



**February 28, 2022**

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**Employee News**

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***Women’s Uniform Pants***

- ◆ [Dovetail MavenX Women’s Pants](#) have been added to the catalog. If you have any questions please contact [Mary Weaver](#) or your uniform representative.
  - Eastern Region – [Lisa Deaton](#)
  - Central Region – [Chad Stover](#)
  - Western Region – [Cole Young](#)
  - Headquarters – [Kaitlin Dewitt](#)

## Coming Up

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### *Save the Date – Forest Carbon Symposium*

- ◆ June 1, 2022 will be the “Forest Carbon Symposium” in Staunton, VA. The Utilization & Marketing (U&M) Program is hosting a one-day forest carbon informational session. Speakers from around the US are invited to deliver sessions on forest carbon, what it means to Virginia, and what opportunities exist for Virginia. Large to small forest owners, urban and rural forestry communities, field foresters, local landowners, and forest managers will benefit from the symposium. More details will follow.

## Project Updates

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### *Policy and Procedures*

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 7-4 Rural Forestry Technical Procedures](#) has recently been updated and posted on the Intranet. The primary change was to update the Riparian Forest Buffer reporting in IFRIS. When reporting linear feet of buffer establishment, i.e. tree planting, if both sides of a stream or watercourse have been protected and planted, the linear feet of the stream or watercourse should be doubled. Several of the links to other resources were also fixed, so visit the policy and procedure 7-4 to see all of the changes.

### *VDOF Phone System Replacement*

- ◆ VDOF phone system replacement is moving ahead. Staff are meeting with VITA and Verizon representatives this week to review system options and pricing.

### *Grant Automated System*

- ◆ VDOF staff have begun meeting with personnel from Dulles Technologies, the contractor who is working with us to launch an automated system to help us manage agency grants. This new system will enhance management of sub-grants made to our forestry partners, as well as improving oversight and management of the grant funds VDOF is awarded.

## Did You Know?

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### *VDOF Career Fair Events*

- ◆ After nearly a three-year hiatus, many college and academic institutions are returning to face-to-face career fair events this spring. Our VDOF Talent Acquisition/Office of Human Resources Team and employee ambassadors have been eager to move from virtual platforms to in-person events, with the understanding that this engagement is what ultimately drives interest in our agency's mission and occupational roles. For nearly five years, we have shared our story at military bases, community colleges, urban universities, private and public institutions alike, yielding a 30% increase in veterans and minority/women hires throughout this period. Our goal remains accessibility to forestry careers by all who have a passion for protecting our natural resources and believe in a greater calling to serve our communities as public servants. This past week, our teams were present at the College of William and Mary (Feb 18) and Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment (Feb 22) career fairs. Our engagements were extremely positive, and while many students visited career fair sites, we interacted with 25-30 directly at each career fair event - an excellent ratio given the total number of students in attendance.

- At William and Mary (W&M), our very own W&M Tribe alumna Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forestry specialist) addressed the many questions from students who were interested in DOF careers, job diversity, her day-to-day duties, flexibility of work, and our overall public-serving mission. Our booth even received a visit from W&M's mascot, the Griffin (pictured).
- At Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment (VT CNRE), in addition to regular interactions with natural resources students, we directly engaged with 12 forestry major students about careers throughout our department. We also conversed with current leadership, faculty, and staff to plan upcoming engagements this spring at VT CNRE, with some specifically tailored to encourage minorities to pursue forestry majors/careers.
- ◆ We are eager to continue face-to-face events this year, which will take place at private colleges, military bases, and statewide educational institutions. If you are interested in joining our HR team as an employee ambassador, please send an email to [hro@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:hro@dof.virginia.gov) to identify an opportunity.



## Last Week

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### Administration

- ◆ The VDOF had an agency charge card usage percentage of 99.5% for the most recent period - well above the statewide agency average of 92%. Utilizing a charge card for purchases under \$5,000 is encouraged by the Department of Accounts as a cost-effective way for agencies to do business.

### Fire and Emergency Response

- ◆ February 15<sup>th</sup> marks the start of Virginia's official spring wildfire season. During the spring, warming temperatures and dry, windy conditions make most of Virginia susceptible to increased threat for wildfire. The spring fire season ultimately ends as everything greens up across the Commonwealth, typically by late April.
- ◆ February 15<sup>th</sup> also marks the start of Virginia's 4PM burning law. The 4pm law puts a limitation in place, which requires the public to postpone any outdoor burning until after 4 pm each day. Debris burning is Virginia's number one cause of wildfires, closely followed by arson (intentionally set) fires. The 4 PM Burning Law was adopted during the 1940s to reduce the number of wildfires which occurred each spring, when Virginia has traditionally seen an increased number of fires. Fires are more likely during late winter and early spring because winds are usually elevated, the relative humidity is lower, and the fuels on the forest floor are extremely dry, having "cured" all winter without the shade of tree leaves. After 4:00 p.m., winds usually calm down and the relative humidity levels rise, both of which reduce the potential for a debris fire or any outdoor open-air fire to escape.
- ◆ In calendar year 2021, the VDOF suppressed 558 wildfires, which burned 6,649 acres. These numbers match our most recent ten-year average (2012-2021). Virginia's largest wildfire of 2021 was a 1,730 acre fire in Rockingham County.
- ◆ This year, since February 15, the VDOF has suppressed 84 wildfires, which burned 746 acres. Since the start of 2022, the VDOF has suppressed 103 wildfires, which have burned 913 acres. Agency suppression efforts during this period directly protected 34 homes and 45 other structures, with a protected value of over 6.8 million dollars.

## Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Molly O'Liddy (urban & community forestry [U&CF] partnership coordinator) attended the national Healthy Trees Healthy Lives working group conference call. Molly is working with the Southern Group of State Foresters communications committee to design outreach materials for this effort.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy participated in an on-camera interview for NBC12 Richmond on how to prepare your yard for severe weather. Molly spoke about taking inventory of the health and species of trees in your yard, proper tree care and maintenance, and the importance of consulting with a certified arborist. The interview will air in March, which is 'severe weather awareness month.'
- ◆ Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager) met with the Heat Watch Group to discuss updates on data trends for the urban heat island studies conducted last year and next steps for the project.
- ◆ The 2021 Timber Products Output survey was mailed to Virginia's primary producers. This survey is sent out yearly to randomly selected mills to compile how the industry is utilizing our wood resources.
- ◆ The U&M program conducted a half-day urban wood workshop for James Madison University's Industrial Design Class. The workshop included indoor presentations from Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) and Harrisonburg's Department of Public Works Green Space Program Manager Jeremy Harold. The class then moved outdoors to view local urban wood products produced by Brad Wroblewski (KnochedVA) and a sawmill demonstration by Aaron Coffman of Cootes Store Farm & Sawmilling. James Madison University (JMU) has recently launched their urban wood program in cooperation with the City of Harrisonburg and the VDOF. Earlier this year, Harrisonburg donated a trailer load of ash lumber for use by the Industrial Design students.

## Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) and Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) organized and attended the 30th annual Virginia Association of Forest Health Professionals (VAFHP) meeting in Staunton. Speakers gave updates on emerging forest pests, invasive species management, pollinator habitat, urban forest fragments, pesticide safety, and more. In total, 116 people attended in person and 88 virtually.
- ◆ VDOF is making plans for a Forest Management Academy in the fall of 2022. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, an idea group began planning for this event. The group is composed of the HQ Forest Management Branch (FMB) and regional representatives Grayson Coleman and Daniel Hosack (western), Jordan Herring and Michael Aherron (central) and Doug Audley and Ken Sterner (eastern). Initial plans are for two sessions, a western event focused on hardwood management topics and an eastern event featuring topics on both pine and hardwood management. The planning group is currently working on scheduling, logistics, and content. If you have ideas, please share these with a regional or FMB representative.

## Agency Lands

- ◆ The Sussex Pine Nursery has lifted and graded 10,673,000 seedlings, which is 46% of this year's crop.
- ◆ The Augusta Nursery started lifting and grading trees in preparation for the shipping and pickup process to start February 22. They currently have 1420 orders for \$360,225 in sales.

## Public Information

- ◆ Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) represented VDOF at the recent meeting of the Virginia Resource Use Education Council.

## Central Region

- ◆ Drew Arnn (senior area forester) met with Eric Day, Entomologist with Virginia Tech, to find a location along a railroad corridor in Pittsylvania County to place a forest inventory insect trap.
- ◆ Al Brooks (technician specialist) conducted a fire scene origin protection training for 12 members of the Kenbridge Fire Department in Lunenburg County.
- ◆ Rodney Newlin (water quality specialist) led an IGNIS drone operation training in Rockingham County for 9 VDOF drone pilots. The IGNIS drone is actually a DJI Matrice 600 Pro drone that carries the IGNIS system, which carries a payload of ping-pong size chemical spheres. Upon command, the spheres are injected with glycol, starting a chemical reaction that will generate flames after being dropped precisely where you want them. This system allows for safer and more efficient ignition. The training helped our pilots get more familiar with the system without having the pressure of being on an actual prescribed burn or wildfire.
- ◆ Ed Furlow (area forester) gave a "Forestry and Natural Resources Careers" presentation to Madison County High School students. He addressed their AP environmental science class, which included 26 students. Ed spoke to students about college-related and non-college-related career paths in the natural resource field.

