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**Employee Spotlight**

*Matthew Hutchins and Chuck Wright - Thank you*

- ◆ During the months of August and September, Fluvanna County High School senior Gus Jones participated in a number of ride-alongs with Matthew Hutchins (forest technician) and Chuck Wright (area forester). The two employees advised Mr. Jones on the culmination of his senior project, an interpretive trail on school property. Various kiosks located along the trail are linked via QR code to a website explaining the benefits of forested riparian buffers. Gus sent in the note below:
  - "My name is Gus Jones and I am a senior at Fluvanna County High School and I am also enrolled in Blue Ridge Virtual Governor's School. For the internship portion of my senior project, I shadowed Mr. Chuck Wright (area forester) and Mr. Matthew Hutchins (forest technician). They showed me so much about regulating logging jobs, planting and growing trees, and so many other things that foresters do. They both have so much knowledge and were able to share their many years of experience with me. I thank them so much and I really enjoyed my time with them".

**News You Can Use**

*Virginia Tech Plant Disease Clinic*

- ◆ The Virginia Tech Plant Disease Clinic is now charging \$35 for each submission. The fee applies to both digital and physical samples. If the clinic is not able to diagnose the problem from a digital submission,

they will request a physical sample and no additional fee will be incurred by the client. If private landowners wish to submit a sample, they should do so through their local VCE office and be prepared to pay the submission fee. If VDOF staff would like to submit a sample from public land, contact [Lori Chamberlin](#) (forest health manager).

## Last Week

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### State Forester

- ◆ VDOF was well-represented at the annual Virginia Forestry Summit hosted by the Virginia Forestry Association (VFA). Rob Farrell provided an overview of the new Hardwood Forest Habitat Initiative and Rachel Harris (utilization and marketing specialist) presented a session on the impacts of labor shortages on the forest resources community.
- ◆ VDOF hosted a meeting of the Board of Forestry in association with the VFA Summit meeting. Five new board members were welcomed, and the meeting agenda was focused on the effects of solar energy development on the forest resource. Forestland conversion due to solar facilities has been an ongoing concern in the forestry and farming community.
- ◆ At the VFA Summit awards banquet, Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) was recognized with the Society of American Foresters Merit Award from the Virginia Division of the Appalachian Society of American Foresters.
- ◆ This is the 50th anniversary of the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program. Rob Farrell recognized the VFA for its support, cooperation, and assistance with RT in the past and moving forward. At the awards banquet on September 30, a historical video on the program, featuring former State Forester James Garner, debuted. Rob then presented a plaque made of wood from one of the first 1971 RT planting projects to VFA Executive Director Corey Conners. The RT program was highlighted at the VDOF exhibit at the Summit and featured storyboards about the program, a more extensive video, and items produced from the “RT50 Tree.” Many in VDOF are involved in the RT program on a daily and regular basis, so it is difficult to name them all, but some who closely worked on activities related to the Summit are listed here. Thanks go to VDOF’s Jon Perry (forestry technician) for video production; Michelle Stoll (public information director) for overall coordination; Todd Groh (forest management programs) for video, exhibit, and overall help; Mary Weaver (executive assistant) and Joe Lehn (utilization and marketing specialist) for plaque crafting and coordination; Janet Muncy (integrated media manager) for exhibit production and overall guidance; Jennifer Leach (program support technician) for exhibit and procurement; Becky Woodson (program support technician) for abundant support; and Dean Cumbia (forest resource management director).

### Fire and Emergency Response

- ◆ VDOF Incident Management Team (IMT) members Dave Houttekier (assistant director fire and emergency response), Ken Sterner (senior area forester), Jason Braunstein (GIS program manager) and John Miller (director fire and emergency response) attended the National Wildfire Coordinating Group’s (NWCG) advanced leadership course in Chattanooga, TN on September 27-30. The course included a total of 40 incident managers from 11 different state forestry agencies across the south. The training targets senior fire management leaders, with the goal of fostering an exchange of knowledge and experience in the art of leading during high-risk and complex incidents. John Miller was the overall coordinator for the event.
- ◆ The VDOF participated in the second annual First Responder Virginia conference in Virginia Beach on September 22 – 25. The conference is a combined offering presented by the Virginia State Firefighters Association and the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads. The conference provides

numerous training opportunities, cooperator exhibits, and a meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board. VDOF participation included several members of the agency's fire staff, as well as additional help from the VDOF's Eastern Region.

