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Employee News

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Kenny Thomas (forest technician specialist) is retiring from VDOF on December 31, 2021 after 37 years of service. Congratulations, Kenny – enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

2022 Calendars

- ◆ What could be better than the gift of a VDOF wall calendar? It's time for the final big push to get our VDOF wall calendars out! Please distribute to those who want or can use them, or to folks you'd like to introduce yourself to. Giving a calendar near the holidays is a great opportunity to plant a seed with someone to establish or improve working relationships for the future. If you haven't already, take advantage of our wall calendars and reach out to landowners, local officials, cooperators, local organization leaders, or others who you interact with or would like to interact with in the future. Demand for the calendars decreases after the first of the year, and we don't want to let this resource go to waste. If you find you're not using the stock given to you, please share them with other staff that could use more. Our goal is no calendars left alone in a dark office over the holidays!

Coming Up

Intranet Update Coming

- ◆ During the week of December 27-31, updates will be made to the VDOF Website / Intranet site which will put in place a 90-day password expiration policy for site security. Once implemented, if you have not changed your Website / Intranet password in the past 90 days, you will be prompted to change it the next time you login. We don't anticipate issues, but should you experience problems, please report problems to ifrishelp@dof.virginia.gov. Thank you for your patience as we make this necessary update.

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ On December 7-8 at the Roslyn Conference and Retreat Center in Richmond, VDOF held their first Women in Fire Summit for agency field-women and our partners from the USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. Today, women represent only 10 percent of the national wildland fire workforce. This event provided an opportunity to build relationships and have open and honest discussions regarding challenges, concerns, and barriers that women face in the field, in the office, or on the fireline. Participants were welcomed by remarks from Secretary Ring. They later engaged in professional discussions with external and internal first-responder mentors in a variety of topics, including career growth and development, leadership skills, training, work-life balance, mental health, and support resources. Summit leaders and speakers received lots of positive feedback from participants, who left motivated and eager for future events and networking opportunities.

Zoë Sumrall (water quality specialist) and Kristi Clore (talent management and HRIS coordinator), coordinated the event, which drew more than 50 participants (pictured).



- ◆ Rob Farrell participated in the National Association of State Foresters executive committee meeting held at the NASF offices in Washington, DC. The discussion primarily focused on how state agencies can influence the allocation of the significantly increased federal funding that will be flowing to forestry. The funds are primarily targeted to catastrophic wildfire mitigation in western states, but the category includes language for forest restoration and resiliency that could provide significant benefits for all the states.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ The Forestland Conservation team has sent out their annual Conservation Newsletter to all VDOF easement holders. A PDF copy of the 2021 newsletter has been posted on the [VDOF website](#). If you would like a hard copy of the newsletter, please contact [Sarah Parmelee](#) (forestland conservation coordinator). Thanks to Sarah and Janet Muncy (integrated media manager) from Public Information for the hard work putting this newsletter together.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy (urban & community forestry [U&CF] partnership coordinator) attended the Southeastern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (SEVA RT) planning meeting. The meeting introduced

the new co-chair partners, which included a private arborist and a city arborist. Upcoming meeting topics were also discussed. Meghan Mulroy-Goldman and Kendall Topping (community forestry specialists) also attended the meeting.

- ◆ The Utilization and Marketing Division continues to make progress on several projects:
 - Received commitments from two speakers for the wood in construction - mass timber seminar and began research and planning for that event.
 - Began outreach on a potential wood innovation grant. This grant will focus on biochar, its uses as a water quality Best Management Practice (BMP), soil aggregate for improvement of soil health, and the potential for soil carbon markets.
 - Continued conversation with Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) about the training program and syllabus.
 - Attended a Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) webinar about funding Virginia wood exporters, which proved to be very informational about assistance that is out there for international marketing needs.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health manager) recorded a presentation for the Landscape Contractors Association of Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The presentation will be available for members to watch in February as part of a virtual pesticide recertification training session.
- ◆ On December 10, Todd Groh (forest resource management program manager) and Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management) participated in a virtual meeting with the Southern state forest management chiefs and policy staff. The meeting focused on gathering input in developing the new USDA Farm Bill, which directs policy and funding for federal investments in private forest management. In particular, the group provided input and analysis for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Working with Dr. Corey Greene from the Virginia Tech Forest Modeling Research Cooperative, Jerre Creighton (research program manager) completed all scheduled field measurements for the cooperative's long-term intensively managed plantation thinning study. Loblolly pines ranging in age from 28 to 30 years old were measured at each of five study locations at Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest to assess their growth 12 to 15 years after thinning to different densities. The data will be archived and analyzed over the coming winter and will be used to continually improve growth and yield models used to forecast loblolly pine plantation productivity.
- ◆ Augusta Forestry Center (AFC) field staff worked on completing lifting and grading. The nursery continues to fulfill bulk contractor pickups, and has taken in 859 orders totaling \$233,508.
- ◆ Josh Bennicoff (nursery manager) attended a field day with Weyerhaeuser and the Robert E. Lee Chapter of the Society of American Foresters to look at Weyerhaeuser's containerized plantings. Discussion centered on nursery capacity, as well as two stops to observe one-year-old and three-year-old plantings. A focal point was the conversation on pine tip moth control and injecting PTM in the outplanting versus treating in the nursery beds. (VDof is not capable of injecting in the nursery beds.)

