



March 7, 2022

## Upcoming Events

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[Board of Forestry Meeting](#) - March 15 @ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

[Environment Virginia Symposium](#) - March 29 - 31

[Mid-Atlantic Training Academy](#) – June 6 – 10

- ◆ The registration site for the 2022 Mid-Atlantic Fire Training Academy is now open for full-time VDOF employees. Do not share this information with anyone who is not a full-time VDOF employee! You can go directly to the registration site by clicking here: <https://www.garrettcollege.edu/fire-academy.php>
- ◆ You will see two options for registration:
  - Compact Member/Instructor and have a code:
  - Attendee and will pay with a credit card: (THIS REGISTRATION OPTION IS NOT YET OPEN! – It opens in early April)
- ◆ All fulltime VDOF employees can register as a Compact Member under option 1 using the following code: **MAFA2022VA**
  - This code will result in no charge for the registration.
- ◆ All employees must have the approval of your supervisor before registering.

**Important:** Since we have to validate our employees for this process and we will need to coordinate travel/carpooling plans, two things are needed once you have your registration confirmation:

- ◆ Let Sandy Mills know that you are attending and what course(s) you will be taking.
- ◆ Let your Regional Fire Specialist know what course(s) you are taking and work with them directly to coordinate carpooling and regional passenger vehicle/SUV use.
- ◆ Part-time VDOF employees, agency cooperators, and everyone else will use option # 2, once the regular registration opens up in early April, you will be notified when this is going to occur. (If anyone who is a non-fulltime VDOF employee registers with the Compact code, their registration will ultimately be canceled.)
- ◆ Personal per diem expenses for the academy will ultimately be paid by the Mid-Atlantic Compact directly. (Information on this reimbursement process will be provided at the academy.)
- ◆ Let Dave Houttekier or Sandy Mills know if you have any questions.

## Employee News

### *Congratulations – Brad Carico!*

- ◆ It is with great pleasure that we share the exciting news that Brad Carico has been selected to be the Regional Forester for the Western Region. Brad brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role from both state government and the private sector, and he has served in a variety of leadership roles for the VDOF in the past. Please congratulate Brad and welcome him to his new role, which officially begins March 10<sup>th</sup>.

### *Congratulations – Kathy Albertson!*

- ◆ It's a grandson! Kathy's daughter gave birth to Christopher Wyatt Norman early on the morning of March 2, weighing 8.5 lbs. Mom, dad, baby and grandma are all doing well.

### *Congratulations on your Retirement, Chester Lauck!*

- ◆ Friends and family came together February 26th to thank Chester Lauck for his 37 years of service to the Virginia Department of Forestry. Chester was sworn in as a local fire warden in Frederick County in 1984 and served as a dozer operator and patrolman. Over the years, Chester became invaluable to VDOF as a part-time firefighter, fire academy instructor, and mentor. Chester decided, *"with great pain, to hang up [his] boots and pack, and do what most people would just walk away from long before now, [and] retire on December 31, 2021."*
  - Many VDOF staff have worked with Chester over the years, at local fire incidents, out-of-state fire or hurricane assignments, or teaching the next generation at fire academy. We've all benefited from his mentorship and support. It's not always easy to keep a secret from someone so connected within VDOF and the fire community, but we managed to surprise Chester February 26th with a celebration dinner with family and friends. Thanks to Zoë Sumrall for organizing and Chester's family for helping with the ruse to get Chester there. There were many great stories and lots of reminiscing over dinner. A special plaque made of ash from trees removed at the Woodstock office was presented to Chester (Zoë's concept and Janet Muncy's design). Join us in thanking Chester for his years of service to VDOF and wishing him well! (pictured)



### *Public Information Contacts for VDOF Employees*

Here's how the Public Information Office can help you and who to contact for various needs:

#### *Jennifer Leach, Public Information Programs Coordinator*

- ◆ Schedule, reserve, and pick up Public Information exhibits and event equipment
- ◆ Obtain bulk packs of printed publications (Work Areas - check your region first; Regions – contact Jennifer for restocking; HQ – contact Jennifer)
- ◆ Bulk Tree ID or Shrub ID book orders
- ◆ Large plotter poster prints and laminating

#### *Janet Muncy, Integrated Media Manager*

- ◆ Website and Intranet updates, questions, and assistance

- ◆ Graphic design of media (publications, graphics, signs, and promotional materials)
- ◆ Assistance with obtaining photos from our photo library
- ◆ Guidance on printed publications, design, and project management
- ◆ Assistance with promotional campaigns for events, programs, and messages
- ◆ Assistance with event planning and coordination

### ***Cory Swift-Turner, Public Information Specialist***

- ◆ Submit social media material, ideas, or inquiries
- ◆ Guidance and assistance with media interviews or inquiries
- ◆ Photography and videography needs and opportunities
- ◆ Assistance with editing documents, presentations, and other materials

