



May 3, 2021

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Employee News

Leaving VDOF!

- ◆ Walker Wolfe (Mountain Valley work area forester) is resigning his position on May 3 to pursue a new opportunity. Best of luck on your new adventure.

Celebrating Virginia Public Service Week – May 3-7

- ◆ We all know that VDOF employees dedicate much of their time, talent, and energy to serving the Commonwealth of Virginia. This past year, amid trying times, you demonstrated great character and “a let’s move forward together attitude”. On behalf of the Executive Team, we thank you for your professionalism, dedication, selfless service and genuine commitment to a safer Commonwealth while accomplishing your duties. We wholeheartedly thank everyone who consciously accepted the call to support the state’s efforts to fight COVID-19.

- ◆ In the spirit of celebration, we also wanted to highlight that our annual service awards' celebration will take place later this summer, allowing us to maximize participation of all awardees with less restrictions as we celebrate their service to VDOF and our Commonwealth. In the meantime, join me in congratulating five teammates who achieved their 35-year milestone for a combined 175 years of Commonwealth Service.
 - Mary Altizer
 - Dean Cumbia
 - Nelson Jarvis
 - Richard Reuse
 - Stuart Sours
- ◆ In addition, during this years' service award celebration, we also plan to include some very special guests. We hope to host over 15 retirees who could not benefit from a formal VDOF send-off due to COVID-19 restrictions since March 2020. Their accomplished careers with a combined 550+ years of institutional knowledge will be co-celebrated with our service award recipients.

Annual Open Enrollment May 3 – 17

- ◆ **No action** is required if you:
 - Have no health plan coverage changes
 - Are not enrolling in a Flex Spending Account
 - Do not plan to participate in Premium Awards
- ◆ You **must take action** if you:
 - Want to enroll or change your health plan
 - Want to enroll (or re-enroll) in a Flex Spending Account
 - Want to participate in the Premium Rewards program to receive the \$17 per month discount

Two Options to making Changes to Your Health Plan and/or Enrolling in Flex Spending

- ◆ Submit open enrollment elections online:
 - Log in to **EmployeeDirect** at <https://edirect.virginia.gov> and select **Health Benefits Direct** from the menu.
 - For new users or if you have forgotten your **EmployeeDirect** login, follow the prompts to submit the following:
 - a. Your 7-digit Employee Number
 - b. Date of Birth
 - c. Last four digits of your Social Security Number
 - d. Email address

----- **OR** -----

- ◆ Complete and submit a paper Enrollment Form
 - Complete the fillable enrollment form on the DHRM website at https://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/docs/default-source/benefitsdocuments/ohb/stateactiveenrollform-for-fillable-pdf-a10520.pdf?sfvrsn=501dab2e_6

- **Print, Sign and mail to HR no later than close of business on May 17th**

Mail to: HR Office, VA Dept. of Forestry, 900 Natural Resources Dr., Charlottesville, VA 22903

Premium Rewards

- ◆ You and/or your covered spouse can participate
- ◆ You save \$17 per month (\$204 per year); if you and your spouse participate you save \$34 per month (\$408 per year)
- ◆ **Personal devices should be used to complete the Health Assessment**
- ◆ **Premium Rewards will be effective July 1 if the Health Assessment is completed between May 3 - May 17.**
 - Health Assessments submitted before May 3rd will not count towards the new plan year beginning July 1.

COVA Care Members to receive your Premium Rewards

- ◆ Complete or update your health assessment at www.anthem.com
 - Log in to www.anthem.com
 - Select My Health Dashboard from the top navigation menu
 - Select Programs
 - Under Programs, select Learn More on the WebMD Health Risk Assessment Card
 - Click Start your Assessment or Take it Again if you have previously completed an assessment
 - Be sure to click the Finish button for your confirmation
- ◆ You may also access the Health Assessment through the **Sydney Health** app on your mobile device:
 - Log in to **Sydney**
 - From the **Sydney Welcome screen**, you can click on the **More** button, in the bottom right corner
 - Choose **My Health Dashboard** from the menu list
 - Scroll down and click on **Featured Programs**
 - Scroll down the program list to the **WebMD Health Assessment** option
 - Click **start your assessment** or **take it again** if you have previously completed an assessment
 - Be sure to click on the **Finish** button for your confirmation

