



**September 27, 2023**

## Upcoming Events

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[2023 Fall Fire Academy](#) – September 26 - 29

[Generation NEXT: Legacy Planning Workshop](#) – October 20 & 21

[Board of Forestry Meeting](#) – October 31

## Welcome to DOF

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DOF is pleased to welcome **Phillip Cook** as the new Dickenson County technician in Headwaters District. Phillip has been a part-timer with the DOF for 23 years and is the Volunteer Fire Chief in his hometown of Haysi. He's an avid outdoorsman, and likes to spend his free time hunting, fishing, and riding motorcycles.



We also welcome **Catherine Shefski** to the DOF family as the agency's new information security officer. Cathi has Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Smith College and Master's degree in Educational Administration from Regent University. She also has her Cybersecurity certification from Piedmont Community College. She comes to DOF from Charlottesville Public Schools with extensive security certifications. She joined the Information Technology team on Sept. 25 and will support all DOF applications with software security and audits.



## Policy and Procedures

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### *Unmanned Aircraft Systems*

[Policy and Procedure 1-5 Small Unmanned Aircraft System \(sUAS\)](#) has been updated to clarify expectations of DOF pilots and sUAS equipment when responding to requests from cooperating agencies and non-profit organizations. The new guidance clarifies when we can assist these cooperators and non-profit organizations. Additionally, we have established sUAS rates for our different sUAS uses. **The policy also provides direction on video and photographic records obtained**

by drones and requests made by members of the news media. Please review the policy and procedure for all updates.

## Agency Updates

### Safety Alert: New Safety Decals

Accidents can be frightening, discouraging, emotionally and financially draining...and of course, much, much worse. These experiences can also leave us questioning the simplest tasks we take on every day.

DOF has created new safety decals for bulldozers that serve as a reminder to ensure seatbelts are in place and properly secured. The decals were a suggestion from state risk management agency DHRM, with feedback from DOF. The stickers will be placed on the dash of every DOF dozer in view of the operator as a reminder. DOF has created a [quick video on the new decals](#). If you have any questions contact Safety, Training and Compliance Officer [Chad Briggs](#).



### New Arbor Day Foundation Resource for Localities and Colleges

The Arbor Day Foundation has opened a new [online application portal](#) for Tree City USA, Tree Campus Higher Education USA, and Tree Line USA programs. Applicants use the portal to report on the work completed during 2023. The deadline for applications is Dec. 31.

### Pre-harvest Plan Templates Updated

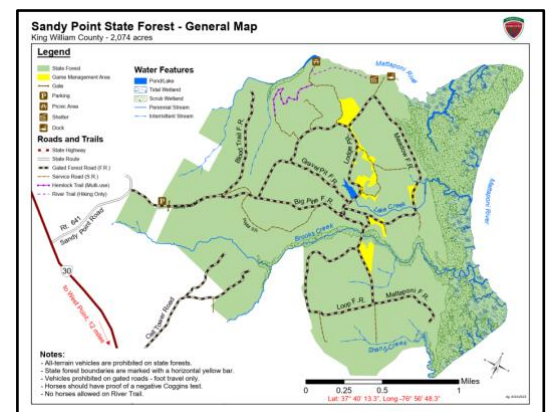
The templates for regular pre-harvest plans and DOF easements pre-harvest plans have recently been updated. The main edits were formatting so that both templates mirrored one another with the exception of additional easement references and information. The biggest change for the regular pre-harvest plan template was moving the general BMP recommendations and references to the BMP Manual from the Site-Specific Harvest Recommendations section to the Appendix. Both templates are now on the Intranet.

<https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/Template-Pre-Harvest-Plan-Easement-Property.dotx>

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### State Forest Maps and Hunting Briefs Available

Under Maps and Additional Resources, each state forest now has a general map showing roads, trails, water resources, parking areas, recreational features and more. If the state forest allows hunting, there's also a hunting map showing safety zones and other information. The maps will work with Avenza Maps™, a mobile app that allows you to track your movements offline on your iOS and Android device without the need for cell service or internet. A free version of this app can be downloaded to your device through your app store.



While Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources hunting regulations apply, we've also created hunting season summaries for each state forest to highlight essential season dates and times, including any additional restrictions that may apply (such as no hunting on Sundays). Visit [Find a State Forest](#) to locate any state forest.



