



**June 28, 2021**

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**Project Updates**

*Policy and Procedures*

- ◆ This recent revision of [Policy and Procedures 8-5 Human Resources Professional Development Education and Training](#), redefines the approval process for an individual employee’s training request; re-focuses development into two categories: career/talent competency and organizational development. It also incorporates a talent development model as an element within a Career Competency Track. It also adds the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police (VACP) Leadership Education as part of Management Development, a highly selective educational opportunity, and includes in-house internships as a special interest development opportunity. These minor updates were necessary to ensure established policy directs future implementation of new programs.

**News You Can Use**

- ◆ The Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) are important partners in our management and conservation efforts. Each year, during the first week of December, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) Annual Meeting is held. The VSDWCD presents forestry awards to rural and urban landowners/groups that have made exceptional efforts to practice and promote forestry through implementation of practices and projects, both in the rural and urban forestry sectors.
- ◆ VDOF field staff work closely with their landowners and urban partners to help with the implementation of plans and projects. Please plan to nominate in conjunction with your local SWCD a

deserving individual or group for one of these awards. The deadline for nominations is September 9th and the information and form can be found at: <https://vaswcd.org/award-program>

## Last Week

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### State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell, Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester), Terry Lasher (assistant state forester), John Colligan (chief of administration), and Karl Didier (forestland conservation program manager) attended the Board of Forestry Meeting on June 15. Five outgoing board members were recognized for their dedicated service: Dr. David Smith, 15 year; John Burke, III, 11 years; Glen Worrell and Frank Myers, 9 years and Ben Reeves, 2 years. Rob Farrell led a strategic planning discussion of what issues the Board wanted to address over the next 12 months. Board members agreed solar array impacts on forestland and forest product markets were their priority.
- ◆ Rob Farrell participated in the Virginia Forever panel discussion about the potential for increased land conservation funding resulting from passage of the Great America Outdoors Act. Rob focused on Virginia's experience with the Forest Legacy Program and the potential for additional funding in the coming years. The Forest Legacy Program requires a 25 percent match for all awards which means the increased funding would require additional matching funds to be found. Rob also shared how the State Forest Mitigation and Acquisition Fund (which resulted from the mitigation package for the Cobbs Creek Reservoir) was critical for enabling each of the three most recent major VDOF land conservation projects. That fund is now 100 percent committed and VDOF has lost an important tool for supporting forestland conservation.

### Administration

- ◆ VDOF staff from across program and operational areas met on June 21 to provide feedback on IFRIS as part of our analysis of the system. In addition to sharing how different parts of the agency use IFRIS, they also shared the good and not-so-good aspects of the system, as well as enhancements they would like to see. This information will be shared with the contractor doing this analysis and she will follow up with individual discussions with staff. We anticipate this analysis will be a very helpful tool as we determine a path forward for either an enhancement of IFRIS or IFRIS 2.0.

### Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) and Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry [U&CF] program manager) surveyed for laurel wilt disease on sassafras in southwest Virginia and treated blue ash in Cedars Natural Area. They hosted a training on June 17 for VDOF and Tennessee Division of Forestry staff where laurel wilt has been confirmed covering diagnosis of laurel wilt, preventative treatment techniques, and tool sanitation.
- ◆ Lara Johnson and Katlin Dewitt attended the dedication of the Clinch River State Park in St. Paul, Virginia. U&CF staff have been a critical part of the Clinch River Valley initiative since its inception and have provided funding through a variety of grants to support the work of the group including environmental education, stream cleanup, kiosk development, conceptual planning for towns along the river and have provided support for the development of the newly dedicated state park.
- ◆ Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) served as a VDOF representative for the Virginia Tech external partners advisory group meeting for the proposed Urban Natural Resources degree program. The external partners were comprised of a group of approximately 35 people from a wide variety of organizations including state and federal government, businesses, and conservation organizations.

- ◆ Joe Lehnen partnered with Katlin DeWitt to co-author an article on utilizing emerald ash borer (EAB)-killed ash trees in the Nelson County area for Blue Ridge Life Magazine. Blue Ridge Life Magazine, which serves Nelson County and the surrounding areas, recently transformed to an online format only. There is a notable quantity of dead ash in yards, near homes in the Wintergreen and Beech Grove areas of Nelson County.
- ◆ The Timber Products Output (TPO) survey continues with an agency goal of concluding the program by June 30. Presently 24 of 63 surveys (38%) have been returned, processed by Forest Utilization & Marketing staff, and forwarded to the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station in Knoxville. The VDOF regions continue to contact the mills who have yet to return these TPO surveys which can provide essential information for supporting existing forest industry and the expansion of new forest product markets for Virginia landowners.

### Agency Lands

- ◆ As we near the end of the fiscal year, the State Forest system is excited to report these financials for the past year:
  - Revenues from State Forest management in Fiscal Year 20-21 have generated pending payments in lieu of taxes to the various counties where the timber was managed totaling \$241,754.21. Payments will be presented to the various counties in the coming months at Board of Supervisor meetings.
  - Total State Forest revenue generated in Fiscal Year 20-21 was \$1.65 million.

### Western Region

- ◆ Bill Sweeney (area forester) led a virtual tour of the River Ramble Loop Trail at Franklin County's Waid Park for three classes of biology students from Franklin High School. The tour discussed bottomland forests, their importance in maintaining water quality and native fauna, and how invasive species are impacting many of the riparian areas. During the hike students enjoyed a lively Q&A session as they learned how to identify many of the common native and invasive species found in the county. The tour also touched on the emerald ash borer, as the trail has been heavily impacted by the insect.

### Public Information

- ◆ Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) met last week with the natural resources State Fair planning group. The natural resources are being moved indoors this year. Ellen presented VDOF's plans for shifting our resources to local fairs and is working with the group to facilitate Smokey Bear's presence at the State Fair this fall.
- ◆ Efforts to encourage forest service providers to sign up/register their businesses on the new website continue. Janet Muncy (integrated media manager) developed a flier that can be passed out at meetings and other face-to-face opportunities with providers. The Virginia Loggers Association also distributed information to all of its members via its weekly newsletter.

### News Clips

- ◆ [James City County farmer stays vigilant as experts work to slow spread of threatening invasive species](#)
- ◆ [Virginia Tech earns 13th Tree Campus USA recognition](#)
- ◆ [Virginia announces \\$4.8 million in land conservation grant awards](#)