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Employee Spotlight

Stephen Jasenek and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman – Job Well Done!

- ◆ All of the current 14 VDOF staff members who are working on the IMT and at the vaccine centers, as well as the dozens who have done so over the past year, have distinguished themselves through their continued hard work and dedication to this critical effort. Recently we received an acknowledgement for a couple folks from the Eastern region. While calling out two of our staff specifically, it is also emblematic of the many compliments we regularly get for all our team members working on the COVID-19 recovery effort.
- ◆ The Commonwealth of Virginia Incident Management Team (COVIMT) Incident Commander and member of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) Mike Anderson writes:
 - “I wanted to take a moment to give a shout out to Stephen Jasenek (VDOF) and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (VDOF). Kirby Woolfolk (VDOF), the COVIMT’s Branch 1 East Director, reported the Chief Medical Officer for AshBritt (the contractor running several of the Community Vaccination Sites)

went out of his way to praise Stephen and Meghan for their help and getting [the Portsmouth] facility up and running.”

- ◆ This well-deserved compliment is reflective of the great work our VDOF partners are providing to the COVIMT. I listen to the 0830 Operations Brief every morning and this level of effort is happening throughout the entire Commonwealth.

News You Can Use

Governor's ONE Virginia Town Hall

- ◆ The administration has once again had a historical legislative session with many equity accomplishments. One of those accomplishments is the passing of a new law requiring all state agencies to adopt and implement a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan. To introduce this and explain the support being provided, a virtual meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 31 at 1PM.
- ◆ During this meeting, the Governor and members of the Cabinet will introduce the ONE Virginia Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence. This plan was developed by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) and an interdisciplinary volunteer executive steering committee. Please save the date for this informational meeting for state employees to learn about our ONE Virginia mission for building Virginia into an inclusive state where everyone can live, work, visit, learn, and thrive.

- ◆ **Governor's ONE Virginia Town Hall**

Wednesday, March 31, 2021 – 1pm

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/y7eb8k49>

All state employees are invited to attend.

Fire Training Announcements

- ◆ Due to ongoing COVID related restrictions, we are unable to host our annual Statewide Wildfire Training Academy at Longwood University, originally planned for the last week of May 2021. As a result, we are offering a couple of more localized offerings of two critical classes needed for our newest employees.
- ◆ Registration for these classes will be directly coordinated by contacting [Sandy Mills](#), beginning on **March 29**. There will be a special one week VDOF-only registration period, to only include full-time VDOF employees and full-time VDOF P-14s. Beginning on **April 5**, registration will then be opened to the public, specifically targeting agency part-time firefighters and other agency cooperators. More complete class information and specific registration details will be coming out as a separate email on March 29. There will be no registration fee associated with these offerings.
 - *May 5, 2021: S-130/190 - Field Day Session. New Kent*
 - *May 10 – 13, 2021: S-212, New Kent*
 - *May 19, 2021: S-130/190 - Field Day Session. Matthews State Forest*
 - *May 24 – 27, 2021: S-212, Matthews State Forest*

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program in IFRIS

- ◆ The Fiscal Year 2022 Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program has been created in IFRIS. Foresters can now enter their landowner information and project prescriptions for FY 2022 reforestation and release projects into IFRIS and print out and send the RT applications to their landowners. The Regional RT allocations have not been determined yet, so the applications cannot be approved by the

Regional RT Coordinator. However, the forester can still submit the projects in IFRIS once the landowner returns the application and W-9 tax form to the regional office and they are assigned a Cardinal Vendor Number. If there are any questions, first review the Policy and Procedures 7-2 Rural Financial Assistance Programs, pages 8-9, and if there are still questions, please contact your Regional RT Coordinator.

Project Updates

Policy and Procedure 3-2 Travel Regulations and Guidance

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 3-2 Travel Regulations and Guidance](#) has been updated to reflect the following changes:
 - The requirement for filling out a Form 3.5 Travel Authorization and Advance Request has changed from overnight travel expected to exceed \$500.00 is now \$1,000.00.
 - Deletion of Guidelines for Aircraft (was related to state-owned for chartered aircraft), Film Developing Charges and Internet Reimbursement.
- ◆ If you have any questions on these changes please contact [Fernanda Crandol](#).

