



January 09, 2023

Upcoming Events

[VDOF Forest Research Seminar - January 20](#)

[Introduction to Forest Carbon Markets – March 3](#)

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

2022 State of the Forest

VDOF has completed and published the 2022 State of the Forest report, now available on our website https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/SOF_2022.pdf. As you probably know, the State of the Forest serves as our agency annual report and is a vehicle to share VDOF's great work with legislators, industry partners, non-government organizations and the public. As directed by § 10.1-1119: *Preservation of evidence as to conserving forest supply; reports to General Assembly; publications*), VDOF submits this annual report of agency actions, conclusions and recommendations to each session of the General Assembly and the public. Many folks played a part (and went above and beyond) in collecting data and content in order to put this year's annual report together. The result is truly an example of excellent teamwork that helps tell "the VDOF story."

Employee News

Congratulations – Clint Folks!

- ◆ Clint Folks will begin his new role as Forestland Conservation Coordinator on January 10, moving over to the Forestland Conservation Program from his area forester role in the Western Region. Clint will be responsible for stewardship, monitoring, and enforcement of the VDOF's portfolio of 200+ conservation easements, as well as coordinating responses to requests for VDOF to comment on development projects in the state. Please direct all landowner questions about existing easements to Clint. Congratulations, Clint, on your new position!

Congratulations – Grandpa & Grandma Kyner!

- ◆ Congratulations to Randy Kyner and his wife on the birth of their FIRST grandchild, born to Randy's daughter Ann and her husband Michael Haslam. Kinley Rose Haslam was born on December 26, weighing in at 9 lbs. & 6 oz. Grandparents, new parents and new granddaughter are all doing well!

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ Jerre Creighton (research program manager) is retiring from VDOF on January 31, 2023, after 18 years of service. Congratulations, Jerre! Enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Fire and Emergency Response Branch (FERB) Update

- ◆ 2022 saw a year of change for several of the FERB staff. As we begin 2023, here is a quick summary of the FERB staff members and their primary job responsibilities:
 - *Dave Houttekier*, Assistant Director – Operations: Oversees and directs agency fire operations and law enforcement program; manages the Dry Hydrant program; manages the Volunteer Fire Assistance grant program; coordinates VIC center/out of state deployment; and serves as the agency lead for the IQS program and agency fire-related credentialing.
 - *Jason Braunstein*, Assistant Director – Planning, UAV and GIS; GIS specialist; oversees and directs the agency’s prescribed burning/4 pm exemption programs; agency IFRIS program co-lead; manages the agency /UAV Drone program; Firesponse program manager; oversight of agency IMT development.
 - *Chad Briggs*, Agency Safety, Training and Compliance Officer: Provide a more concentrated focus on agency operations, policies, and procedures to help ensure that our agency remains in compliance with state and national level requirements to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all agency employees. Coordinates the VDOF’s overall safety program; coordinates agency accident investigations; provides oversight and direction of agency level employee training and development.
 - *Vacant*, Assistant Director – Mitigation and Prevention: Oversees and directs the agency’s wildfire hazard mitigation and wildfire prevention programs; manages firewise and hazard mitigation grant programs; coordinates the Community Wildfire Defense grant (CDWG) program for Virginia; serves as the liaison to the national Firewise Communities USA program. *(This vacancy is expected to be announced as an internal promotional opportunity by the end of January 2023.)*
 - *Keith Brown*, Radio Specialist: Oversees and directs agency communications systems; coordinates with state-level communication entities; provides direct support of field level communications in agency vehicles and offices.
 - *Danny Fortune*, Agency Transportation, Equipment and Surplus Property Manager: Oversees and directs vehicle and equipment maintenance, acquisition and disposal; coordinates the agency fuel card program; handles state level reporting related to agency vehicle usage; serves as the primary agency liaison to DGS; serves as the agency program lead for the review of motor vehicle accidents; provides oversight and direction of agency surplus property tracking and disposal.
 - *Carl Belew*, Lead Mechanic: Manages the HQ shop facility including the supervision of one other repair technician/fabricator (Paul Morse); coordinates the fabrication of new agency vehicles and equipment; provides equipment maintenance and repair support to the agency’s three regions, state forests and nurseries.
 - *Sandy Mills*, Administrative Coordinator - Emergency Programs, Water Quality, and Shop Operations: Provides the daily administrative support for eight FERB program managers; assists with the coordination of four FERB pass-through grant programs for agency cooperators; provides administrative support of the water quality penalty program; coordinates administrative needs of the riparian buffer tax credit program; provides logistical support of FERB-related training activities.
 - *John Miller*, Director, Fire and Emergency Response Branch: Provides strategic direction and general oversight of all FERB-related programs and activities; ensures all agency policy and procedures are followed to support field operations; manages the FERB budget; coordinates state

and federal grant programs in support of agency activities; serves as the agency liaison to fire-related cooperators.