- ◆ Virginia's Certified Prescribed Burn Manager (CPBM) program is recognized under Virginia Code of Law, providing a higher level of professionalism for fire managers in Virginia. VDOF provided its second virtual offering of the VDOF's premier course for prescribed burners in the Commonwealth on September 21 – 24. This year's class certified 58 students, and reinforced the success of this program as a virtual offering. Since the inception of the program, more than 1300 individuals have now completed Virginia's Certified Prescribed Burn Manager program.
- ◆ In the fall of 2019, the Virginia Department of Forestry purchased Polaris Ranger off-road utility vehicles for each of the 24 field work units in order to better perform our emergency response mission. The funds utilized for this initial project were secured through the Master Equipment Lease program.
  - The vehicles help support wildfire suppression, prescribed fire, and forest management activities such as transporting seedlings at forested tracts for tree planting projects. VDOF staff have responded to search and rescue mutual aid calls across the Commonwealth with their machines.
  - Because there was no factory-provided firefighting package available for these units, VDOF staff designed and built a custom water pump and spray solution. That prototype is complete and currently being tested in several geographic areas.
  - For VDOF, fielding this employee-designed vehicle is a game changer. It will give us the ability to effectively complete our core mission of protecting the citizens of the Commonwealth and their property from the threat of wildfire, by efficiently transporting the tools to do the job. The new unit has *drafting capability*, an industry term to describe the ability to refill the water tank by pumping water back into the tank from any surface water source independently. This system will not be deployed solely for wildfire control, but will also support prescribed fire operations while remaining flexible enough to be removed from the vehicle to transport seedlings and tools for reforestation projects as well.



## Forestland Resource Management

- ◆ Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) crews have completed 98.8% of the plots for the current panel of plots, as of October 1 (91.7% completed as of September 1). Additionally, 3.9% of the next panel of plots have been completed. Thanks to the FIA crews for their productive work.

## State Forest

- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager), John Scrivani and David Crouch completed the 2021 harvest of control- and open-pollinated American chestnuts at the Lesesne State Forest. The control crosses (approximately 300 bur clusters from over 20 select trees) will be used for small stem assays to test for blight resistance and for establishment of future breeding and seed production orchards, while the open-pollinated burs (approximately 40-50 bushels) will provide next year's crop for the Augusta Forestry Center.
- ◆ Staff presented an "In Lieu of Taxes" check to Washington County Board of Supervisors for timber sale and recreation revenues generated on the Channels State Forest.

- ◆ Staff have prepared a hunters map for First Mountain State Forest that will be posted to our website after review. Preparation for a timber sale on First Mountain State Forest is moving forward.

### State-Owned Lands

- ◆ Staff looked at a potential timber sale project on the Southwest Virginia Veterans' Cemetery with Scott Miller from the Dept. of Veteran Services (DVS). Two other DVS properties are also being looked at in Amelia and Suffolk counties. Staff will also gather information to provide management plans that meet the DVS objectives for each property's forested lands. The timber on the Dublin tract is shortleaf pine that was planted in the early 1960's. (pictured)



### Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) / Shared Stewardship

- ◆ Allegheny Lumber has restarted harvesting on the Hunting Camp timber sale - a part of the Round Mountain West GNA. Staff met the buyer and walked through what is remaining to do on the sale.
- ◆ Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) participated in the Shared Stewardship field trip as part of last week's Forest Summit. Areas toured were a part of U.S. Forest Service property in the North River and Lee Ranger District. Pictured left is a view from Reddish Knob looking over the forested area in



Rockingham County and further. Pictured right are attendees at one stop discussing prescribed burning as a tool.



### Central Region

- ◆ Jim McGlone (urban forest conservationist) made a presentation at the Plant VA Natives workshop called "How to Build a Forest in Your Front Yard." He discussed how encouraging citizens to plant trees helped with many public policy goals, but the "lawn first" model of modern landscaping got in the way of tree planting. Jim also gave some tips about picking out a plant at your local nursery and talked about some of the common issues with container-grown trees and how to correct them. The workshop was viewed by over 650 people live and is posted for the 3000 registrants to view online.
- ◆ Jim McGlone gave a presentation on forest management to the Virginia Master Naturalists statewide conference. In his presentation, he highlighted VDOF's role in forest management and the services VDOF offers to landowners. The presentation was well received and several participants indicated a better understanding of the role of timber harvests in forest management.
- ◆ Chuck Wright attended the Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium meeting and tour. The day started with a virtual meeting with speakers from Virginia Cooperative Extension, Department of Environmental Quality, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Council. The virtual meeting was followed by a tour at the Department of Corrections State Farm

facility located in Goochland & Powhatan Counties. The Department of Forestry and many other state agencies and private organizations are actively working on this unique property to restore and protect important buffers along the James River. An interesting aspect to this project is incorporating the training provided for the State Farm inmate workforce to accomplish many of the tasks, including fence construction and the planting and maintenance of the trees.

### **News Clips**

- ◆ [Science You Can Use \(in 5 minutes\)](#)
- ◆ [Seeing Our Future More Clearly: How One Peatland Study is Changing How We Think About Carbon](#)
- ◆ [Indigenous Fire Stewardship: Federal/Tribal Partnerships for Wildland Fire Research and Management](#)
- ◆ [Longleaf Pine Woodlands and Encroaching Species](#)
- ◆ [FOLIAGE WATCH: When you could see the leaves change color this year](#)
- ◆ [Virginia Forestry Summit comes to Harrisonburg](#)
- ◆ [Wood fibers key to sustainable concrete, cement](#)
- ◆ [Enviva Forest Conservation Fund helps protect ancient wetlands](#)
- ◆ [Why Do Forests Matter for Birds?](#)
- ◆ [IKEA's not-so-secret weapon](#)
- ◆ [Why the US Navy Manages Its Own Private Forest](#)
- ◆ [Study looks at U.S. climate change mitigation related to forestry and agriculture](#)
- ◆ [Startup's drone swarms plant seeds in fire-ravaged forests](#)