



July 11, 2023

### Upcoming Events

[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

- ◆ Please welcome John Hinkell to DOF. John will be serving as the Franklin County technician. John comes to us a retired 27-year veteran of the Army National Guard. John currently lives in Franklin County in the Glade Hill area and is the proud father of two children, a son in college and a daughter working in Washington D.C. In his spare time, John enjoys fishing, hunting, playing guitar, sawmilling and restoring and maintaining an 1850s farmhouse. John enjoys managing the forest around the farm for wildlife health and for timber. Please welcome him and reach out if you have any projects of interest.



- ◆ Jennifer McClenny has accepted the program support technician for Urban and Community Forestry and Watershed Program areas at headquarters. Jennie previously worked for DOF as the program support technician in the Northern Virginia team area. Please provide her with a warm welcome back when you get a chance.

- ◆ Chris West has started as the Forest Inventory Specialist for the southern Central Region. Chris has 10 years' experience as an arborist, including operating his own business in New York. Please provide him with a warm welcome when you get a chance.



- ◆ Welcome Cynthia "Thea" Scheuermann to her new position as the Forest Inventory Specialist in the southern Eastern Region. Thea has a Master's in biology from VCU and six years of experience with DOF (two years in Urban and Community Forestry and four years in Forest Inventory).

## Farewell, Sabina

- ◆ After leading multiple innovative efforts and industry education campaigns, Sabina Dhungana, our Utilization and Marketing Program Manager, has decided to leave the agency for another opportunity. In the last two years Sabina has led multiple initiatives to strengthen our industry, improve our forests and lead agency efforts around strengthening markets. These included the establishment of the Virginia Wood Council, several biochar demonstrations and support webinars, our Mass Timber/CLT Workshop and our Forest Carbon for Landowners Symposium. We wish Sabina all the best. She will be missed.



## News You Can Use

### Policy and Procedures

- ◆ The [Policy and Procedures 7-3 Rural Forestry Law](#) has recently been updated and is on the DOF Intranet. This policy and procedure's purpose is to ensure adherence to, and enforcement of, the Seed Tree Law and the Endangered Species Act, and to provide guidance to DOF employees if summoned as forestry experts in court proceedings. The primary content of the procedure remains unchanged, but some of the links for partner agencies and DOF forms have been updated.
- ◆ [Policy and Procedures 8-2 Equal Opportunity and Employment Practices](#) has been updated to include the addition of the Hiring Manager Checklist, changing all RMS language to PageUp our job posting and applicant tracking software, and removing the requirement for US Citizenship in our forester positions. Please review policy and procedure for all updates.
- ◆ [Policy and Procedures 8-3 Compensation Management Policy](#) has been updated to reflect the Overtime Leave Practices to help reduce excessive leave balances. DOF is limiting the maximum overtime leave to 100 hours, with the expectation that employees start each leave year with no more than 40 hours of Overtime Leave. Supervisors will work with their staff to reduce their leave balances to 40 by January 10<sup>th</sup> of each year. Any exceptions must be reviewed and approved with the Deputy State Forester. Please review policy and procedure for all updates.
- ◆ [Policy and Procedures 06-03 Forest Health Monitoring](#) was updated to clarify expectations of staff when responding to requests for technical assistance regarding trees in privately owned land or yards ("sick tree calls"). The new guidance lists expectations for field staff, Forest Health and Urban and Community Forestry program staff to ensure DOF provides good customer service, but doesn't create an unnecessary burden on staff and doesn't unfairly compete with private providers.

### New "Sharpen the Saw" Webinar Series Begins July 12!

- ◆ DOF is launching a new webinar series focused on topics that might not involve your everyday work, but that you will find of interest. Designed to run an hour or less, presentations will include approximately 30 minutes of content, and 15 minutes of dedicated Q&A. These optional morning webinars will occur at HQ and be available statewide via Teams (future webinars may be hosted from other locations as well). The first in this new webinar series will be given by State Forester Rob Farrell on the endangered northern long-eared bat and how forestry activities are being impacted in Virginia.

