Development class. This is a class that allows Fluvanna citizens to learn about all aspects of Fluvanna County government and volunteer services and how they can become actively involved in Fluvanna County.
- ◆ On the evening of February 21, the Amherst County Sheriff's Department requested assistance from Bill Perry (forester specialist) to rescue three private local communications company technicians from the communications tower located on Rocky Mountain. The road up to the tower was icy and they were unable to get their vehicle out. A sheriff's deputy had gone up that way with a UTV and was stuck on Wiggins Spring Road, which was also icy. They then called Bill to come and assist as several other fire and rescue workers in the county were on a rescue call for a group of hikers on the Appalachian Trail. Bill spent about three-and-a-half hours with the Sheriff's Department and County personnel, and eventually recovered all three of the technicians and their vehicle.

Eastern Region

- ◆ On February 16, Water Quality Specialist Derek Keiser successfully concluded a Timber Transaction Complaint Case in Prince Edward County. The complainant, Mr. Herrea, notified VDOF in December 2020 that he had not received payment for timber that was harvested from his property. The operator was identified as Kristopher Hurt doing business as "Shade Tree Logging". Herrea was instructed to notify Hurt in writing for a demand of payment and request load tickets. Derek assisted Herrea with the process and interviewed Hurt to obtain information and records of harvesting activity. Derek also established relationships with local wood yards and receiving facilities in and around Prince Edward County while conducting the investigation. The case was resolved on February 16, with Herrea receiving the payment agreed upon in a contract and all records of loads removed from the property accurately reported to Herrea. Although a criminal complaint was ready to be filed on February 16, charging Hurt with failure to produce load tickets, these charges were avoided. Hurt was also charged with a failure to notify.

Public Information

- ◆ The 17th Annual (first virtual) Woods & Wildlife Conference was attended by 124 participants. Presentation topics included landowner-specific topics such as converting land into natural areas, riparian food forests, and getting the timber sale you want. Participants also learned about laws impacting forestry, what determines woodland site productivity, research on American chestnut, fireflies, and bobcats, and even Virginia's mushrooms.
 - This virtual event was sponsored by Virginia Tech's Forest Landowner Education Program, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Virginia Department of Forestry, in addition to several other organizations. Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator), Bill Sweeney, Ed Furlow, Denny McCarthy (area foresters), Jack Kauffman (forester specialist), Sarah Parmelee (forestland conservation coordinator) and Joe Rossetti served on the planning committee, and Jerre Creighton was a presenter.
 - Although this event should return to an in-person format next year, there were a few advantages to the virtual format. Presenters were able to type answers to individual questions that couldn't be covered in the allotted time, and icy weather did not cancel the event!

News Clips

- ◆ [Furniture made from urban lumber promotes sustainability, job growth in cities](#)
- ◆ [Sweet revival: A Virginia college finds 'gold' in its roots](#)
- ◆ [NASA's Moon Trees are all over the United States – here's how to find them](#)

- ◆ [This robot could help plant 1 trillion trees](#)
- ◆ [In 'sleeper' environmental bill, Virginia lawmakers eye carbon sequestration possibilities](#)
- ◆ [Coalition Sees Wealth for Black Farmers in Land, Forestry](#)
- ◆ [1,000 tiny seedlings will one day fend off mountain of moving sand at Jockey's Ridge](#)
- ◆ [The Rise and Fall of our Forests: from the Lenape to Smokey the Bear](#)
- ◆ [From Forests to Cities: One Entomologist's Journey to Understand What's Disturbing Insects](#)
- ◆ [The 30 x 30 Protection Plan and the George Washington National Forest Ark](#)
- ◆ [UVA Wise, The Nature Conservancy start Cumberland Forest Community Fund](#)
- ◆ [The Immense Potential Of Forests To Sequester Carbon](#)
- ◆ [Native ecosystem restoration expanded at Joseph Pines Preserve in Sussex County](#)
- ◆ [Building sustainability via food forests](#)