### **“Fifteen Minutes in the Woods”**

Water Quality Engineer **Rodney Newlin** assisted Adam Downing from Virginia Cooperative Extension with a [“Fifteen Minutes in the Woods” landowner education video](#). Created by the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program to educate landowners and the general public on forestry and other natural resource-based topics. This month's video concentrated on water quality concerns and associated mitigation techniques for forested roads and stream crossings.

### **Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards training**

District Forester **David Powell** participated in the annual Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards training by leading an educational hike at Ivy Creek Natural Area. The hike centered on the land use history that has shaped the current forests and ecosystems as well as ongoing management strategies to improve biodiversity and ecosystem health on the landscape. The following is an excerpt from the class coordinator:

*Thank you SOOO very much for taking such good care of our students and providing them with your great wealth of knowledge not just about trees but also our environment. The students all came back raving not only about how great the walk was but also about how fantastic each of you were. CATS is so lucky to have such knowledgeable and giving persons as yourselves. A special thanks goes out to David for stepping in at the last minute to sub for Jonah. Again, thank you...your time and efforts are greatly appreciated.*

### **Eastern White Pine Decline Collaboration**

Forest Health Manager **Lori Chamberlin**, Forest Health Specialist **Katlin DeWitt**, and State Forest Manager **Zach Olinger** met with North Carolina Forest Service and Tennessee Division of Forestry staff to discuss damage to the eastern white pine. Forest Health program staff from North Carolina have observed increased decline and mortality of eastern white pine over the last couple of years. Symptoms include needle discoloration, canopy thinning, branch dieback and resin flow. Similar damage has been observed in western Virginia for many years, but the severity of symptoms fluctuates from year to year. The group met at the NCFS office in Sparta before driving to multiple sites to observe stands with declining and dead white pine. This damage may be the result of attack by a scale insect and subsequent infection by a fungal pathogen, but more research is needed.

### *Pre-Harvest Planning Training*

A pre-harvest planning training was conducted by Water Quality Engineer **Rodney Newlin** and Water Quality Specialists **Zoë Sumrall**, **Derek Keiser**, **Don Giegerich**, and **Kevin Dawson** for 14 Central Region personnel that have been with DOF for less than two years. The training consisted of an overview of pre-harvest planning followed by a field exercise on the Cumberland State Forest for a reconnaissance on a proposed timber sale for a 57-acre tract. The group was broken into five groups, each taking a different scenario. The teams then presented their plans to the class in the afternoon. Watershed Stewardship Specialist **Patti Nylander** led a discussion related to harvesting on DOF conservation easements at the end of the day.

“Thanks to Cumberland State Forest Manager **Shannon Lewis** for finding a suitable field site, Cumberland Volunteer Fire Department for the use of their training room, and Program Support Technician **Kathy Albertson** for all of her assistance coordinating supplies,” said Newlin.



### *Annual Waynesboro Tree Care Workshop*

Trees Virginia, in partnership with DOF and the City of Waynesboro, hosted the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Waynesboro Tree Care Workshop. Nearly 200 arborists, foresters, tree stewards, master gardeners and other tree care professionals attended the event, which centered on caring for mature trees. Speakers covered management of high-profile trees including the cherry blossoms in Washington D.C., the “Survivor Tree” in Oklahoma as well as Virginia Tech’s “Merry Tree.” Attendees finished the day outdoors at Ridgeview Park where the group discussed interacting with mature trees, managing trees during construction and also watched a demonstration on fractal burning of urban wood.

### *Isle of Wight County Fair*

The Blackwater District visited the Isle of Wight County Fair last week, which celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> year with a record crowd. Over 38,000 citizens from all over Tidewater enjoyed rides, rodeo acts, tractor pulls, crop and small animal judging, fair food and of course agency displays. The DOF display included IOW 50, our Courtland office UTV featuring the new slip in fire suppression unit as well as the inflatable Smokey. Forest Technician **John Rose** managed staffing for the fair and Water Quality Engineer Stephan Jasenak and Foresters Zach Dowling, Caroline Norris, Evan Richardson, and Scott Bachman worked shifts to help spread the word about forestry and fire prevention.



### *Grassy Hill Hike*

Invasive Species Specialist **Lindsay Caplan** collaborated with Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage to lead a hike for the Restoration Ecology Club at Virginia Tech at the Grassy Hill Natural Area Preserve in Franklin County. Topics discussed included plant identification, restoration ecology, invasive management, the role of fire in land management, and career options.