2023 AD Program Open enrollment period

- ◆ Employees desiring to take an out of state deployment as a federal USFS AD must complete the necessary paperwork during the enrollment period as a precursor to making themselves available for a deployment in the coming year. That paperwork/enrollment process is now open for the 2023 season. Completed packets are due back to the VIC center by January 27. Please review all instructions carefully as they must be followed exactly as written.
- ◆ The AD program is available to all VDOF full-time and currently active part-time employees. Invitations to complete this paperwork was already sent to all participants from last year. Anyone interested who has not already received their invitation should contact their Regional Fire Specialist for enrollment information. *Important:* There will be a mandatory webinar training for all potential 2023 VDOF AD's on February 8 at 10:00 a.m. The webinar information will be forthcoming to all of those who submit paperwork for 2023.

News You Can Use

Governor Bans TikTok and WeChat on State Devices and State Wireless Networks

- ◆ In December, Governor Glenn Youngkin issued Executive Order 24, banning the use of certain Chinese-owned mobile phone applications and websites on state government technology. The Executive Order bans TikTok and WeChat, and any other applications developed by ByteDance Limited or Tencent Holdings Limited on state government devices and wireless networks and requires businesses who contract with the state government to also prohibit the use of those applications on state-owned devices or IT infrastructure. The Executive Order applies to all Executive Offices and Executive Branch Agencies.
- ◆ Any employee of the Commonwealth, or person or entity contracting with the Commonwealth, who has already downloaded TikTok or WeChat applications or any other applications developed by ByteDance Limited or Tencent Holdings Limited to any government-issued devices as listed above are hereby directed to remove, delete, and uninstall these applications immediately. No person shall access TikTok or WeChat or any other application developed by ByteDance Limited or Tencent Holdings Limited through Commonwealth owned, operated, or maintained wireless network. **Please note that this also applies to personal devices as well if you receive a stipend to use your device for work purposes and have work-related information on this device such as email or OneDrive files.** Executive Order 24 can be found [here](#).

2023 IRS Standard Mileage Rate

- ◆ The IRS Mileage rate increased to 65.5 cents, effective January 1, 2023. Internal resources will be updated to reflect this change. Department of Accounts (DOA) has updated the Travel Expense Reimbursement Voucher form for 2023 to reflect the new IRS rate and can be found here https://www.doa.virginia.gov/forms/Travel_Forms/Travel_Reim_Form_2023.xlsx. The Fleet rate of 24.6 cents remains unchanged. Please reach out to Finance if you have any questions or need assistance with mileage reimbursement rates.

Senior Management Team (SMT)

- ◆ The SMT minutes from the [November 1](#) and [December 12](#) meetings have been posted to the intranet.

Project Updates

Policy and Procedures

- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 03-05 Personnel Vehicle Equipment Service and Publication Rates](#) has been updated to reflect the increased mileage rate.
- ◆ [Policy and Procedure 06-01 PBBP Cost-Share Program](#) – The maximum rate for reimbursement in VDOF's Pine Bark Beetle Prevention Pre-commercial Thinning Cost-Share Program has increased. Effective January 1, 2023, incentive payments to landowners is 60 percent of direct project cost for pre-commercial pine thinning, not to exceed \$115 per acre (cost-share payment) or \$10,000 in a federal fiscal year (10/01-9/30). This increased rate will be applied to all approved pre-commercial thinning projects that are completed in 2023.

Last Week

Charlotte State Forest Expansion

- ◆ VDOF successfully added approximately 360 acres to the Charlotte State Forest on Dec. 29. The addition was from property owned by the Conservation Fund, obtained by their acquisition of lands owned by Stanley Land and Lumber in 2019. Forest Legacy and State Forest Mitigation Funds funded the purchase of the additional acres, as approved by the General Assembly and the Governor during the 2022 legislative session.

State Forest Prescribed Fire Study

- ◆ Big Woods State Forest and South Quay State Forests will be participating in a review led by Virginia Tech to determine if prescribed fires support habitat for the imperiled Southern Plains Bumblebee (*Bombus fraternus*). The bumblebee has been identified at two military bases in Virginia that use prescribed fire for land management objectives. Likewise, at several Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation locations, including South Quay Sandhills Natural Area Preserve, prescribed fire is used to maintain desired vegetative conditions and wildlife habitat. Few pollinator surveys have been conducted to determine how prescribed fire may impact specific pollinator species at South Quay. *B. fraternus* specifically is listed as a species of Greatest Conservation Need, Tier II by Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. Developing a better understanding of how fire may be shaping habitat for this pollinator will assist VDOF's prescribed fire planning efforts. Additionally, information obtained in this project may shed additional light on management conditions that best support other desired species.

Maymont Park Riparian Buffer Plantings

- ◆ Working alongside park horticulture staff and volunteers, VDOF staff helped plant 120 bareroot seedlings at Maymont Park in Richmond. Maymont is a 100-acre historic estate and park featuring gardens, an arboretum, native wildlife habitats, the Robins Nature Center, and a mansion. The planting will establish a forested riparian buffer for a stream running through the grounds.