### ***Ellen Powell, Conservation Education Coordinator***

- ◆ Assistance in planning content, messaging, delivery, and audience for new educational media (publications, web pages, interpretive or educational signs, presentations, etc.)
- ◆ Writing or editing text for educational media
- ◆ Lesson/activity ideas and materials for various audiences, youth to adult
- ◆ Collaborative educational projects with partners
- ◆ Training in educational methodology

### ***Cindy Frenzel, Project Learning Tree (PLT) Coordinator***

- ◆ PLT facilitator training
- ◆ Scheduling PLT educator workshops for groups in your area

## **Last Week**

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### ***Water Quality***

- ◆ The results of calendar year 2021 BMP monitoring are now available on our website at: [https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/BMPs-Imp-Monitoring-2021\\_pub.pdf](https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/BMPs-Imp-Monitoring-2021_pub.pdf). The results are impressive as forest harvesting professionals are maintaining the median score of 94.4% statewide and 95.7% within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The Bay numbers are extremely important due to a requirement under the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) that forest harvesting attain a 95% implementation rate by 2025. Virginia has been able to hit that mark for several years now. The dedicated crew of regional water quality specialists and engineers are to be commended for completing the assigned monitoring audits as well as working with the harvest operators on training through the SHARP Logger Program and individually to ensure that BMPs are in place.

### ***Forestland Conservation***

- ◆ Cory Swift-Turner (public information specialist) and Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) traveled to St. Pierre's Woodworking and Sawmill in Floyd, VA, to capture the delivery of parts of the Merry Tree that used to stand on the Smithfield Plantation, which is part of the Virginia Tech (VT) Campus. This historic white oak, whose age was estimated at 300+ years, succumbed to failing health and was decimated by a strong storm more than two years ago. The usable parts of the tree were

recovered and stored by Campus Arborist Jamie King until he received clearance to proceed with this project to help preserve the legacy of the tree.

- Another component of this story is that descendants of the historic black family (slaves) associated with the plantation have a rich oral history about the tree that they wish to continue by utilizing the tree parts for mementos for family members. A representative from the family drove from Baltimore, MD, joined Cory and Joe in Floyd. There is also a bench planned for placement near the former location of the tree and a sculpture using parts of the tree for the VT Campus.
- VDOF's role is to partner with the VT Communications Team to capture the story of the tree and this project in several forms – blogs, press releases, social media posts, and a video. VDOF is also serving as an advisor and facilitator for the project.
- ◆ Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager) met with urban and community forestry leads from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia to discuss program priorities and opportunities for collaboration across state lines.
- ◆ The awards for Tree City USA, Tree Campus Higher Education, and Tree Line USA have arrived at the headquarters office. The U&CF team will be working to get these awards distributed to the appropriate work areas this week. Please send any questions to the U&CF branch.
- ◆ Rachel Harris (utilization and marketing specialist) attended the USDA Forest Service Wood Innovations Review Committee Meeting and is working on grant application reviews. Rachel is also planning a lumber grading training with timber product inspections (TPI) to help build workforce development and labor supply in the state.
- ◆ The Utilization and Marketing team is assisting a potential biochar producing company navigate the Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund's availability, helping them connect with USDA's Rural Development program, and exploring other available state funds from Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to help leverage their available private investment.
- ◆ Caitlin Verdu (watershed management program manager) guest lectured for a Virginia Tech Human Development Senior Capstone course. Caitlin shared tips and tricks for working with underserved and diverse audiences.

## **Forest Resource Management**

- ◆ On February 26, the Annual Forest Landowner Woods and Wildlife Conference was held at Germanna Community College in Culpeper. Organized by Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program and in its 18th year, more than 120 people attended the event. The VDOF featured several speakers: Joe Rossetti (hardwood initiative coordinator) on the hardwood initiative; Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) on forest health monitoring and emerging pests; Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester), and Jordan Herring (senior area forester) on urban wood utilization; and Sarah Parmelee (forestland conservation coordinator) on forestland conservation topics. Other speakers included representatives from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and several non-profit conservation organizations. Additionally, VDOF provided two exhibits, staffed by Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) and Deya Ramsden (Middle James River forest watershed project coordinator), and several other VDOF field personnel attended and interacted with forest landowners and citizens.
- ◆ The Spotted Lanternfly is a hot topic. See the latest on scouting egg masses through a blog written by Lori Chamberlin <https://dof.virginia.gov/spotted-lanternfly-egg-mass-scouting-diy/>
- ◆ Patti Nylander (senior area forester) and Joe Rossetti met with DWR representatives Kent Burtner and Gray Anderson to run the Hardwood Assessment Tool (HAT) on a 12-acre stand on Little North

Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Rockbridge County on a rainy morning. The stand was regenerated from a total harvest about 15 years ago and is suitable for the Crop Tree Release practice. This was the first introduction of the HAT to these DWR staff. We're happy to report that the Hardwood Assessment Tool works rain or shine.