COVA HealthAware Members to receive your Premium Rewards:

- ◆ Complete or update your health assessment at www.aetna.com
 - Log in to www.aetna.com
 - Scroll down until you see Member Resources on the right side of the page and click on Well-being Resources in this section to open your Member Engagement Platform.
 - Once the Member Engagement Platform opens, hover over Health in the menu at the top and click on Health Assessment.
- ◆ Accessing from the **Aetna Health** mobile app:
 - Log in to the **Aetna Health** mobile app
 - Select the **Improve** tab
 - a. When accessing this tab for the first time, select Get Started

- b. When accessing this tab after the first time, select Health Survey

Instruction can also be found in the Aetna Health Digital Reference Guide at

<https://www.covahealthaware.com/#resources>

To Read the “**Spotlight on Your Benefits**” brochure and to find additional benefits resources go

to <https://www.dhrm.virginia.gov/employeebenefits/open-enrollment2021-22>

Project Updates

Policy and Procedures

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 3-4 Coding and Approval Authority Listing](#) has been updated to include all current coding and approval authorities. If you have any questions, please contact [Jackie Newton](#).
- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 17-01 Urban and Community Forestry Programs](#) has been updated to include the My Trees Count Application. If you have any questions, please contact [Lara Johnson](#).

Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ Recently the Virginia Urban Wood Group published its seventh VA Urban/Local Wood newsletter. The e-newsletter is distributed through the Trees Virginia Constant Contact platform.
 - Approximately 302 people received this edition, including VDOF personnel interested in the Urban Wood program.
 - Following is a link that will take you to the latest edition of the VA Urban Wood newsletter. Please contact Joe Lehnen (joe.lehnen@dof.virginia.gov) if you would like to be included on the distribution list >><https://conta.cc/39KkWWy>
- ◆ The Virginia Urban Wood Project recently co-sponsored two “lunch and learn” webinars on “Wood Drying Techniques for Small Scale Producers” producers with Dr. Brian Bond from the Department of Sustainable Biomaterials at Virginia Tech University. The two webinars had an average attendance of 33 participants. The webinars were recorded and will soon be posted on the VA Urban Wood Group webpage >> www.vaurbanwood.org

Last Week

Agency Matters/Operations:

- ◆ The VDOF Incident Management Team (IMT) began the demobilization process from its planning and support role with the Commonwealth’s vaccination efforts at the end of the day on April 27. In total, 32 VDOF employees provided more than 12,000 hours of assistance, over 111 continuous days, supporting the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, the Virginia Department of Health and local health districts across the Commonwealth.

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell reached out to Delegate Thomas Wright regarding a landowner’s request to be granted an access easement on the Cumberland State Forest in order to build a driveway to a landlocked parcel. VDOF has provided the request and supporting information to the Office of Attorney General (OAG) for guidance. Delegate Wright has been copied on the landowner’s communications with VDOF.
- ◆ Rob participated as ex-officio member of the Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources (VT-CNRE) Advisory Board meeting. Main topics of discussion included the college’s adaptations related to COVID-19 and the resource needs of the college due to increasing enrollment.

- ◆ Rob participated in several virtual meetings to introduce the contractor that has been hired to implement projects utilizing the Mountain Valley Pipeline Forest Enhancement mitigation fund to the representatives for the public agencies that have eligible properties, including: Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)-Natural Heritage, Department Wildlife Resources (DWR), and the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry [U&CF] program manager) and Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) attended the Virginia United Land Trust (VAULT) conference. Topics included tribal relations, solar conversion, and sea level rise. Andrew Fotinos (forestland conservation specialist) led a Generation NEXT family land transfer and easement training. Approximately 25-30 people attended the training.
- ◆ Lara, Molly, and Eli Podyma (community forester) attended an Earth Day tree planting celebration with the Chickahominy Tribe - Eastern Division. Two native pin oak trees were sourced for the planting. The tribe expressed that the pin oak was significant to the culture and history of their people.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy gave a talk to the Wildlife Center of Virginia about Arbor Day and planting appropriate trees for wildlife. About 30 participants were engaged in the online forum.
- ◆ Meghan Mulroy-Goldman, Kendall Topping (community foresters), Lara Johnson and Stephen Jasenak (forester) attended the Safan Food Forest planting in Newport News. This project was funded through the Virginia Trees for Clean Water Program and VDOF staff helped with the design layout and species selection.
- ◆ Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester), along with nine other forestry resource professionals from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, were recognized for their contribution to the *"Woodland Health Practices Handbook: A Practitioner's Guide for Creating, Enhancing, and Maintaining Natural Areas."* The team received the "Bronze Award" by the Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals (ANREP)

