From: Farrell, Robert
To: DOF-ALL EMPLOYEES
Subject: The Branch
Date: Monday, April 12, 2021 6:42:02 PM
Attachments: 2021-04-12 Branch.pdf

Hello everyone;

I am happy to be able to share some good news with you. We have had a significant number of employees who have had the good fortune to retire over the past year or so, and the agency has had the good fortune to be able to refill almost all of those positions in spite of COVID-19 budget impacts. This high level of retirements and new hires provides us a dividend in the form of reduced personnel expenses.

The good news is that we will be able to reinvest some of these funds in our agency workforce with the goal of retaining a skilled workforce, recognizing individual performance, and increasing opportunities for training and professional development. I will be sharing more about these programs in the months ahead and I will ask for volunteers from the agency to help develop them further. Unfortunately, these personnel savings are not enough to enable us to close our ongoing agency budget imbalance so we will have to continue with our strategy of holding positions open prior to filling.

Today I have the pleasure of sharing our first reinvestment, which is a pay raise for a number of our foresters and technicians for internal alignment and retention. These employees, in the Natural Resources Specialist II and III roles, have all been notified by their supervisors. I know that leaves some of you disappointed that you were not included also, but the state budget includes a 5% raise for state employees this year so everyone has reason to be thankful this year.

This pay raise was focused on the technician and forester roles because they provide our only opportunity to address salary alignment across a large number of employees in the same role. Also, it is our field employees that have borne the brunt of the high level of turnover and the extra work due to the 60 day hiring delays because most of the retirements have been in this group. As an agency, we are always looking at salary alignment and we try to make adjustments when we can to make salaries appropriate for duties - within the agency's means.

When I was deputy state forester, I was involved in the last few years of the budget reductions and I still remember the hard conversations with those impacted employees. So I am very thankful to be here now, and to be able to invest in our people. I am looking forward to sharing more in the coming months and I hope you will take the opportunity to help design the new programs.

Rob Farrell
State Forester
Virginia Department of Forestry

Headquarters
900 Natural Resources Drive, #800
Charlottesville, VA 22903
office (434) 220-9047

cell (757) 810-6943
fax (434) 220-9140

rob.farrell@dof.virginia.gov

www.dof.virginia.gov