### Agency Lands

- ◆ The Sussex pine nursery has lifted and graded 13,624,000 or 59% of the 2022 planting season's crop.
- ◆ This year's research/demonstration crop of nearly 800 American and hybrid chestnuts has been lifted and deployment to collaborators has begun. Of those, 280 seedlings will go to a new study in cooperation with the American Chestnut Foundation where out-planting in old fields, pine understory, and hardwood shelterwood will be compared at two locations; 105 seedlings will be added to a demonstration/orchard planting on private land along Little Back Creek in Bath County; and smaller allocations will be out-planted at several locations across the commonwealth.
- ◆ Jim Schroering (longleaf/SPB prevention coordinator) attended two half-day sessions of the virtual Virginia Prescribed Fire Council meeting.
- ◆ In fulfillment of VDOF's commitment to the North Carolina State Cooperative Tree Improvement Program, Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester) has been at the co-op's Arrowhead, GA, breeding orchard since February 18 and returned to Virginia on March 1. In Georgia, Ones has been busy with: monitoring flower development on 46 select families with a 70-foot lift, placing 410 pollination bags on more than 1600 flowers, collecting pollen from three parent genotypes, and helping with top grafting of nine special rust-resistant clones, for a total of 72 grafts. The cones from this pollination effort will be collected in fall 2023, the resulting seed will be sown in spring 2024 and progeny tests with the seedlings from them will be established in winter 2024 – spring 2025 in Virginia.

### State Forest

- ◆ Dennis Gaston (forest management specialist), Tom Zaebst (state forest superintendent), Bryant Bays (regional forester), Dave Slack (area forester), and Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) participated in a virtual meeting with the King William County administrator along with other county staff concerning management of Sandy Point and Zoar State Forests found within the county. The county is in process of updating their county comprehensive plan with citizen input desiring more outdoor recreation within the county. The county is interested in possibly looking at ways to increase recreation on the state forests.
- ◆ Shannon Lewis (forest management specialist) conducted a field tour for 15 master naturalists in the Riverine Chapter on the Cumberland State Forest.
- ◆ Zach Olinger (forest management and education specialist) made a presentation on eastern white pine management at the Wytheville Woods and Wildlife Conference.

### Central Region

- ◆ Tom Snoddy (area forester), Pat Murphy (senior area forester), Chad Stover (regional fire specialist), Thomas Reeves (forest technician), and Shannon Lewis (state forest manager) assisted with providing fire training to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) new AmeriCorps crew for this upcoming summer. Eleven full-time DCR staffers and four employees from the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) attended instruction about prescribed fire equipment, tactics and objectives. Held at Cumberland State Forest in conjunction with Bear Creek Lake State Park, participants took the fire fitness test, and heard from various staff about roles and opportunities in prescribed fire and wildfire. That afternoon concluded with hands-on stations with fire shelters, drip torches, fire line



hand tools and water pump operations. This multi-agency event has been conducted twice over the last two years, with plans for it becoming an annual event.

## Western Region

- ◆ Ben Wassum (natural resource specialist), Jake Stinnette (forest technician), Russel Proctor (regional fire specialist), and Joe Cotner (senior area forester) attended a spring fire season meeting with Bedford County Fire/Rescue and the USDA Forest Service (USFS) to discuss the upcoming season. Talking points were resources, personnel and the upcoming 1000-acre Black Horse Gap prescribed burn by the USDA Forest Service scheduled for this spring.
- ◆ Denny McCarthy (area forester), David Tompkins (forest technician), and Joe Cotner, recently met with Botetourt County Fire and EMS leaders. Topics included introductions of new personnel covering the area, response procedures and capabilities, law enforcement, training, and prevention.
- ◆ Dan Cloeter, Bill Sweeney, (area foresters); Erin Perry and David Bryan (forest technicians); Kevin Keith (senior area forester), Joe Rossetti (hardwood initiative coordinator) and Ben Wassum marked 37 acres over two properties for crop tree release under the Hardwood Habitat Initiative Program (HHIP). The crew marked 1,082 trees in 26.5 employee hours. Both stands were marked to favor oak, but poplar was also marked when no oaks were available. The two sites were on similar soils and one was 22 years old while the other was 15 years old. Similar stands could use the treatment even younger to be able to mark more oaks before they're outcompeted by poplar. The crop trees will be released by a contractor in March.
- ◆ Chad Austin (water quality engineer) and Andrew Vinson (water quality specialist) led a field lab for Virginia Tech's field skills course in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation. Approximately 45 students met with Chad and Andrew on a recent timber harvest in Roanoke County where they discussed Best Management Practices (BMP) for water quality and conducted a BMP audit. They followed with a discussion on pre-harvest planning, BMP monitoring results, and how they relate to sustainable forestry. The class also viewed a recently installed GeoWeb ford crossing and further discussed stream crossing options for forest management, as well as careers and internship opportunities at VDOF (pictured).



## News Clips

- ◆ [Tree-canopy initiative dies in legislature](#)
- ◆ [The Kenbridge Victoria Dispatch \(VDOF\)](#)
- ◆ [Luray and the DOF team up for water quality](#)
- ◆ [America's First National Park Turn 150](#)
- ◆ [Virginia Cooperative Extension, Natural Area Management Services to provide three-part webinar series](#)
- ◆ [Burning ban to remain in effect through April 30](#)