State Forest

- ◆ Staff assisted in planting 700 hybrid chestnut seedlings in the Matthews State Forest orchard, in cooperation with The American Chestnut Foundation. Foundation staff and several volunteers participated in the planting operations.

- ◆ State Forest staff responded to a report of a wildfire on the Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest located at Forbes Road. The Volunteer Fire Department put the fire out before staff arrived. Staff investigated the fire and found it to be intentionally set by lighting cardboard. They found two more 1 to 2-foot diameter spots in the same location covered by fallen leaves from several weeks previous. These are in the same location as fires several years ago. Staff asked local hunters in the area to be on the lookout.
- ◆ Staff prepared three areas on the Sandy Point State Forest for three different treatments for the Hardwood Habitat Initiative, seeking out how much each treatment will cost to help with hardwood cost-share implementation cost decisions. The three treatments will consist of both mechanical and chemical treatments using funds from USDA Forest Service (USFS) grant funds. Each project utilized the Hardwood Assessment Tool.

Central Region

- ◆ Jonah Fielding, Ed Furlow (area foresters) Cameron Lipscomb (forest technician), David Powell (senior area forester), Rodney Newlin (water quality engineer), and Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) volunteered to help with the Skyline Chapter of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) firewood harvest for a deserving family December 10. Michael Downey (area forester) provided the logistics for the day. Ms. Wentz, the recipient, was most grateful for the ~3 cords of oak the group provided (pictured).



Western Region

- ◆ Brad Carico (deputy regional forester), Chris Sullivan (senior area forester) and John Miller (director of fire and emergency response) met with the Pulaski County Administrator and Emergency Services Coordinator to discuss VDOF's fire program in the county. Discussions focused on emergency response, fire mitigation programs and cross-boundary projects.
- ◆ Chris Thomsen (regional forester) and Brad Carico accompanied Secretary Bettina Ring and Deputy Secretary Heidi Hertz for an economic development announcement in Patrick County. Ten Oaks, LLC, a manufacturer of high-quality residential hardwood floors, will invest nearly \$9.3 million in Patrick County (Stuart) to construct a state-of-the-art hardwood sorting and stacking facility to support its manufacturing operations in the county. The new mill will enable the company to strengthen its supply chain, optimize yield on raw materials, and improve production quality and efficiencies, all while creating a major new market for Virginia's hardwood sawmills. The project will create 11 high-paying jobs and lead to the purchase of over \$18 million of Virginia-grown forest products over the next three years.
- ◆ Jon Perry (forest technician) and Bill Miller (senior area forester) met with staff of the Southwest Virginia Trails Authority, aka Spearhead Trails, to discuss collaborative functions that could be beneficial to both agencies. Spearhead Trails staff were very interested in wildfire training and assisting VDOF with dozer operations. Several of them operate dozers as part of trail construction and maintenance. VDOF will continue to work with Spearhead Trails when logging operations impact their trails.

News Clips

- ◆ [Virginia Farm Bureau recognized for longtime support of timberlands reforestation](#)
- ◆ [Large fire now contained in Washington County, Va](#)
- ◆ [Burn Ban Declared as Brush Fires Occur](#)
- ◆ [To regrow forests, the U.S. needs billions of seeds—and many more 'seed hunters'](#)
- ◆ [Wood products company expands in Patrick County](#)
- ◆ [Frederick County homes saved from woodland fires](#)
- ◆ [Improvements to ConserveVirginia prioritize land conservation projects impacting water quality](#)
- ◆ [FPL Scientists' Work on Moldable Wood Is Featured on the Cover of Science](#)