



April 17, 2023

Upcoming Events

[Blue Ridge PRISM's 2023 Spring Meeting](#) - April 19 @ 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

[Project Learning Tree \(PLT\) Workshop – Explore Your Environment](#)

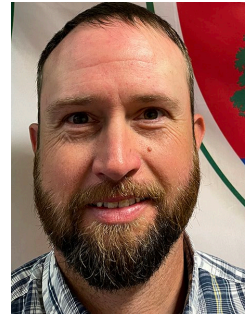
April 27 @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

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

Employee News

Welcome to VDOF

- ◆ Welcome aboard Allen Pennington!! Allen is our new forest technician covering Wythe, Bland and Grayson Counties. Allen comes to VDOF with 11 years of experience at VDOT, heavy equipment operation experience, contracting as an installer for NRCS/SWCD watering systems, as well as logging experience and BMP installation. Allen resides in Rural Retreat where in his spare time he enjoys fishing, hunting, coaching and spending time with his family. Allen's first day with VDOF was April 10.



News You Can Use

Employee Engagement Survey – Deadline Extended to April 21

Have you taken the survey yet? Your feedback – which will be kept anonymous and confidential – is needed! Please take a few minutes to provide your thoughts on what we are doing well, but more importantly, areas where we can improve. Deadline extension: Please complete the survey by COB April 21. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TDXM889>

Last Week

Spring Fire Update

- ◆ Over the last week, VDOF responded to 49 fires that burned 731 acres. The largest fire of the week was a 249-acre fire in Buchanan County. Over this same period, VDOF responders are credited with protecting four homes and five additional structures with an estimated value of almost \$1 million.

U.S. Forest Service and VDOF Joint Meeting

- ◆ Leaders from the U.S. Forest Service and VDOF met in Marion to discuss ongoing challenges, lessons learned and collaboration. The group, which included area foresters and specialists, included presentations from The Nature Conservancy, sessions on VDOF's Hardwood Initiative, an update on the American chestnut from the Virginia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation, general forest management and opportunities for future partnerships.



VDOF Receives New Water Crossing Program Funding

- ◆ VDOF recently received notification from the U.S. Forest Service that Virginia will receive funding through the Temporary Water Crossing program. One of six southern state forestry agencies to receive funding, VDOF will receive the funds through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The funding (\$350,000) will support temporary water crossings for skidders and heavy equipment through a cost-share bridge program similar to VDOF's current program. Increased use of portable bridges and mats will mitigate water resource damage and prevent water quality degradation. Bridge crossings are preferred over culvert and ford crossings as they span the entire channel, resulting in less impact to streams.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Visits Longleaf Pine Restoration Partners

- ◆ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams met with longleaf pine restoration partners at Raccoon Creek Pinelands in Sussex County to commend Virginia's successful efforts and how they might be used as a restoration model in other states. VDOF is a member of the partner group of agencies and organizations taking an active role in bringing back longleaf pine from near extinction in Virginia. The day included visits to several longleaf stands restored through silvicultural practices, including prescribed burning. Each organization highlighted their role and activities in support of this collaborative partnership. (Pictured: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Director Martha Williams and other Virginia Longleaf Pine partners in Sussex County on April 4)



Watershed Team Field Trip

The Watershed Team headed to the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind in Staunton to perform maintenance and replantings. They worked on approximately 80 trees, which are all part of the city's initiative to plant one tree for each K-12 student. Despite some hard ground and high temps, it was a great day for the team.



U.S. Forest Service Southern Industry Round Table

- ◆ VDOF participated in the USFS southern industry round table meeting hosted by U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Inc., a nonprofit organization. Industry issues, market opportunities, and new and emerging wood products initiatives from Virginia were discussed.

Annual Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District's Seedling Sale

- ◆ VDOF recently assisted with the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District's (NVSWCD) annual native seedling sale. NVSWCD sold about 1,000 bundles of tree and shrub seedlings. Each bundle contained two seedlings of three different species. VDOF staff helped with bundling and were on hand for distribution and to answer questions about the trees and how to plant them. Half of the 6,000 seedlings were purchased from VDOF nurseries.

VDOF Establishes 205th Conservation Easement in Southampton County

- ◆ VDOF has established its 205th conservation easement on the 376-acre Three Creek Capron property in Southampton County. The easement conserves 359 acres of working forests, the majority of which is considered high forest conservation value with nearly four miles of streams and a large section of Coastal Plain Swamp, a state-vulnerable terrestrial community.

Biochar Production Demonstration in Harrisonburg

- ◆ A fifth biochar production demonstration was conducted at the City of Harrisonburg's Recycling Convenience Center to introduce the concept of using urban wood resources for biochar production. Approximately 30 participants from the U.S. Forest Service, VDOF, USDA-NRCS, City of Harrisonburg, James Madison University, and Tyson's Poultry had the opportunity to view the CharBoss mobile biochar production trailer (supplied by City of Harrisonburg staff) creating biochar from wood. This was a collaborative project sponsored by VDOF, the U.S. Forest Service Wood Innovations program and Air Burners Inc.

Virginia Tech Study on Stability of Limb Wood in Architecture

- ◆ VDOF supplied green limb wood samples to a Virginia Tech School of Architecture grad student studying the properties and stability of limb wood in architectural applications. The mentoring professor is Dr. Jonas Hauptman (School of Architecture), a continuing partner in the Virginia Urban Wood Project.

Forest Management

- ◆ Joe Rossetti (hardwood initiative coordinator), Doug Audley (area forester) and Dean Cumbia (forest management director) visited with a landowner in Amelia County on April 5 to look at potential for hardwood management. While VDOF landowner visits are “standard procedure” for VDOF, several circumstances of this visit help to highlight the importance and significance of what we do on a daily basis. The landowner, Preston Willson, a second-generation owner and President/CEO of the Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center, has spent over 50 years in positively contributing to youth development in conservation. The property is under a conservation easement and the forests have been well-managed. He is very interested in the Hardwood Initiative and has already started practices to encourage development of hardwoods, including understory removal of holly, pine to hardwood conversion, and planned crop tree management. Mr. Willson, who is now well into his senior years, successfully walked the entire stand with us and offered relevant site history of previous harvests and management. Realizing the importance of long-term management and continuity, one of his sons accompanied us throughout the day and was very engaged, asking a number of insightful questions.
- ◆ VDOF Forest Health staff are currently involved in a number of activities during this busy spring season. These included surveying another white pine plot in Bath County for pine scale, southern pine bark beetle trap checks, and development of invasive species outreach tools.

Agency Lands

- ◆ For 2023 mass-controlled pollination, the goal was to put up 30,000 – 35,000 bags this season, and the goal was met with 32,500. Bagging started on March 20 and ended on March 24, when some flowers were getting to stage 3 of development. Staff used fresh pollen this year for the entire operation, cutting 123 gallons of catkins that yielded 61 liters of pollen. 40 liters were used this season and another 21 liters will be used next year. The removal of bags was completed on April 8.

Central Region

- ◆ Amy Bigger and Tyler Newton (area foresters) participated in the Central High School Career Expo for grades 6-12 in Victoria, VA. Approximately 800 students attended.
- ◆ Drew Arnn (area forester) taught an ecology class at Averett University in Danville. The presentation included silviculture, harvesting systems, and the VDOF’s work with loggers and landowners.