



June 21, 2021

Contents

Employee News	1
Welcome to VDOF!	1
VDOF Employee Photo Contest!	1
News You Can Use	2
Early Reminder – Vehicle Mileage!	2
Last Week	2
State Forester	2
Forestland Conservation.....	2
Forest Resource Management	2
Fire Emergency and Response.....	3
Agency Lands	3
State Forest.....	4
Eastern Region	4
Central Region	5
Western Region	6
Public Information	6
News Clips.....	6

Employee News

Welcome to VDOF!

- ◆ Welcome Ian Morris to the VDOF family as a Forest Technician for the Appomattox Buckingham State Forest starting on June 25. Ian is a graduate of Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and is a member of the Army Reserves, having recently returned from deployment to Kuwait. Ian is from the Appomattox - Buckingham area, with his family owning a farm in the area. Ian has worked as a part-time employee on the State Forest and has been instrumental in designing and fabricating some equipment used there, and he possesses a Class A CDL.

VDOF Employee Photo Contest!

- ◆ Public Information is having a photo contest to create the 2023 VDOF calendar. The best way to get photos is through the photo lens of the women and men of VDOF. Photos captured by employees may also be used for other VDOF educational and promotional initiatives. We'll be running the contest over the next year to allow staff to capture all forest seasons and activities. Photos will be accepted from

now until July 1, 2022. Check out the Employee Intranet for full details and rules:

<https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/Photo-Contest.pdf>

News You Can Use

Early Reminder – Vehicle Mileage!

- ◆ This is just an early reminder that all vehicle mileage as of June 30, 2021 will need to be entered into IFRIS around the first of July. A follow-up reminder will be forthcoming in each of the next two editions of The Branch.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell participated in the Southern Group of State Foresters annual (delayed) winter meeting in Birmingham Alabama. Discussion focused on potential impacts from the USDA Forest Service budget modernization process, as well as opportunities related to carbon sequestration markets for private landowners and state lands.
- ◆ Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer joined Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring and VA Delegate Israel O'Quinn for the grand-opening ribbon cutting ceremony at Speyside Bourbon's new Glade Spring stave mill. This facility received Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Funds (AFID) and has been in operation for about 12 months. The opening celebration was delayed due to the pandemic restrictions.
 - This facility will produce barrel staves for Speyside's Virginia cooperage mill and will eventually employ up to 60 people.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) provided a virtual presentation entitled "Firewood in Virginia-Looking into the Future" for the National Firewood Webinar which was coordinated by North Carolina State Forestry Extension. The presentation highlighted the preliminary results from the recently completed VA-NC Home Fuelwood Sourcing & Use Survey.
- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban and community forestry [U&CF] program manager) presented at the Western ISA Chapter meeting about the Urban Forest Strike Team, with representatives from the US Forest Service, Florida Forest Service, and Ohio Division of Forestry.
- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) and Sabina Dhungana (utilization and marketing program manager) met with professors and researchers from Clemson University to discuss the potential use of Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) panels to be used as noise barriers in Department of Transportation applications. This potential product could have application in Virginia as we attempt to discover new markets for low quality hardwood and southern yellow pine.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ In addition to the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) plot measurement production information shared last week (60% complete), crews will also be measuring for additional information on some plots. Crews will collect data on forest fuel loading, carbon estimation, and vegetation and crown measurement on 44 plots. All of this will add to the richness and value to the overall FIA dataset. Finally, all FIA field staff attended a virtual refresher course on May 17 regarding the added data gathering requirements.

- ◆ Virginia's Hardwood Forest Habitat Initiative has eight strategies to improve the hardwood forests of Virginia. Two of these strategies are to institutionalize hardwood management within VDOF, and to provide training in hardwood management. Since July 2020, a group of 15 VDOF foresters has been engaged in hardwood training and development of the Hardwood Assessment Tool. VDOF is expanding the training to additional foresters this summer. On June 8, the first of three regional training sessions was conducted at Sandy Point State Forest in King William County (Eastern Region). Fifteen foresters and three trainers participated in this event. The group learned that the Hardwood Assessment Tool is a process to gather several elements of forest stand level data, determine a baseline numerical score by element and an overall score. This will help to determine and select what steps are needed to improve the stand to meet the stated objectives.
- ◆ Forest health staff have begun placing spotted lanternfly traps in high risk areas in central Virginia. This trapping effort supports the state-wide spotted lanternfly program led by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). Traps will be checked every two weeks for the next two months while spotted lanternfly nymphs and adults are active.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) met with Josh McLaughlin (assistant nursery manager) to look at mature white pines at the entrance to the Augusta Forestry Center (AFC) that had thinning crowns. Introduced pine sawfly larvae were found feeding on pine needles in the stand and were determined to be the cause of defoliation. Control techniques were discussed and Josh had already implemented a spray program to protect white pine seedlings close to the mature pine trees.