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Todd Groh (forest resource management coordinator) presented at the virtual U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Virginia State University (VSU) Information Session on April 22. This is an annual event where various USDA agencies are able to share their programs and opportunities for small farmers and answer questions concerning eligibility and participation. Todd was the only non-USDA agency representative presenting at the meeting besides the VSU Small Farmer Outreach Program. His presentation promoted the numerous ways that VDOF serves the citizens of the Commonwealth, from improving and renewing forest resources to protecting water quality.
- ◆ One of the elements of the Virginia Hardwood Habitat Initiative is to develop demonstration projects to showcase the process of assessing sites, selecting practices, and implementing projects. On April 20, one of the first demonstration sites was installed on the Big Woods State Forest in Sussex County. Travis Tindell (area forester and member of the VDOF hardwood working group) led the development of the project. Dennis Gaston (state forest forester), Ben Dukes (state forest technician), Brian Lacey (resource forester), and Dean Cumbia (forest resource management director) all participated in the assessment and implementation. The group first conducted a stand assessment, utilizing the new Hardwood Assessment Tool. Data was also collected on an adjacent area that was not treated that will serve as a control. Based upon the objectives for the property, the group identified the stand characteristics that could be best addressed by management (improve percentage of desirable species), and selected practices to accomplish this. The group then applied practices to remove lesser quality trees and less desirable species using small and larger chainsaws, brush and hand saws, and

stump and girdle treatment with herbicide. The site is along a major State Forest road, and is adjacent to well-managed pine stands, allowing good opportunity for comparison, viewing, and monitoring.

- ◆ Forest health staff and Shenandoah work area staff treated 55 hemlocks at Paul State Forest. A soil drench was applied to protect these trees from the hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive insect that attacks and kills hemlocks. The soil drench will provide protection for up to seven years.
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) and Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) attended a virtual Virginia Noxious Weed Advisory Committee meeting on April 22. This group, led by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, reviews proposals for noxious weeds and decides which plants should be recommended for inclusion on Virginia's Noxious Weed list.
- ◆ Teagan O'Brien (forest health technician) and Lori Chamberlin took tree measurements at VDOF's white pine long-term monitoring site in Bath County. Eastern white pines at this site are infested with a bark scale and a pathogen that may be causing white pine decline in the southern Appalachian region. VDOF is working with other forestry and research institutions to learn more about this scale/pathogen complex.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt met with Scott Bachman (senior area forester) and Stephen Jasenak (area forester) to collect fusiform spores from infected trees in Southampton County. These spore samples will be sent to the Resistance Screening Center with the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and North Carolina State Tree Improvement Program to show the most relevant pathogen populations across the landscape and generate inoculum for screening tests.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Interagency crews completed a very successful understory burn on 564 acres of Big Woods State Forest including 100 acres of longleaf pine. Crew members participated from Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), DCR Natural Heritage & State Parks, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services (including some folks from New Jersey), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) staff, and VDOF. They used the TNC drone for aerial ignition.
- ◆ Zach Olinger (forest management & education specialist) and Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) completed a timber management cruise of property owned by the DCR Natural Heritage Division - Mount Joy / Dry Pond Natural Area in Augusta County.
- ◆ Mike Womack (forest management specialist), as a member of the National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group's (NWCG) Equipment Technology Committee participated in the development of NWCG Safety Warning on Drip Torch Lock Rings Detaching. Report can be found at <https://mailchi.mp/c1956d711735/etc-safety-warning-drip-torch-lock-rings-detaching?e=fc45166103>

Central Region

- ◆ Zoë Sumrall (water quality specialist) met with Carefree Acres Homeowners Association (HOA) in Clarke County to update them on the new three-year grant cycle and to introduce Firewise to new homeowners who recently moved into the community. Along with their Firewise Resident Leader, Melissa, Zoë reminded the HOA of what activities and projects count towards their in-kind investments for the annual renewal process. Carefree Acres has been an active Firewise Community since 2012 and they consistently complete community-wide wildfire mitigation projects each year.

