



April 4, 2022

Upcoming Events

[*Hardwood Forester 2022 Class Training – May 18 – 20*](#)

[*2022 Virginia Interagency Wildland Fire Academy – May 24 – 28*](#)

[*2022 Mid-Atlantic Compact Fire Academy – June 6 – 10*](#)

[*Forest Health Workshop – Charlottesville – June 8*](#)

[*Forest Health Workshop – Galax – June 9*](#)

[*All Agency Meeting – June 29*](#)

[*Forest Management Academy – East – September 13 – 15*](#)

[*Forest Management Academy – West – September 27 – 29*](#)

Employee News

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Rani Rahate (systems and data analyst) resigned from her position with the agency to pursue a career closer to home in Richmond. Her last day was March 31.
- ◆ Jordan Herring (senior area forester) resigned from his position with the agency to pursue a career opportunity with the City of Winchester as the City Arborist. His last day was April 1.

Did You Know

April Celebrations – [Statewide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Holiday Calendar](#)

- ◆ April is much more than an Egg Hunt or Earth Day celebrations: it serves as a collective period where some of the world's largest religions like Christianity, Islam and Judaism commemorate, live and share their teachings with central tenants of love, hope and graciousness of humanity. Also, a highlight of the United Nations' Earth Day celebration in New York City is the ringing of the Peace Bell, a gift from Japan, at the exact moment of the vernal equinox.
 - April 2 – [Ramadan](#), [World Autism Awareness Day](#), [Equal Pay Day](#)
 - April 10 – [Palm Sunday \(Christian\)](#)
 - April 15 – [Good Friday \(Christian\)](#), [Passover begins at sundown \(Judaism\)](#)
 - April 17 – [Easter \(Christian\)](#)

- April 20 – [First day of Ridvan \(Bahai\)](#)
- April 22 – [Earth Day](#)
- April 23 – [National Day of Silence \(LGBTQIAA+\)](#)
- April 24 – [Orthodox Christian Easter](#)
- April 30 – [End of Ramadan \(Islam\)](#)

Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matt Lohr joined Rob Farrell and Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer in attending the quarterly Board of Director's meeting of the Virginia Logger's Association (VLA). Board members shared their concerns on a variety of issues, including large solar installations encroaching on prime forest and farm lands, lack of markets for some forest products, and high fuel costs.
- ◆ Secretary Lohr, Rob Farrell, Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) and Bryant Bays (eastern regional forester) participated in the Rappahannock River Basin Commission meeting in Fredericksburg. The commission has been a longtime supporter of the VDOF Healthy Watershed Forests initiative that is aimed at utilizing local Economic Development Authorities (EDAs) to aggregate forest landowners in order to access carbon sequestration markets.
- ◆ Rob Farrell led a call with the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) executive committee to share concerns about the increasing level of overhead and administrative costs that the USDA Forest Service is planning to take from the federal IJA funding that has been allocated for state forestry programs. The overhead deductions are over 30% of the total for some categories. NASF is arranging a follow-up call with USFS leadership to share state concerns.
- ◆ Robbie Talbert (central regional forester) has temporarily stepped down from his regional forester role to undertake a special assignment for the agency focused on increasing agency performance of on-the-ground management activities. This assignment will also better enable VDOF to benchmark our agency against other state forestry programs.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban & community forestry [U&CF] program manager), Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator), and Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) visited the Richmond Toolbank to tour their facility. The Toolbank is a non-profit that supplies rentable tools to volunteer groups across the city, including wheelbarrows, shovels, etc., for planting projects.
- ◆ Lara Johnson, Eli Podmya (community forestry specialist) & Molly O'Liddy met with urban foresters from Richmond Urban Forestry Department to discuss the city's effort to update their tree inventory. Richmond Urban Forestry is working with volunteers to collect data across the city as well as incorporate new plantings performed by volunteer groups.
- ◆ The Virginia Urban Forest Council, also known as Trees Virginia, hosted their first in-person meeting in two years in Charlottesville. Volunteer members of the board met to discuss priorities for the next year and ways that the Council can integrate with urban forest goals throughout the state.
- ◆ Lara Johnson coordinated a tree planting training video for the new Tree Steward Manual with the Fredericksburg Tree Stewards. The video will demonstrate proper planting and mulching, in addition to the root washing technique used all over the state by various Tree Steward groups.

- ◆ Sabina Dhungana (utilization and marketing program manager) participated in the Carbon Webinar Series for Family Forest Landowners planning meeting as a Services, Utilization & Marketing (SUM) representative. Attendees were interested in learning and attending the Carbon Symposium that we have planned in June in Virginia.