Fire Emergency and Response

- ◆ On June 9, John Miller (director fire emergency and response) participated in VESTEX 2021. The event, led by Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), was a table-top exercise which included all of the Virginia Emergency Response Team (VEST) agencies focused on cybersecurity and the Commonwealth's plans to protect and respond to interruptions to our energy grid. John served as one of four Branch Directors for the exercise, leading the VEST agencies that normally serve in support of the state Emergency Operations Center (EOC) under the Emergency Support Branch during a statewide emergency.
- ◆ On June 10, John Miller participated in the Commonwealth's Drought Monitoring Task Force (DMTF) meeting. The DMTF is a collective group of the key agencies and cooperators who are pulled together when drought conditions are affecting the state. The group provides drought stage directions which relate to proactive actions that can be taken in the Commonwealth to help reduce the possible impacts of an expanding drought. This was the first meeting of this group in the last three years and was triggered by low level drought conditions which had developed in many areas of the Commonwealth by the first week of June. Ultimately, the group decided to wait to see the impact of the rain event predicted over the weekend of June 12/13, which did ultimately provide some relief in nearly all areas except south central Virginia.
- ◆ During the week of June 14, Fred Turck (prevention program manager) served as the lead instructor for a completely online offering of the M-410, Facilitative Instructor class. The class was one of several offerings provided by the annual Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Protection Compact training academy. The class included students from seven different states.

Agency Lands

- ◆ The loblolly nursery continued irrigation. Shade cloths were removed from the loblolly containers and germination currently is looking great, with the NC longleaf currently at 78 percent germination and the containerized loblolly at 95 percent. The containerized shortleaf is at 80 percent. The beds also currently look well and will get the first application of fertilizer shortly.

- ◆ Two new reports have been posted to the website's Resource Library (<https://dof.virginia.gov/resource-library/>): Report 140 – “Comparison of Early Performance of Containerized and Bare-Root Loblolly Pine Seedlings Planted from October through April” and Report 141 – “Performance of Four Hybrid Poplars and Three Native Hardwoods in Plantations in Central Virginia at Age 14” can be accessed by selecting the "research" category from the drop-down menu.
- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager), Dean Cumbia (director forest resource management) and Todd Groh (forest resource management program manager) led the eastern region hardwood assessment initiative training session at Sandy Point State Forest.
- ◆ Controlled pollination work on the Lesesne State Forest chestnut orchards is underway after a one-year pandemic hiatus. So far, approximately 70 flowers on four parent trees have been "bagged" and will be pollinated in the next few weeks as pollen ripens. More parent trees will be bagged this week.
- ◆ Eastern Forest Consultants were the low bidder for doing invasive species control work on the Virginia Tech - McCormick Farm property. Invasive species control work will commence on this property, along with Catawba Hospital & Goochland Women's Correctional Center, at the end of June.
- ◆ The Virginia Department of Forestry, acting on behalf of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), will be offering and administrating a pine plantation thinning sale. Sealed bids will be received for the purchase of pulpwood, chip-and-saw, and sawtimber designated for removal in a pine plantation thinning on the Clarke and Dance Tracts of the Pocahontas State Park located in Chesterfield County. The total thinning acreage is 299.5 acres.

State Forest

- ◆ Sustainable Forestry Initiative and American Tree Farm System surveillance audits were conducted on the Whitney, Conway Robinson, Devil's Backbone, Paul, Moore's Creek, and Bourassa State Forests last week. Auditor seemed very happy with everything examined and reviewed, with a draft report to be sent over the next three weeks.
- ◆ When conducting surveillance audits this past week, the auditor was able to interview several members of the public who were visiting the Whitney State Forest near Warrenton. One individual was the former Mayor of Warrenton who was complimentary about our efforts and need to treat invasive species on the forest, and in our future management plans to conduct needed timber harvests. Two other citizens who ride horses were also very complimentary of our management, but had concerns that others visiting the forest were not adhering to maintaining dogs on leashes when walking trails on the forest. Unleashed dogs could spook horses, so they asked that we look at putting additional signage on trailheads about the need to keep dogs on leashes.
- ◆ Four educational programs for 10 students each day were held on the Matthews State Forest with students from Fries Elementary. The program is a partnership with Blue Ridge Discovery Center. Students learned about trees, forests, wildlife, and aquatics.

Eastern Region

- ◆ Foresters from the Capital, Peninsulas, Mattaponi, and Waverly Work Areas, Eastern State Forest Staff Dennis Gaston & Ben Duke, and Regional staff Brian Lacey and Bryant Bays participated in a VDOF Hardwood Assessment Tool training day at Sandy Point State Forest. This was the first training, outside of the initial Hardwood Group, that was delivered to regional field foresters. Staff learned about the Hardwood Initiative program, and how to use the assessment tool to measure a multi-site tract. The foresters were able to provide feedback on the tool, particularly related to sections that had been developed with a Piedmont focus. These foresters are now equipped to apply this tool when evaluating landowner properties for possible hardwood management.