**What:** Sharpen the Saw Webinar: Northern Long-Eared Bat and Impacts to Virginia Forestry

**When:** Wednesday, July 12, 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

**Who:** State Forester Rob Farrell, presenter

**Where:** Teams meeting, limited space available in person in the HQ Training Room

A Teams meeting invitation was sent to all staff. **If you have not received it and would like to attend, email Director of Communications Greg Bilyeu at [Greg.Bilyeu@DOF.Virginia.gov](mailto:Greg.Bilyeu@DOF.Virginia.gov).**

### ***Southern Pine Beetle Predictions***

- ◆ Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) predictions have been calculated for counties in which trapping occurred this spring. Based on the number of beetles found in the traps and historical outbreak data, the counties of concern for 2023 are Cumberland, Chesterfield and Hanover. We will continue to monitor the entire state for pine bark beetle activity but will pay close attention to these counties.

**As you come across SPB spots in the field, please enter Forest Health Ground Observations (FHGOs) in IFRIS. This will help improve the accuracy of SPB predictions in the future.**

### **Last Week**

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#### ***Wythe County Forest Products Company Expansion***

- ◆ Last week Governor Glenn Youngkin announced that Musser Biomass and Wood Products will invest \$7.5 million and create 10 new jobs to expand its operation in Wythe County. Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr and State Forester Rob Farrell joined company and Wythe County representatives at an event to announce the expansion. The company will more than double production of dried hardwood chips and sawdust supplied to composite decking manufacturers, plastic extrusion companies, and heating wood pellet companies. Musser Biomass and Wood Products, a division of family-owned and -operated Musser Lumber Company, will also significantly increase its purchase volumes of hardwood residuals from regional sawmills, which in turn will create a new market for this operational byproduct. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services worked with Wythe County and the Joint Industrial Development Authority on the expansion. The Governor approved a \$75,000 Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund grant that will be matched by Wythe County.

#### ***Annual State Forest Timber Sale***

- ◆ DOF's State Forest timber sales program generated \$2,101,768.73 in Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) (compared to \$1,925,727 in FY22). This in turn will generate payments in lieu of taxes of \$422,604.19 to the following counties where timber was harvested: Cumberland, Appomattox, Buckingham, Sussex, Washington, Charlotte, King and Queen, Rockingham, Prince Edward and Fauquier. Another \$102,837.60 is set aside for recreational projects on state forests located in the counties of Cumberland, Appomattox and Buckingham.

#### ***Shenandoah National Park Conservation Efforts***

- ◆ Virginia was awarded \$7,095,000 from the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program to conserve over 4,300 acres of working forest lands along the southern edge of Shenandoah National Park. Virginia's award was the third largest in the southern region. The project will allow DOF, in partnership with the Piedmont Environmental Council, to acquire open-space easements on four

properties (three owned by private landowners and one by the City of Charlottesville). Together, the properties will help buffer the national park from potential impacts of development radiating from Interstate 64 and surrounding communities. Visited by nearly 1.5 million people every year, Shenandoah will benefit from conservation efforts to preserve scenic views, more than two miles of wild trout streams, an endangered mussel species and several other wildlife habitats, and the drinking water supply for 120,000 residents (Sugar Hollow Reservoir and associated streams).

### ***Urban Forest Strike Team Deploys to Oklahoma***

- ◆ DOF participated on the Urban Forest Strike Team to assist Oklahoma Forestry Services and Tulsa Parks and Recreation following a windstorm in June. Over three days, the team logged 542 hazardous trees in five city parks. Virginia joined other state staff on the Strike Team from Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas.

### ***Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Program Managers Meeting***

- ◆ DOF staff joined other state, federal and university staff from Georgia to Canada, and west to Michigan (the native range of eastern hemlock) at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Program Managers Meeting held in Blacksburg from June 27-29. States provided updates on challenges and successes experienced during attempts to control the hemlock woolly adelgid. DOF's Forest Health program staff provided a presentation about treatment on private and state land, including the release of parasites. Research programs reported results of biological control and chemical treatments, and attendees toured the Virginia Tech quarantine facility and insectary where biocontrol agents are cultivated and shipped to collaborators.