Last Week

Fire and Emergency Response:

- ◆ Fourteen VDOF employees continue to serve as a coordination and support entity to Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH) for the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination efforts. March 14 marked the 60th day that the VDOF has been committed to vaccination efforts in the Commonwealth. VDOF fills management roles supporting the overall effort as well as serving as field-level coordinators throughout the Commonwealth. Our field coordinators work closely with VDEM's Chief Regional Coordinators (CRC), local health districts, and other local officials connected to locating, evaluating and supporting larger vaccine distribution sites, which vary in capacity from 1,000 to 6,000 vaccinations per day.
- ◆ VDOF suppressed 75 fires which burned 1,164 acres, damaged three homes, and damaged three other structures. Agency response efforts for the week are credited with directly protecting 47 homes and 40 other structures, with an estimated value protected of over 8.2 million dollars.
- ◆ All of our personnel are to be commended for their safe and effective actions on the fire suppression front this week.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban and community forestry [U&CF] program manager) and Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) participated in the monthly Board of Directors call for Trees Virginia. Attendees shared scholarship results, workshop plans, and plans for a virtual Tree Steward Symposium in June.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy attended the Urban Forest Connections webinar, *Tree Equity for Climate and Health*. Representatives from American Forests spoke on their new GIS tool that measures the 'Tree Equity' score within an area. A pilot study was completed in Providence, Rhode Island in 2020. Another in-depth project will be completed in Richmond, Virginia in 2021.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy assisted with a planting at the Amelia Street School in Richmond. Molly instructed volunteers on how to properly plant container and balled and burlapped trees. Virginia Commonwealth University Sustainability office is heading the project with the goal to add canopy

coverage to an area of Richmond that has historically had lower numbers of trees. VDOF's Virginia Trees for Clean Water program is funding this project.

- ◆ Lara Johnson assisted with a tree planting project at Swansboro Park in Southside Richmond. Lara instructed volunteers on how to properly amend tree planting sites after conducting a soil test. This project is part of a larger Southside Regreening Project led by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation of VDOF is a partner.
- ◆ Lara Johnson presented at the Southeast Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (SEVA) on the How to Kill a Tree Poster Revision completed in 2019 and favorite resources available for the planting, care and maintenance of trees. There were 86 people in attendance at the virtual event.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy and Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) met with the Triconomy Team which is an urban wood business development partnership between Paul Hickman of Urban Ashes and graduate students from the University of Michigan. Collectively they are working with the City of Ann Arbor to develop a vibrant urban wood economy. Molly and Joe supplied information on the urban forestry/urban wood program development that we have been doing with municipalities in Virginia.
- ◆ Joe Lehnen provided the Oklahoma "Up with Trees" webinar with a presentation entitled "Helping Communities & Universities Launch Urban Wood Programs". This was a statewide gathering of Oklahoma municipal arborists and volunteers.
- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) presented information regarding forested watershed management principles, programs and water quality to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Water Planning Division's quarterly meeting.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ One element of the Hardwood Initiative is the establishment of demonstration projects around the State. On March 10, Kirby Woolfolk (area forester) and Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management) visited Fort Pickett in Nottoway County and met with the base forester to look at potential sites. The landscape of Fort Pickett is somewhat unique in that prescribed burning is used routinely to manage the landscape for troop training and safety purposes. The element may provide an opportunity to show the effects upon hardwood stand development and regeneration.
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) and Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) attended a virtual ArcGIS Pro training hosted by Jason Braunstein (GIS program manager) and led by John Scrivani. This is the new version of ArcGIS that forest health staff will use this year to map forest health monitoring data.
- ◆ Forest health staff, along with Dennis Gaston (state forest forester), Ben Duke (state forest technician), and Jesse Bander (area forester), released a new biological control agent at Sandy Point State Forest to control the hemlock woolly adelgid, an



invasive insect that attacks hemlock trees. The hemlocks at Sandy Point are unique because they are outside the historic range of hemlocks in Virginia. The stand is infested with the hemlock woolly adelgid, but trees remain in good health. Over 400 Leucopis silver flies were



released on March 11 in hopes that they will reduce the hemlock woolly adelgid population. These small flies have been approved by the USDA for release in appropriate hemlock stands, and VDOF forest health staff will work with Virginia Tech forest entomologists to monitor their population and impact. (Pictured).