- ◆ The Capital Work Area completed their monthly bulldozer day at Dragon Run State Forest, which accomplished training new staff on tractor operations, exercising equipment, and helping local State Forest staff open several forest roads that were closed off from storm damages that occurred over the winter.
- ◆ Heather Dowling (senior area forester) and Brian Lacey (regional resource specialist) used one of the VDOF drones to identify areas and take pictures of a 150-acre stand that was damaged by an ice storm this past winter in Dinwiddie County, within the Fort Pickett Military Operations Airspace. The flight was finished in less than 20 minutes, which saved days of trudging through the woods. The landowner was grateful that there was not as much timber damage as originally thought (pictured).
- ◆ Kendall Topping (community forester) wanted to share a link to a Virginian Pilot article about our Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) grant program. She provided the EAB grant program information to the Virginia Pilot and due to this article, we have had some homeowners reach out for funding. <https://www.pilotonline.com/life/wildlife-nature/vp-hl-in-full-bloom-allissa-bunner-emerald-ash-borer-052921-20210529-nbtbsszmirbndl2lmkmjhsefma-story.html>



Central Region

- ◆ On Tuesday, June 8th and Thursday June 10th, personnel from the Central Region participated in their yearly regional fire training. The topic for this year was engine operations. This training was conducted at the Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest facility on the 8th for the personnel south of the James River and in Rockingham County on the 10th for those north (pictured).
 - The session focused on 5 main areas: pump operations, drafting, tools and equipment, winch operations and preventative maintenance. The instructors were David Powell, Bill Perry, Darwin Rhodes, Jon Willoughby, Zoë Sumrall, Cain Harbison, Leslie Mace, JD Baker and Al Brooks.
 - One of the challenges of holding a large scale training such as this is to make it relevant to both seasoned employees and those who are new to our agency. Thanks to the knowledge of the instructors and their ability to deliver quality training, we were able to meet this challenge and have a successful two days.
- ◆ Zoë Sumrall (water quality specialist) and Robbie Lewis (senior area forester) represented VDOF's Honor Guard at the 24th annual Virginia Fallen Firefighters & EMS Memorial Service on Saturday, June 5th in Richmond. Since the 2020 event was cancelled due to COVID-19, this year's Memorial Service honored twelve Fallen Firefighters who were recognized in the Virginia Line of Duty Act in 2019 and 2020. Robbie and Zoë participated as family escorts for two of the fallen firefighters being honored



that day, supporting and serving their families throughout the ceremony. [VDFP website: 2021 Virginia Fallen Firefighters & EMS Memorial Service.](#)

- ◆ Patrick Murphy, Steve Morris and Tom Snoddy of the Heartland Work Area with Chad Stover, CR Fire Specialist, conducted a day long fire training at the Cumberland State Forest for DCR's Americorp Crew. The crew, comprised of individuals from all over the country, will be assisting the DCR State Parks throughout the state with staffing for the summer. The day of training started with a work capacity test followed by talks on fire training and deployments. With an emphasis on prescribed fire and safety, the 17 Americorps members attended stations of instruction headed up by VDOF staffers covering hand tools, fire shelters, dozer safety, drip torch ignition methods and UTV and engine operations. This has been an annual cooperative effort between the two state agencies for many years. (pictured)



Western Region

- ◆ Chris Sullivan (senior area forester) and the Abingdon Tree Commission, in order to sustain a healthy and vibrant urban forest, spearheaded a tree give-away program where residents got up to 3 one-gallon container sized trees at no cost. They were able to select from the following tree species: white dogwood, redbud, black gum, and white oak. The giveaway was sponsored by Food City, Sustain Abingdon, the Abingdon Garden Club, and Bartlett Tree Experts. Trees Virginia, the State's 501-C3 Urban Forest Council, was the fiscal agent for this program.

Public Information

- ◆ As of this week, 66 providers have registered for business accounts on the new website. Of those, 48 have completed their listings. This includes 28 consulting foresters, 19 logger/timber harvesters, and 7 other forest industry service providers. Some of the providers fall into multiple categories. To help promote this self-maintained service, Janet Muncy (integrated media manager) has developed a postcard to hand out to service providers with detailed instructions for how to register their businesses. These cards will be useful at VDOF events where providers are attending and will be provided to field personnel.

News Clips

- ◆ [PayPal Purchases Carbon Credits From Enrichmond Foundation to Support Urban Forest Preservation in Richmond, VA](#)
- ◆ [Aerial treatment for gypsy moth coming up in Wythe and Smyth counties](#)
- ◆ [USDA Forest Service Supports Economic Development, Forest Conservation Project](#)
- ◆ [WWF's 'Forests Forward' Helps Companies Deliver on Science-Driven Strategies to Benefit Nature, Climate, People](#)
- ◆ [USDA Forest Service supports economic dev't, forest conservation project](#)
- ◆ [The Return of the King](#)
- ◆ [Virginia Appoints New Commissioner of Agriculture](#)

- ◆ [Outdoor recreation projects in Southwest Virginia funded by federal law](#)
- ◆ [Little box once part of fire protection program](#)