



June 5, 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 Summer Interns!

- ◆ Welcome to Rachel Kim, one of two Virginia Tech interns who will be working on the Matthews State Forest. Rachel started on May 30 and Daisy Leavitt will be starting around June 15.
- ◆ Welcome to Hunter Atkins, a summer intern starting for the State Forests on May 31. Hunter is a student at Glenville State University in Glenville, West Virginia, a SAF accredited college for forestry. Hunter was the successful applicant out of two who applied for the State Forest paid intern position. Hunter is from Abingdon Virginia.
- ◆ All interns will work through early August.

Last Week

2023 Statewide Wildfire Training Academy

- ◆ DOF's 22nd annual wildfire training academy was held on the campus of Longwood University in Farmville from May 23 to 27. Nearly 250 students participated, representing local fire department personnel along with state and federal wildland fire agencies from Virginia and three other states. Eight different wildfire suppression and incident management-related classes were part of this year's curriculum. All coursework follows the training standards of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group and ensures that all firefighters in the Commonwealth are prepared for any emergency. The agency's district foresters also held their regular meeting during the academy to conduct a comprehensive review of DOF's recent reorganization plan. The discussion included success stories as well as identified processes that need additional improvements.

First Mountain Bridge Damaged During Logging Job

- ◆ An incident occurred in First Mountain State Forest (Rockingham County) on Friday, May 26, when a truck loaded with gravel for logging activities fell partially through the bridge deck. No injuries occurred. The logging organization used their equipment to move the vehicle to safety and DOF staff secured the bridge that evening to prevent use by the public during the Memorial Day weekend. Temporary repairs will occur this week as the structure is reviewed by engineers to ensure safety to the public and forestry operations.

Virginia Hardwood Assessment Tool Training

- ◆ DOF Forest Management branch conducted a training for consulting foresters on the Hardwood Initiative, Hardwood Assessment Tool (HAT) and financial incentives for landowners. HAT is an innovative, data driven framework for professional foresters to inform recommendations to improve hardwood forests. This represents the first-time audiences external to DOF have been trained on HAT. Consulting foresters are natural partners in the Hardwood Initiative and assist landowners with managing and selling timber. These foresters are motivated to grow productive hardwood forests for professional, business and stewardship ethic reasons. The Virginia Interagency Wildland Fire Academy, run by DOF Fire and Emergency Response, provided an opportunity to use classrooms at Longwood University and field sessions at the nearby Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest for the training. In addition to training topics, conversations focused on making good hardwood management operational, achieving forest management goals and incorporating HAT into business practices. (pictured)



Cowpasture Restoration Project

- ◆ DOF's Watershed team, Mountain Valley District and Lexington Natural Resources Conservation Service field office recently came together to complete several projects on a property in Bath County as part of the Joint Chiefs' Lower Cowpasture Restoration Project. The projects included the prescribed burning of 20-plus acres of switchgrass (planted as quail habitat), nearly half an acre of hardwood planting to increase an existing riparian buffer's width and functionality, and a follow-up cut-stump treatment of almost an acre of autumn olive.

Smokey at Troutville Trail Days

- ◆ Smokey Bear recently teamed up with David Tompkins (forest technician, , Aaron Altice (forest technician) and two DOF Emergency firefighters (EFF Samantha Matson and EFF Garret Abshire) to spread Smokey's Wildfire Prevention and Fire Safety message at the Troutville Trail Days Festival. Held in the Appalachian Trail Town of Troutville, the festival celebrates camping, backpacking and outdoor fun. And for the first time since anyone remembers, David Tompkins and Smokey Bear were both seen at the same time, dispelling the myth that they are one in the same! (pictured)



Wildland Fire Training with Botetourt County

- ◆ The Watershed team, Mountain Valley District, and Lexington NRCS field office recently came together to complete several projects on the Bath County property of Mr. Dave Peters, as part of the Joint Chiefs' Lower Cowpasture Restoration Project. The projects completed included the prescribed burning of 20+ acres of switchgrass that Mr. Peters planted as quail habitat, the planting of nearly half an acre of hardwoods in order to increase an existing riparian buffer's width and functionality, and finally a follow-up cut-stump treatment of almost an acre of autumn-olive. Mr. Peters has a long history of working with both VDOF and the NRCS and is a true conservation-minded steward of his natural resources.



Botetourt County Fire and EMS recently worked with DOF Forest Technician David Tompkins for a two-day combined wildland fire training event. The training was designed to provide basic proficiency in brush truck operations, hand-line construction, fire-line tool use and safety, and tractor plow safety. Students left with a county level training certificate and task-book to be finalized by their local station. (pictured)

Forest Management

- ◆ On May 23, Todd Groh (forest resource program manager) led a discussion with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) state office staff and DOF District Foresters prior to the Wildland Fire Academy in Farmville. The discussion centered around roles and responsibilities when delivering NRCS conservation programs to forest landowners. NRCS and DOF have enjoyed a long cooperative relationship that has been impactful to landowners and the forest resources of Virginia.

Western Region

- ◆ Johnny Vest (natural resource specialist) and David Tompkins (forest technician) visited Rainbow Riders Preschool in Blacksburg and read the story of Smokey Bear to over 50 children. Smokey also made a surprise appearance and each child got the opportunity to meet Smokey.
- ◆ Johnny Vest, Joe Cotner (district forester), and Dan Hosack (area forester) hosted a booth at the Montgomery County Storm water Days event. This booth saw more than 500 7th grade middle school students from around the county, where they learned about the importance of riparian buffers and how good forest management can benefit watersheds.
- ◆ Johnny Vest attended the Town of Blacksburg's Arbor Day celebration, where town staff and over 100 volunteers from various organizations and clubs planted more than 80 trees in Blacksburg's municipal park and in the towns nursery.
- ◆ Johnny Vest attended Virginia Tech's Tree Campus/Arbor Day celebration where a ceremonial tree was planted along the stadium woods on campus, this white oak seedling was grown from the seed of a mature white oak found within the stadium woods.