



May 30, 2023

Upcoming Events

[Board of Forestry Meeting](#) – June 21 – 10:00am – 2:00pm

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

[2023 Virginia Certified Prescribed Burn Manager Course](#) – October 2 – 15

- ◆ 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 DOF!

- ◆ We are pleased to welcome Josie Briggs as the new Program Support Technician for the Forest Management Branch at HQ. Josie is a native and recent resident of western Pennsylvania. She has a wide range of work experiences, working with several businesses including retail and insurance, non-profits, and assisting local governments. Josie will be assisting the rural forestry, forest health, and hardwood programs within the Forest Management Branch.



- ◆ We are pleased to announce that Mike Roberts has been selected as a forest technician with the Five Forks district. Mike retired from the U.S. Air Force in August of 2022 after 32 years of military service. He is married with 5 children and 13 grandchildren. Mike enjoys being outdoors and also working on race cars and racing on weekends with his son Josh. Mike's first day with DOF was May 25. Please provide him with a warm welcome to the agency when you get a chance.

- ◆ We are pleased to announce that Luke Marcek has been selected as the district forester in Blackwater. Luke grew up in southwest Michigan and relocated to New England during high school. He earned his BS in Forest Operations Science from the University of Maine in 2012. After graduation Luke started with the Maryland Forest Service as a Project Forester in Charles County, then moved to a Project Manager position on the Lower Eastern Shore before joining DOF. Luke enjoys hunting and camping with his wife, Hadley, and their Chesapeake Bay retriever, Remy. Luke's first day with DOF was May 25. Please provide him with a warm welcome to the agency when you get a chance.



◆ *Salary Increase for Classified State Employees*

The Virginia Assembly has approved a 5% increase for Classified state employees that will take effect on June 10. All salaried employees hired on or before March 10, or who transferred into DOF, will be eligible for the increase assuming they were rated at least a Contributor on their last annual evaluation. Employees will see the increase on the first paycheck of the new fiscal year which will be paid on Monday July 3, just in time for the July 4th holiday!

Last Week

Ash Tree Assessments

- ◆ DOF Forest Health staff visited Paul D. Camp Community College in Franklin to assess campus ash trees treated on a regular basis since 2019 to protect them from the emerald ash borer. While some trees are too damaged to be saved, many are healthy enough to respond to treatment. DOF staff will return to the college (state-owned land) this summer to re-treat select ash trees with an insecticide to protect them for an additional three years.

Annual Vegetation Management Workshop

- ◆ Vegetation management (VM) is an important part of forest management. VM involves guiding and favoring desirable species while controlling others, and is used for site preparation, controlling invasive species, or favoring crop trees. On May 19, Nutrien Solutions and IFCO hosted the 14th Annual Vegetation Management workshop in Colonial Heights. Approximately 200 forestry professionals, including 45 DOF personnel, attended this event. The presentations covered a wide range of VM and forest management topics, including a DOF panel update with Todd Groh (forest resource management program manager), Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) and Joe Rossetti (hardwood initiative coordinator.) The session also provided recertification credit for Virginia Pesticide Applicators license, SHARP logger, and Continuing Forestry Education.

Beginning Woodland Owners' Retreat

- ◆ DOF, along with partners Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program, hosted a Beginning Woodland Owners' Retreat at the Matthews State Forest. These workshops provide private woodland owners with information and tools needed to practice sound forest management on their land. The program included a tour of the state forest, covering pine, hardwood, American chestnut and wildlife management.

JMU Spring Semester Urban Wood Projects

- ◆ James Madison University (JMU) Industrial Design students unveiled their spring semester urban wood project. Over the past several weeks Dr. Audrey Barnes' Industrial Design class rehabilitated a nature trail and installed outdoor classroom infrastructure at Keister Elementary School. The JMU students created the projects from wood harvested from the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum on the university's campus, and a willow oak from a private residence in the elementary school's neighborhood. DOF staff serve as a JMU Urban Wood Program mentor and semester project consultant.

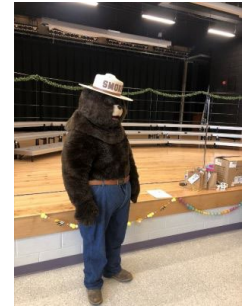
Forest Management

- ◆ Lindsay Caplan (invasive species specialist) released 1,500 mile-a-minute weevils in New River Trail State Park near Galax, and 500 weevils on VDOT land in Vesuvius. These weevils are biological control agents of mile-a-minute vine, an invasive species.

- ◆ Lindsay Caplan and Cory Swift Turner (public information specialist) filmed our first invasive species video. This will be an introduction to invasive species to “set the stage” for other upcoming videos.

Nursery

- ◆ Josh Bennicoff (nursery manager) attended a forestry meeting at Dan Hammond's farm to talk about genetics and the pines offered by the nursery. Roughly 40 people attended.
- ◆ Josh Bennicoff and Trent Wilson (assistant nursery manager) attended the Nutrien-sponsored meeting for pesticide points held at the Keystone tractor show.
- ◆ Cole Young (area forester), Daniel Swisher (forest technician) and Timothy Howdyshell (nursery technician) presented at Hugh K. Cassell Elementary School for Career Day. The presentation was about nursery operations and wildland firefighting. Several props were used to show the kids the process of using fire to fight fire. A total of 750 kids attended this event (pictured).



Eastern Region

- ◆ Kendall Topping (community forestry specialist), Evan Richardson, Scott Bachman (area foresters) and John Rose (forest technician) of the Blackwater District had the last of three “Farm Days” organized by a partner agency, the Peanut Soil and Water Conservation District. Over the three days, over 500 second grade students (parents and teachers too!) from Surry, Isle of Wight and the City of Suffolk public schools and several private academies visited the DOF display.



- Kendall, Evan, John and Scott presented information on how trees benefit us each day, cleaning our air and water. Knowing that the students would not be so excited to listen to a 10-minute talk about trees, the team instead treated the kids to the Tremendous Trunk of Tree Treasures - a “magic box” that can read students’ minds about things from trees and the forests. Students learned that many things they use daily are actually forest products, such as cellulose sponges, maple syrup, lumber and even cinnamon. They also learned that the greatest invention of humankind, toilet paper, is made from trees!
- Before each group moved to their next station, staff emphasized the importance of protecting our forests so we can have these benefits and products is their job. The students promised to never play with matches or lighters and get an adult if they see friends doing so.
- Farm Days are long and tiring for sure, but rewarding. A parent from Surry said the forestry booth was the best experience of the day. It was a good reminder that we make a lasting difference in the lives of the citizens of our work areas! (pictured)