Forest Resource Management

- ◆ On March 21, Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager), Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) and Joe Rossetti (hardwood initiative coordinator) met with staff and board members at Ivy Creek Natural Area in Charlottesville. Joe spoke with members about hardwood regeneration among one section of the natural area that is heavily utilized by the public and used the Hardwood Assessment Tool to help determine which practices would be most effective for achieving their goals. Katlin and Lori assessed hemlocks at this site and gathered data to return in the next month for treatment against the hemlock woolly adelgid.
- ◆ On March 24, Joe Rossetti hosted a web meeting for approximately 25 VDOF foresters. On the call, Joe highlighted the practice of crop tree release, discussing research supporting the practice. Foresters shared field progress updates and questions regarding the practice and hardwood management in general. The first crop tree release on private land has been completed, using the Hardwood Habitat Incentive Program; others projects on private land and State Forests are in progress.

Agency Lands

- ◆ The seed for the 2022 loblolly pine crop at the Sussex and Augusta nurseries was stratified by a team of VDOF volunteers. The process involves carefully weighing 10-lb lots of seed, soaking them overnight in water, then draining and bagging the seed, which is transferred to racks in the coolers at the Augusta Forestry Center (AFC). Over a four-day period, 2983 pounds of seed were processed; this should produce over 32 million seedlings for Virginia's landowners to plant in 2023. The total value of the crop (based on this year's catalog prices) could exceed three million dollars. Thanks go to Clint Folks, Grayson Coleman, Alex Hernandez (natural resources specialists), Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist), Todd Groh (forest resource management program manager), Cameron Lipscomb, Russell Schmidt, Jacob Stinnette, Daniel Swisher, Tristan Vest (forest technicians), Chris McClelland (area forester) and Patti Nylander (senior area forester) for their willingness to join in the effort.
- ◆ The Sussex pine nursery has lifted and graded 21,581,000 trees, which is 94% of our 2022 crop. Plans are to be finished lifting and grading by the end of this week.
- ◆ AFC field staff continue to lift and grade trees. The office has taken in 1865 orders totaling \$602,000.

State Forest

- ◆ Staff met with James Madison University students, Professor Tom Benzing, Trout Unlimited staff, and Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) staff on First Mountain State Forest. The students have been conducting monthly water sampling on Boones Run and Snag Run as part of their senior CAPSTONE project and are preparing to present their findings at the end of April. DWR staff discussed assessing a crossing at First Mountain to rate the degree to which it obstructs fish passage. The assessment was unable to be completed because of high flow. Trout Unlimited led an electrofishing sample on Boones Run. Two brook trout were caught during the sample at a location 1/2 mile upstream from the entrance to First Mountain.
- ◆ Staff conducted an understory burn in a 5-acre stand on the Matthews State Forest, with help from Western Region Mt. Rogers personnel.
- ◆ A northern parking lot was installed on the Charlotte State Forest to accommodate increased recreational use, ahead of its opening on April 1st.

State-Owned Lands

- ◆ Staff assessed the hardwood tree planting project survival at Virginia Correctional Center for Women in Goochland.
- ◆ Staff performed a site visit, with Chuck Wright (area forester) providing an overview of J Sargent Reynolds Community College state-owned lands plan and recommendations included in the plan.
- ◆ Tree planting was completed on the Paul D Camp Community College property and the Southampton Corrections (Deerfield Corrections) property.

USFS / Good Neighbor Authority

- ◆ Ed Stoots recently participated in the USDA Forest Service (USFS) George Washington / Jefferson National Forest Resource Advisory Council. The council recommended the award of over \$100,000 for Secure Rural School Funding to projects in various counties in Southwest Virginia to enhance recreation and improve infrastructure.

Central Region

- ◆ Drew Arnn (senior area forester) met with Danville Parks and Recreation and members of the Southwestern Piedmont Virginia Master Naturalist chapter to help formulate a plan to help reforest Ballou Park in Danville, as many of the older trees are being removed due to maturity and hazard mitigation.
- ◆ Heartland Area Foresters Tom Snoddy and Chris McClelland and Central Region Program Support Technician Charlene Bardon presented a program to 130 Buckingham County pre-school students recently at their Arbor/Earth Day celebration. Each student got an indigobush to take home and plant for their family. The group also discussed Arbor Day, tree planting, fire prevention, and had a visit from Smokey Bear.
- ◆ Rick Butler (area forester) assisted the foresters from the Five Forks work area in teaching the important skills needed by students for this year's upcoming Envirothon competition. The group instructed students from five area schools at the Longwood University Environmental Education Center on the Appomattox River on forestry tools, measurements, and tree ID. The center is just up the hill from the Appomattox River and adjacent to a 20-year-old riparian buffer planting done by the VDOF in earlier years.
- ◆ Jim McGlone (urban forest conservationist) worked in the field with four IB Science classes from South Lakes High School. Jim talked with them about forest management and the students measured trees in a fixed radius plot. They then used the data to determine the stocking level of the site. Since they were working in a stream mitigation bank, many of the trees had been inventoried 15 years ago and still had tags on them. Back in the classroom, they will use the historic data to perform the same calculations and consider the change in the forest over time.
- ◆ Bobby Robertson (forest technician), and Alex Hernandez (area forester) provided a basic wildfire training session of how to work safely around the bulldozer on the fireline, to members of the Alberta Volunteer Fire Department in Alberta (Brunswick County.)

