



**June 13, 2022**

## Upcoming Events

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### ***Softwood Lumber Grading Training – June 13-16 – Canceled!***

- ◆ The Softwood Lumber Grading Training that was scheduled at the New Kent Forestry Center has been postponed due to lack of participation. Please watch for new dates and help spread the word!

### ***Wood in Construction and Beyond Seminar – July 27***

Visit <https://dof.virginia.gov/events/> for more public events and <https://dof.virginia.gov/events/category/employee-only/> for more employee only events.

## Employee News

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### ***Welcome to VDOF***

- ◆ Please welcome Greg Bilyeu as the new director of public information. Greg has held positions of increasing responsibility over 20+ years, ranging from public relations/marketing specialist, creative services editor, communications manager, and director of communications. In addition to being a VNRLI (2019) graduate, his career in public service includes local government (City of Richmond), state government (DEQ, VDOT, VABC), and academic environments (VCU, CNU). Greg embraces the role of primary agency spokesperson and point of contact for the news media; leading all external and internal communications efforts; improving the agency's public outreach and communications efforts; driving agency branding/identity, and increasing inter-/intra- agency collaborations. He graduated from Old Dominion University with a bachelors of arts in communication and masters of arts in English.
- ◆ We are pleased to announce that Garrett Evans has been selected for an area forester position in the Northern Neck Work Area. Garrett has a B.S. in forest ecosystems management from Penn State and a M.S. in forest management and silviculture from the State University of New York - College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF). He has more than 3 years of forestry-related experience, primarily in the research field. His start date was June 13. Please provide Garrett with a warm welcome to the VDOF and the Eastern Region.



## Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Eli Podyma will be departing the agency on June 17 for a new position with Dominion Power in their natural resources division. Eli has become the face of VDOF in the City of Richmond by serving as Community Forester in the Capital Work Area for nearly 2.5 years. Thanks to Eli, the Capital team was able to expand the reach and expertise of VDOF with key groups in Richmond, complete numerous U&CF projects, explore new avenues for VDOF, and enhance existing partnerships. We thank Eli for his dedication and hard work in this role.

## Thank You Letter

- ◆ VDOF has been donating Tree & Shrub ID books, children's educational materials, and Smokey Bear item to the USO. The below letter was received from Alejandra "Ali" Lopez, Center Operations Supervisor at USO National Capital District.
  - "Thank you for donating coloring books, pencils, and various educational items for military families visiting the USO Warrior and Family Center during our Spring Fling program and Mighty Military Kids events. Your generosity is enabling the USO's ability to support and empower the military community.  
  
Every day, the USO carries out our mission to strengthen the men and women of America's military by keeping them connected to family, home and country. We remain dedicated to expanding access to USO centers and programs around the world, increasing annual service connections and boosting transition services for our service members and their families throughout their time of duty.  
  
We rely on the spirit and loyalty of individuals like you who care about this great mission. Thank you for making our work possible."

## Last Week

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### State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell and Secretary Lohr participated in a virtual meeting regarding Sustainable Aviation Fuels that was organized by the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems. Refining aviation fuels from woody biomass could provide a significant new market for Virginia forest products, particularly in western Virginia.
- ◆ On June 2, the annual VDOF - Consulting foresters meeting was held at the Cedar Crest Conference Center at Twin Lakes State Park near Farmville. Rob Farrell and Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer facilitated a discussion with the group on a variety of topics of shared interest. Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager), Joe Rossetti (hardwood initiative coordinator), and Todd Groh (forest resource management program manager) provided updates on their areas of responsibility. Becky Woodson (forest management programs coordinator) provided significant support with meeting registration and logistics. The event included an afternoon field trip at the Prince Edward-Gallion State Forest. Kirby Woolfolk (state forest manager), Joe Rossetti, and Dean Cumbia (director of forest resource management) collaborated in leading the field stops, focused on hardwood management.

### Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Utilization & Marketing (U&M) program hosted Virginia's first-ever "Forest to Carbon Symposium." More than 100 people attended the event, including small and large landowners, consulting and VDOF foresters, and other private and public land owners and managers. Many people were on the waiting list, which confirms that interest in this topic in Virginia is high, and growing. An excellent panel of speakers from around the country delivered informative sessions on different topics about forest

carbon markets and how to take advantage of them. Attendees shared overwhelmingly positive compliments about the event.

