



April 24, 2023

Upcoming Events

[Project Learning Tree \(PLT\) Workshop – Explore Your Environment](#) – April 27 @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

[2023 Virginia Interagency Wildland Fire Academy](#) – May 24 – May 28

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

[Fall Fire Academy](#) – September 25 – 29

Employee News

Nelson Hillyer On the Mend

Nelson Hillyer, Water Quality Specialist from the Tappahannock Office, was injured in a dozer accident on a fire in Essex County last Friday. While plowing a containment line on a very active fire, the front of the dozer dropped into a drainage ditch was hidden from view due to thick vegetation. The decline of the ditch caused the blade to catch on the ground, which stopped the dozer instantly. The sudden, unexpected stop propelled Nelson forward, sending him into the dash of the dozer.

Nelson is currently recuperating from a neck surgery at VCU's Medical Center in Richmond. Fortunately his injuries were not more serious. He is expected to be discharged from the hospital later this week and is expected to take a couple of months to fully recover.

Nelson asked that we stress to everyone the importance of wearing a seat belt while operating a dozer under any condition, and to make certain that the restraint is properly latched at all times. We are sending Nelson our positive thoughts and wish him a speedy recovery.

Farewell & Good Luck

- ◆ Adam Cumpston, District Forester in the Headwaters District, has taken a new opportunity with Virginia Energy. Adam's last day with DOF will be May 9. Best wishes to Adam in his new position.

Welcome to VDOF

- ◆ Please welcome Charles “Aaron” Altice, our new Henry County forest technician. Aaron comes to us from the Department of Conservation Recreation where he worked at Natural Bridge as an interpretive ranger. Aaron has been a part-time firefighter for the VDOF for a couple of years, traveling with us to Texas twice last year. He enjoys hiking and has hiked the entire Appalachian Trail twice. Aaron grew up in Botetourt County, and he and his family have long ties to Franklin County. Aaron’s first day with VDOF was April 10.



Congratulations!!

- ◆ Congratulations to Chris McClelland (district forester) and his wife Hannah on the birth of their first child. Zoey McClelland was born on the afternoon of April 18. Everyone is healthy and doing well.

News You Can Use

Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) – Be on the lookout!

- ◆ Spotted lanternfly (SLF) egg hatch was observed last week, so be on the lookout for nymphs! You can find images and distribution maps at this [VT SLF website](#). If you observe or receive reports of SLF outside areas that are known to be infested, please forward these reports to Katlin DeWitt (Katlin.Mooneyham@dof.virginia.gov) or Lori Chamberlin (lori.chamberlin@dof.virginia.gov).

Last Week

VDOF Awarded \$6.6 Million in Urban and Community Forestry Funding

- ◆ The U.S. Forest Service has announced Virginia’s allocation of \$6.6 million for urban and community forestry initiatives. Eligible entities will be able to increase tree cover in urban spaces and boost equitable access to nature while bolstering resilience to extreme heat, storm-induced flooding, and other climate impacts. This historic level of investment will enable the VDOF to support projects to improve urban canopy, increase forest buffers, improve public health, increase access to nature, and deliver real economic and ecological benefits to cities, towns and tribal communities across the Commonwealth.

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 other structures with an estimated protected value of nearly \$1 million.

Virginia State University Honored with Ninth Tree Campus USA Designation

- ◆ State Forester Rob Farrell visited the campus of Virginia State University (VSU) in Petersburg last Thursday to celebrate the university’s designation as the ninth Tree Campus USA - Higher Education. Created in 2008 by the Arbor Day Foundation, Tree Campus USA is a national program honoring colleges and universities for effective campus forest management and engaging staff and

students in conservation. Tree Campus USA uses five criteria including maintaining a tree advisory committee, a campus tree-care plan, dedicated annual expenditures for a campus tree program, an Arbor Day observance and student service-learning projects. Farrell presented the award to Dr. Robert N. Corley III, interim dean and 1890 Extension Administrator of VSU's College of Agriculture and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

New Plantings with the Rappahannock Tribe

- ◆ VDOF worked with the Rappahannock Tribe to plant approximately three acres of fields on newly acquired land. Species planted included those of cultural significance to the tribe, such as the Allegheny Chinquapin, and those with high wildlife value. An additional three acres will be planted by contractors. The project was funded by VDOF's Virginia Trees for Clean Water Program.

FIA Users Group Meeting

- ◆ VDOF attended the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Users Group meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. This annual meeting of U.S. Forest Service FIA personnel, state partners, forest industry members, academia, non-governmental organizations and other partners provides a setting to discuss program opportunities and areas for improvement to assist FIA's diverse user base. The meeting was hosted by the Society of American Foresters and the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement.

Greene County Parks and Recreation Tree Giveaway

- ◆ VDOF and Greene County Parks and Recreation hosted a tree giveaway event at Greene Community Park. Attendees learned about the many benefits of trees, other VDOF projects at the park, and how to properly plant their new tree. More than 30 people took part in the event and took home a tree.

Biochar Demonstrations Continue

- ◆ A sixth biochar production demonstration was conducted at the City of Newport News Waterworks Work Center to introduce the concept of using urban wood resources for biochar production. Approximately 15 participants from the City of Newport News, U.S. Department of Defense, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, William & Mary and Dominion Power had the opportunity to view the CharBoss mobile biochar production trailer creating biochar from wood supplied by City of Newport News staff. This was a collaborative project sponsored by VDOF's Forest Utilization and Marketing and Urban and Community Forestry groups, the USDA Forest Service Wood Innovations program, and Air Burners, Inc.

Newport News Elementary School Tree Planting

- ◆ VDOF staff partnered with the Peninsula Master Naturalists to plant trees on the grounds of Saunders Elementary in Newport News. With help from 75 third and fourth graders from the school's environmental program, 300 trees were installed. This project was funded by VDOF's Virginia Trees for Clean Water Program and led in part by a local Eagle Scout to increase canopy coverage on the campus.

Forest Management

- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) worked with Molly O'Liddy (urban and community forestry partnership coordinator) to film a video supplement for the Tree Stewards Manual. Katlin focused on the chapter about "Invasive Species in Virginia" and spoke on common invasive insects and plants that plague the Commonwealth as well as how to control them. Once editing is complete, this video will be available to all Tree Stewards and the public through YouTube.

State Forest

- ◆ Staff carried out a 53-acre understory burn on Dragon Run State Forest.
- ◆ Staff assisted the US Fish and Wildlife Service with prescribed burning at the Rappahannock Wildlife Refuge.
- ◆ Staff hosted 122 second graders from Galax and Grayson County for Earth Day activities at the Matthews State Forest.

Eastern Region

- ◆ Andrew Murray (area forester) and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (watershed stewardship specialist) worked with Virginia State University and approximately 300 preschoolers to plant five trees at Westview Early Childhood Center in Petersburg. The young students were able to learn a little bit about trees and help to plant the trees and spread mulch. They were all excited to get a turn with the shovel! The planting was part of the Heat Watch Program aimed at reducing the Urban Heat Island in Petersburg.