- ◆ On March 21, our Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) with the IGNIS system was requested by Jack Kauffman (forest management specialist) to assist with a prescribed burn on the Whitney State Forest. Portions of the burn were in a young shortleaf pine stand. The understory of this parcel was thick with honeysuckle and various other vines and shrubs that made hand ignition nearly impossible. Rod Newlin (water quality engineer), Chad Stover (regional fire specialist), Jason Braunstein (GIS program manager), Zoë Sumrall (water quality specialist), and Jim Pugh (GIS/remote sensing analyst) prepared the IGNIS system, developed the flight plan, and implemented the burn with success. Operating the IGNIS system generally requires a staff of three, so additional sUAS pilots were brought in for an excellent opportunity for flight training on an actual burn unit. The total acres burned was 18, with eight of those in grass and 10 in the shortleaf stand. Personnel from the Rappahannock work area prepped the site and used hand ignition to black line the parcel and provided holding support. IGNIS was used for the interior ignition. This burn was another example of how the IGNIS system allows the agency to conduct burns in fuels and terrain that would otherwise pose a safety risk to our employees.



Eastern Region

- ◆ The Capital Team completed a riparian planting under the James River Buffer Program for the Waterford Rhye Townhouse Association in Henrico. The team planted a mixture of shrubs, trees, and live stakes. (pictured)



- ◆ The Emergency Management Alliance of Central Virginia (EMACV) and the Richmond Flying Squirrels were awarded "Prevention Program of the Year" at the Virginia Emergency Management Symposium. VDOF has been a primary partner with EMACV's emergency prevention outreach and partnership with the Flying Squirrels for the last several years.
- ◆ Jay Bassett has used a creative approach to advertising the 4pm burn law. Jay contacted PG Electric Co-Op office located on US Highway 460 and worked with their public relations manager to advertise the 4pm law on their kiosk, which is visible to many that travel 460 (pictured).
- ◆ After a recent brush fire, the Chief of Jarratt Volunteer Fire Department reached out to Austin Babb (area forester) about providing a training to members of the department. Jay Bassett (forest technician) and Austin met with the department on March 24. Jay led the discussion with a main focus on



how VDOF and the fire department can utilize their available resources to mutually suppress a wildfire. Other topics discussed included maintaining a safe distance from the dozer, the 4 p.m. law, and how to look for and secure evidence at the scene of a wildfire. Members of the department were very appreciative of the meeting. Jay and Austin also gave thanks and expressed that without aid from the fire department, wildfires in the area would be significantly more challenging to suppress.

- ◆ Eight live oak seedlings grown from Mathews County acorns have been planted at the Sussex Nursery. They were collected from a sandbar island near New Point, grown in a garden for two years, and Jim Schroering (longleaf/SPV prevention coordinator) planted them at the nursery last week. It is hoped that we will add seedlings grown from some really old live oaks in Hampton Roads, such as the Algernourne Oak at historic Ft. Monroe and the Emancipation Oak at Hampton University. The seed orchard will be preserving the northern range limit/Virginia genetics of live oak (*Quercus virginiana*). (pictured)
- ◆ Evan Richardson (area forester) and Scott Bachman (senior area forester) responded to a call for assistance from the Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage staff on Friday afternoon. They were using their farm tractor to brush out a fire line on the South Quay property in Suffolk. This land is where nearly all the native longleaf seed is collected, but this block was outside of the mature longleaf. The tractor broke through the root mat in this very wet block of bedded timber, and it sank to the transfer cases. Staff responded with the dozer and easily winched the tractor out to drier land (pictured).



News Clips

- ◆ [Historic Merry Oak will continue telling its story](#)
- ◆ [LETTER: Prince William County needs to be a good neighbor](#)
- ◆ [Prescribed burns help prevent wildfires](#)
- ◆ [Tiny wasps could help save trees under attack](#)
- ◆ [How Do Lumber Producers Determine Log Value?](#)
- ◆ [Dogs with a Nose4Wood](#)
- ◆ [Data now in from 2021 Va. heat survey](#)