Western Region

- ◆ Brian Ledford (area forester) and Jon Perry (forest technician) conducted a prescribed burn at Emory and Henry College's Bartlett-Crowe Field Station in Washington County. The purpose of the burn was

to give the students at the college the opportunity to study the effects of fire on the environment and control the invasive species present.

- ◆ David Tompkins (forest technician) assisted with Bedford County Fire & Rescue's FF1 Ground Fire Module training. Along with classroom instruction and a hands-on field portion, E-608 and BED50 were also present to showcase VDOF resources. Twenty-one recruits were trained.
- ◆ David Bryan and Erin Perry (forest technicians) visited Magna Vista High School to assist its Future Farmers of America (FFA) Junior Forestry team in going over equipment ID and tree ID. David and Erin provided examples of equipment for the team to review and see in person for the first time. The four member junior team was preparing for their first competition. Two former Senior Forestry team members were also present at the practice.
- ◆ Chris Sullivan and Bill Miller (senior area foresters) in conjunction with the Town of Abingdon, The Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy, and volunteers planted seedlings to enhance the viewshed along the trail and Abingdon's new sports complex.

Public Information

- ◆ Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) presented the Peabody School in Charlottesville with their official Project Learning Tree (PLT) GreenSchools banner. Over the course of three years, the school achieved this certification from PLT by establishing a middle school student-led Green Team, investigating five specific aspects of their school's environment, taking actions to improve the school's environmental footprint, and sharing their knowledge with others. Overall, the school strives to inspire a greener way of living among its students and their families. (Pictured from left are school principal Amy Lastinger and one student representing each of the middle-school grades that worked on the certification.)
- ◆ Michelle Stoll (public information director) was the guest speaker at the Department of Wildlife Resources' quarterly leadership meeting, "Team Wild." Michelle discussed the role of communication, inclusion, and diversity to agency culture and morale.
- ◆ The redesigned website is slated to go "live" at the end of this week. Following a soft launch of two to three weeks, we will begin promoting the new site via our partners' newsletters and social media. Special thanks to Janet Muncy (integrated media manager) and all those who have participated in the workgroup and supported the effort through testing and review.



News Clips

- ◆ ["Ghost Forests": Virginia Hanusik '14 Photographs Louisiana's Vanishing Wetlands, Which Are Being Lost to Sea Level Rise](#)
- ◆ [Staunton celebrates Arbor Day with Tree City USA recognition, completion of grants, tree tour](#)
- ◆ [Google's Head of Sustainability Wants You to See the Earth in a New Way](#)
- ◆ [Apple starts \\$200 million fund to remove CO2 by restoring forests](#)
- ◆ [Adhesives from waste wood, biofuel from straw](#)
- ◆ [New PBS Film: Loggers, Environmentalists Work Together To Stop Wildfires](#)
- ◆ [Why forests are critical as a climate solution](#)
- ◆ [Cross-Site Studies Take Root across the Southern Experimental Forest Network](#)

- ◆ [Fire Response Planning Using 'PODs'](#)
- ◆ [Fire as Medicine: Learning from Native American Fire Stewardship](#)
- ◆ [New Video Series on the American Chestnut](#)
- ◆ [Trees on Farms: A Review of the Many Benefits of Windbreaks](#)
- ◆ [Tree Planting Ceremony Held in Herndon](#)
- ◆ [Fortnite video game CEO makes Va.'s largest land conservation gift](#)
- ◆ [Andy Schmookler: The forest is coming](#)
- ◆ [Mapping the timber industry boom in 2021](#)
- ◆ [Northam announces largest private land donation for permanent state conservation in Virginia history](#)
- ◆ [Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's award \\$300K for national conservation efforts](#)