Agency Lands

- ◆ VDOF industry partners have been an essential component to the Agency's success over the years, both in the woods and in the halls of the legislature. As part of our ongoing efforts to ensure our partners understand what the agency does and how they can help us, Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) and Josh Bennicoff (nursery manager) hosted a tour of the Garland Gray Forestry Center (GGFC) for Executive Director of the Virginia Forestry Association Corey Connors and Deputy Executive Director Sonnia Motomayor.
- ◆ The Garland Gray Forestry Center has lifted and graded approximately 80 percent of the 2021 crop. Current projections are they will be completed by the second week in April.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) and Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester) established a test at Hockley Research Forest to compare two root dip treatments for loblolly seedlings from our nursery. The side-by-side comparison of seedlings dipped in a clay slurry (the traditional treatment) and others dipped in a gel solution (used on hardwood seedlings at Augusta) will be monitored for survival and early growth through the coming growing season.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton completed age five measurements of the study comparing alternative hardwood control strategies for loblolly pine plantations at Cumberland State Forest. The test compares pre-plant site preparation, release after one or two growing seasons, site preparation following a one-year delay, and not treatment. This year the test has been impacted by both the recent ice storms and beaver damage to two of the plots.
- ◆ Ones Bitoki finished inspecting the 2021 loblolly pine progeny tests to verify the accuracy of planting maps and then updated the establishment report. With that completed, he also returned the trailer borrowed for hauling progeny test seedlings to NC State.
- ◆ Staff continued to clear roads and trails from downed trees caused by February's Ice Storms on Sandy Point State Forest and Crawford State Forest.
- ◆ Mike Womack continued his assignment as OPS Section Chief virtual assignment with Commonwealth of Virginia Incident Management Team (IMT) COVID-19 vaccination sites response.
- ◆ Staff assisted The Nature Conservancy on a 250 acre control burn on their Piney Grove Preserve.
- ◆ Staff assisted the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) - Natural Heritage Division in carrying out a prescribed burn on their South Quay Natural Area Preserve.
- ◆ Zach Olinger (forest management and education specialist) helped local Virginia Tech extension agents collect apple scion wood from Matthews State Forest apple orchard for upcoming grafting classes for the public.
- ◆ Zach Olinger along with assistance from local Western Region folks carried out a prescribed burn on the Matthews State Forest involving seven acres of warm season grass field and a prescribed burn on a one acre pollinator plot. Installed lines on two additional burn plots.
- ◆ Staff installed several culverts on the Big Woods State Forest along with maintenance of long term fire lines.

State-Owned Lands

- ◆ Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) completed marking and cruising work for a second timber sale on the Catawba Hospital Property that will involve various harvest prescriptions for VDOF's Hardwood Initiative program.
- ◆ Riparian buffer planting started on the Department of Corrections State Farm property with training occurring with several offenders from the facility along with the contractor performing the work. The project is partially funded by both the James River Buffer Program and the State-Owned Lands Fund.

Eastern Region

- ◆ The Capital team planted a one-acre buffer site for the West Manor Civic Association in Henrico. During the planting, the team planted approximately 300 riparian trees and shrubs. This planting was made possible through the James River Buffer Program and Urban & Community Forestry funds. (Pictured)



- ◆ Clint Phegley (area forester) assisted Virginia Commonwealth University with a tree planting project at the Amelia Street School in the City of Richmond.