- ◆ The “Wood in Construction & Beyond” seminar is set for July 27 in Charlottesville. Final details are being planned, and invitations are being extended to architecture and engineering firms, in addition to other associations interested in mass timber construction in the state. The seminar is a daylong event and will culminate in a tour of the Apex Energy mass timber building in Charlottesville.
- ◆ Virginia Farm Bureau interviewed and videoed Mr. Packett and his family on their property that is in the Century Forest Program. The video is on the Virginia Farm Bureau RealVA Channel. It premiered on May 18, 2022. [Century Forest Video](#)

## Forest Resource Management

- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) and Ken Sterner (senior area forester) conducted an aerial survey on the western edge of the Chesapeake Bay. The purpose of the flight was to map ghost forests, forests that have declined due to saltwater intrusion along the coast. Damage was observed in areas of the coast that are lower in elevation and subject to frequent flooding. Additionally, forest tent caterpillar damage was mapped in/near the Great Dismal Swamp. This native defoliator periodically reaches outbreak levels.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt and Amanda Conrad (forest health technician) treated an ash tree at the VDOF HQ mechanic shop to protect it against the emerald ash borer (EAB). Using the Q-Connect injection system, this tree has been protected from EAB feeding for 2-3 years. On the same day, they hopped across the street to Ragged Mountain Reservoir to release 200 *Oobius agrilli*, an egg parasitoid of the emerald ash borer. Later in the week, Lori Chamberlin and Amanda Conrad treated a champion ash tree (69 inches DBH!) at Claytor Nature Center. Joe Cotner (senior area forester), Ben Wassum (natural resource specialist), and Jake Sinnette (forest technician) from the Blue Ridge Work Area assisted with the treatment. VDOF is committed to protecting champion ash trees, and this tree is the third largest green ash in Virginia!
- ◆ On May 31, Kinner Ingram (senior area forester) and Amanda Conrad (forest health technician) visited James Madison’s Montpelier to perform an assessment of ash trees on the historic property. This visit categorized live crown and general health of each ash tree to determine eligibility for the Emerald Ash Borer Cost-Share Program. The VDOF personnel met with Chief Horticulturist of Montpelier Robert Meyers for a brief tour of the site, which houses many historic trees, including the largest English oak in the state of Virginia.

## Agency Lands

- ◆ Ones Bitoki (tree improvement forester) represented the VDOF at the 66th annual advisory committee meeting of the NC State Cooperative Tree Improvement Program in Raleigh, NC. The committee approved the annual budget and a budget blueprint for the next five years. In discussions of future research priorities, it was agreed that more focus is needed pertaining to seed orchard establishment and management; a task force will be formed to develop and present a proposal. In addition, there were eight research topic presentations by graduate students and co-op staff.

## Eastern Region

- ◆ On June 2, Patrick Murphy (senior area forester) and Doug Audley (area forester) attended the Partner's Breakfast hosted by the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District (PSWCD) in Farmville for farmers from Amelia, Nottoway and Prince Edward Counties. Representatives from PSWCD, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Virginia Cooperative Extension

(VCE), Virginia State University (VSU), Department Wildlife Resources (DWR), and VDOF spoke about outreach and cost-share assistance programs available from each respective agency.

- ◆ Josh Bennicoff (nursery manager), Wacetia Stainback (program support technician), and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (Eastern watershed stewardship specialist) attended Christopher Newport University's Fear to Hope: Coastal Resilience Symposium. The event brought together undergraduate researchers, environmental professionals, and high school students who participated in Atlantic white cedar research with a team at Christopher Newport University (CNU) led by Dr. Rob Atkinson. To expand on previous research from a CNU graduate student regarding the formation of ghost forests, the team at CNU began experimenting on the salt tolerance of Atlantic white cedar using seedlings grown at the Sussex Nursery. They worked with students at An Achievable Dream High School in Newport News, Norcom High School in Portsmouth, Warhill High School in Williamsburg, and Hanover High School in Hanover to carry out their research. At the event, Josh, Wacetia, and Meghan were able to talk with high school and college students about the VDOF and career options with VDOF and other natural resource fields. (pictured)



- ◆ John Hisghman (deputy regional forester) and the Eastern Region recently hosted a utility vehicle (UTV) "Train the Trainer" event at New Kent Forestry Center to establish UTV driver instructors within the VDOF. Six personnel (two per region) attended and will return to their regions to establish and conduct training there. Participants spent the week completing the Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association (ROHVA) Basic Driver Course while learning to be ROHVA Driver Coach Instructors. As part of their final exam, the new instructors successfully presented the Basic Driver Course to four new employees from the Eastern Region. The course incorporates both a Closed-Range cone & obstacle-specific exercises as well as an Open-Range trail ride incorporating all the Closed Range skills. It was a successful and valuable training event with everyone taking home new skills in both coaching and UTV operation. Instructor attendees were Daren Williams (mechanic) and Kenny Midgett (forest technician) of the Eastern Region, Jon Willoughby (forest technician specialist) and Darwin Rhodes (forest technician) of the Central Region, and William Neff (forest technician) and David Tompkins (forest technician) of the Western Region. The course was presented by the Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association (ROHVA), a nationally recognized leader in remotely operated vehicle (ROV) / UTV Driver Training." (pictured)