## Eastern Region

- ◆ The Blackwater work unit, Evan Richardson, Stephen Jasenak (area foresters), Kendall Topping (community forestry specialist) and Scott Bachman (senior area forester) completed an 11-acre longleaf understory burn. The burn went well, backing most of the way through the nearly impenetrable thicket of vines in this nearly 10 year old stand. Utilizing natural barriers to our advantage, a small amount of buffer between a field and the longleaf stand was also burned. This was an excellent opportunity for some of our newer employees to put some fire on the ground and suppress a small spot. (pictured)
- ◆ Meghan Mulroy-Goldman and Eli Podyma (community forestry specialists), led 14 Master Naturalist trainees from the Historic Rivers Chapter in the Forest Ecology and Management Basic Training. Meghan first talked about the benefits of forests, how we can quantify some of these benefits using i-Tree, forest ecology, challenges to Virginia's forests, and forest management. Meghan and Eli then led the group on a short walk through the Basset Trace Nature Trail in Colonial Williamsburg to talk about forest ecology and tree ID, while the chapter's president instructed the group on tree measurements using clinometers and Biltmore sticks. The group asked lots of good questions and seemed to enjoy the training.
- ◆ Eli Podyma led a virtual training session on forest management for 28 new members of the Riverine Master Naturalists.
- ◆ Jeremy Falkenau (senior area forester) and Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) met with representatives of VDOT at their Meadow Road Complex in Henrico to discuss potential forest management operations in tandem with planned site development.
- ◆ Eli Podyma spent a day with Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) in the City of Richmond showcasing several urban and community forestry projects that VDOF has been involved with.





- ◆ The Young Farmers of Virginia held a tour on the Eastern Shore. Kenny Midgett (forest technician) provided a stop on the tour in Wachapreague, demonstrating proper chainsaw safety and tree felling techniques. (pictured)



- ◆ Maritime Area personnel assisted the Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the garden clubs of the Eastern Shore, the Master Gardeners, and the Town of Onancock in planting 15-gallon nursery stock willow oaks and red maples to begin restoration of the coalition's new shelter and offices in Onancock. (pictured)



- ◆ John Rose (forest technician), Evan Richardson and Stephen Jasenak presented an overview of VDOF needs when a tractor is called to a wildfire, at the Capron Volunteer Fire

Department in Southampton County. The 15 fire fighters from Capron and several other fire departments were reminded of our needs for an unloading area, safety when the dozer is in the woods, communication essentials, and scene protection. It was an informative evening for the fire departments and the VDOF. COVID has made all of us a bit unfamiliar with our wildland fire fighting partners. It is good to be able to see these groups in a low stress environment again! (pictured)



## Western Region

- ◆ The Mt. Rogers' work area recently hosted Brent Noel, Small Farm Outreach agent with Virginia State University. The group visited agricultural and forestry sites in Grayson County to discuss potential meetings and training opportunities. The group also met with the local Ag Advisory committee (deputy Co Admin, Extension, VDOF, BOS Member, SWCD, Sheriff and local landowners) to discuss local natural resource and agricultural issues. Brent is based out of Roanoke County can be a great resource to assist landowners. <https://www.ext.vsu.edu/sdvbfr-program>
- ◆ Employees from three work areas (Blue Ridge, Mt. Rogers, and Piedmont) and State Forests teamed up to support the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program and Virginia Cooperative Extension in the planning and execution of the 2022 Woods and Wildlife Conference in Wytheville, VA. VDOF speakers presented on the subjects of hardwood management, white pine management, and VDOF services for landowners. The conference was well attended and despite the critical fire weather, fires held off long enough for all VDOF speakers to present their sections.
- ◆ Russell Proctor (regional fire specialist), Ed Stoots, (state lands coordinator) and Brad Carico (deputy regional forester) met with Catawba Hospital officials to discuss fire mitigation strategies for the hospital campus.

## News Clips

- ◆ [Virginia's burning law in effect Tuesday](#)
- ◆ [Forest Service plans multiple prescribed burns across western VA](#)
- ◆ [Virginia implementing statewide 4 p.m. burn law starting February 15](#)
- ◆ [Virginia to implement statewide 4 p.m. burn law](#)

- ◆ [Virginia's 4 p.m. burning law starts tomorrow](#)
- ◆ [Spring Wildfire Season begins, no burning allowed before 4 p.m.](#)
- ◆ [Virginia's 4 PM Burning Law Now In Effect](#)
- ◆ [The burn ban is now in effect](#)
- ◆ [Adidas East Village Expansion by Portland Video Pro – MassTimber Building](#)
- ◆ [Virginia burning law in effect](#)
- ◆ [Virginia's 4 p.m. burn ban in effect until April 30](#)
- ◆ [Dept. of Forestry: 2 homes protected from wildfire in Scott County, VA](#)
- ◆ [Virginia's 4 p.m. Burn Law Now in Effect Until April 30](#)
- ◆ [Burn law in effect](#)
- ◆ [Editorial: Time again to burn after 4](#)
- ◆ [Series of brush fires erupt in Bedford County, all under investigation](#)
- ◆ [New Virginia burning law in effect](#)
- ◆ [Officials concerned about busy start to spring fire season in Virginia](#)
- ◆ [Firefighters contain 10-acre Morrisville fire Saturday](#)