- ◆ Meghan Mulroy-Goldman, Kendall Topping (community foresters), Stephan Jasenak (area forester), and Scott Bachman (senior area forester) attended a shortleaf planting at the Mariners' Museum and Park in Newport News. Led by Dave Kennedy, Graham King, and Erica Deale from the Mariners' Museum and Park, volunteers from the Peninsula Master Gardeners and Newport News Master Gardeners worked to plant 700 bare root seedlings as part of a Virginia Trees for Clean Water Grant Project.

- The project was the result of information provided to the park in a multi-use management plan for the park last year. While preparing the plan, Meghan noted several areas where invasive species had overtaken the native vegetation. One such area had



also been damaged during hurricane Isabel and had a sparse overstory. The park staff decided to use this area to plant shortleaf pine, a diminished species in Virginia. After being awarded the Virginia



Trees for Clean Water grant, they got to work clearing the area for planting. On the planting days in March, all that remained were the sparse overstory trees. The Blackwater team looks forward to continuing to build this partnership with the Mariners' Museum and Park. (pictured)

- ◆ Stephen Jasenak and Scott Bachman met with Dr. Lytton Musselman, preserve manager of the Zuni Pine Barrens and Botany Chairperson at Old Dominion University. Dr. Musselman has a number of grad students that are working on longleaf pine ecology at the preserve. One study is to determine

the natural fire frequency in a longleaf pine ecosystem prior to European settlement. This can potentially be determined by study of remnant stumps found at the preserve. These historic stumps in many cases are of trees that germinated decades before European settlement (determined by tree ring counts of stump cookies). To determine fire frequency, cookies are cut from the remnant stumps at or slightly below the current soil level. These cookies are sanded and polished in the lab and analyzed for indicators of fire damage to the stem. If scars are found, the number of years between fire damage can be determined by ring counts. Using dendrochronology techniques it might even be possible to determine the year when these fire events occurred. In some cases the wind direction can be determined from this analysis. Stephen and Scott will be tasked with cutting these cookies for this research in the next few months.

- ◆ John Rose (forest technician) reports that he has seen active Fire Ants in many of the localities in the Southeastern part of the Commonwealth. Fire ants are not native to the state. They are now established in all counties on the North Carolina border from Mecklenburg east, as well as Isle of Wight, York, and James City. John noted that the ants are becoming more active with the arrival of spring time temperatures. These ants are spread in anything that contains soil, or organic debris. Equipment that moves from a quarantine area to an area outside of quarantine must be cleaned of dirt and debris before being moved. It is wise to clean all dozers after fire activities and forest management work before moving to a new property. John recommends asking the fire departments to provide a wash down after every fire. Having a good relationship with the fire department sure goes a long way to getting your equipment clean after a fire. (Pictured)



Central Region

- ◆ Adam Smith (senior area forester), Amy Bigger, Molly Hunt (area foresters), Bobby Robertson, Chris Roux (forest technicians) assisted the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) with a prescribed burn on Tuesday, March 9. The two agencies collaborated to burn an eight-acre fallow field for wildlife management. Pictured are DWR Wildlife Biologist Katie Martin (left) and VDOF Area Forester Molly Hunt (right) who did ignition on the right-hand side of the field. The burn was conducted the day after International Women's Day.



Public Information

- ◆ Raina DeFonza (public information specialist) and Michelle Stoll (director of public information) met virtually with Rae Tamblyn of #forestproud to learn about the organization's new focus on carbon and climate change and receive an update on new materials and resources.
- ◆ Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) photographed a team of Central Piedmont Master Naturalists as they monitored two vernal pools on Cumberland State Forest.
- ◆ Recent "Field Notes" articles include [Wandering the Winter Woods](#), [An Exciting Mass Timber Project in Charlottesville](#), and [EAB-Killed-Ash: Use it or Lose it](#).

News Clips

- ◆ [Wildlife Center of Virginia celebrates world wildlife week](#)

- ◆ [Study Finds Wildfire Smoke More Harmful To Humans Than Pollution From Cars](#)
- ◆ [A Tree Grows in Richmond: Southside Moves from Redlining to Greening](#)
- ◆ ['A bit of a haven': Southwest Baltimore church reclaims a dying urban forest and creates a community oasis](#)