### ***Surry County Forest Stewardship Plan Monitoring***

- ◆ DOF Forest Management staff visited a forest stewardship property in Surry County selected for monitoring. The U.S. Forest Service randomly selects properties with a forest stewardship plan prepared within the past 10 years. Properties are visited to help determine the effectiveness and impact of the program by gauging the implementation of the plan's recommended practices. The Forest Service uses these monitoring results, collectively with national data, to evaluate the program and investment in private forestlands.

### ***Ash and Laurel Wilt Assessment at Virginia Wesleyan University***

- ◆ DOF's Forest Health staff visited Virginia Wesleyan University in Virginia Beach to assess ash trees for biocontrol release potential. Several locations with sizeable populations of redbay and swampbay were also assessed for Laurel Wilt Disease. Some trees appeared to be symptomatic but were most likely experiencing small-scale damage caused by mite feeding. Laurel Wilt has caused widespread damage on swampbay throughout the south. Of more concern in Virginia is its effect on sassafras.

### ***Forest Management***

- ◆ Amanda Conrad (forest health technician) has processed a significant number of Emerald Ash Borer cost-share applications and the application period is now closed. We had more interest than available funds this year, so the projects were ranked. We were able to approve 62 projects for treatment of 270 ash trees totaling cost-share assistance of just under \$45,000. Completed project paperwork is due in September.
- ◆ Katlin DeWitt (forest health specialist) presented an update on the spotted lanternfly and the associated quarantine to the Virginia Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee meeting held at DOF Headquarters on June 15. The group was made up of industry and state

forestry professionals who wanted to learn more about SLF and ask questions related to compliance with the quarantine. The meeting was held in person with a virtual option, with around 20 people in attendance.

- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager), Katlin DeWitt, and Amanda Conrad visited Shenandoah National Park on June 23 to see the spongy moth outbreak. Katlin had already mapped it during the aerial survey but wanted to field check the damage. Despite foggy and poor visibility conditions, the group was able to see a significant number of feeding spongy moth caterpillars (pictured).



### State Forest

- ◆ Personnel submitted information about Charlotte State Forest into the Virginia Bird and Wildlife Trail publication.
- ◆ One bid was received for the State Forest & State-Owned Lands Site Preparation & Release IFB. The contract was awarded to H&H Forest management. Their bids for aerial site prep on 842.1 acres was \$157.80 / acre (last year was \$154.69 / acre), for ground site prep the bid was \$222.00 / acre on 22.6 acres, and aerial release on 215.7 acres was \$97.80 / acre. Total bid value for all work is \$158,996.46.
- ◆ Appomattox Buckingham State Forest will be submitting several planned sales to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review on possible Northern long-eared bat habitat.

### State-Owned Lands

- ◆ The Virginia State Police Driver Training Center in Nottoway County has received final approval to proceed with a planned timber sale on 32 acres. The IFB will be posted this week with bids on the timber due Aug. 2.

### Eastern Region

- ◆ On June 21, Community Forestry Specialist Kendall Topping participated in the graduation of the newest class of the Tidewater Master Naturalists. The ceremony included a celebration of the year's stewardship projects as well as future conservation efforts. Co-advisor of the chapter, Kendall, along with Assistant Park Ranger of First Landing State Park Jennifer Huggins, handed out awards and offered congratulations (pictured).



### 75th Camp Woods and Wildlife

- ◆ DOF recently held its 75th Camp Woods and Wildlife. Despite the rainiest weather in memory, campers were engaged and upbeat. Pictured here, a camper in Ellen Powell's nature journaling class learns to record detailed forest observations.

2023 Camp Woods and Wildlife by the numbers:

- 49 campers representing 29 counties and cities (spanning the state from Accomack to Tazewell, Frederick to Halifax)
- 20 full-time staff (16 from DOF, four educators)
- 17 additional presenters and instructors, representing 13 agencies, organizations, and businesses
- \$17,800 in funds raised to minimize camper costs and make camp available to all



◆ And from the “It’s never too late file” ...  
In 1952, Betty Ann Blanton (pictured here) from Prince William County had two brothers attend Camp Woods and Wildlife. At the time, only boys could go. Betty Ann didn’t think this was fair and always wanted to attend.

This year, she finally got her wish. The 84-year-old 4-H volunteer visited with campers for two days and even participated in the firefighting exploratory class. We were glad to have you, Betty Ann!