



December 20, 2023

Upcoming Events

[Eastern Region – Regional Meeting & Fire Training](#) – Feb. 7, 2024

[2024 Forest Management Academy at Sweet Briar College](#) – Sept. 9 - 13, 2024

Have an agency-relevant event to share? Email Mary Weaver at Mary.Weaver@DOF.Virginia.gov

Policy Updates

[Policy 8-1 Human Resources General Policies](#) has been updated to include information about the DOF Alert system, as well as changes to the Emergency Closing and Teleworking sections. Please review and become familiar with these changes.

Employee Updates

Utilization and Marketing Program Manager Justin Barnes

The Conservation Division is happy to announce that **Justin Barnes** will be leading the agency's Utilization and Marketing Program. Justin began his tenure with DOF in 2009 as a forest technician in Virginia's Piedmont, then served as area forester and senior area forester in the Shenandoah Valley. He has been the deputy regional forester for the Central Region since 2016. He is a respected and innovative leader within the agency and has been instrumental in leading the region through several new initiatives, transitions, and reorganizations. He has also been the DOF representative for the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute since 2017. Prior to coming to the agency, Justin worked with the Army Environmental Command in Maryland and as a forestry technician at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. Justin is the current board chair for the Rivanna Conservation Alliance and is the current chapter advisor for the Central Blue Ridge Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists. Justin is a graduate forester of West Virginia University.



Welcome to DOF!

Brent Bowen was selected for the area forester position in the Five Forks District. Brent is a graduate of Virginia Tech's forestry program and is an avid Hokies sports fan. He also enjoys coaching and watching baseball. A lifelong Brunswick County resident, Brent previously worked on his family's farm and logging supply business. He also worked shortly as an HVAC installer. He started with DOF on Dec. 11; welcome him when you get a chance.



Agency Updates

March ATV Accident Report Now Available

The final report on the Accident Investigation Evaluation from March is now available on the Intranet under Workplace Safety: <https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/Accident-Report-Rocky-Wood.pdf>. If you have any questions on this report, contact Safety, Training and Compliance Officer **Chad Briggs** at (434) 989-5035 or Chad.Briggs@DOF.Virginia.gov

How to Teach Forestry to Anyone: Education Training

Have you ever been asked to do a forestry presentation and wondered, “What should I teach?” [How to Teach Forestry to Anyone](#), a training for early to mid-career staff, will be offered at five locations around the state in January and February.

This three-hour training will introduce the concept of forest literacy, address learning styles and teaching methods for different audiences, and showcase forest-centered activities for group educational programs and community events. You’ll receive a materials kit to make program planning easy. To register, follow the link above for more details and contact Conservation Education Coordinator **Ellen Powell** at Ellen.Powell@DOF.Virginia.gov at least one week prior to the training session you wish to attend.

Virginia is for Forest Lovers

Forestry has joined one of the most enduring brands in tourism marketing, “Virginia is For Lovers.” **Virginia is For Forest Lovers** has now been added as a theme to the well-known brand, which includes other topics such as history, beach, wine and oysters.

To celebrate this accomplishment, new DOF/Virginia is For Forest Lovers shirts are now available for all staff. HQ distribution is under way and regional foresters will soon be distributing shirts to regional staff.



Update on American Chestnut Research

For more than 50 years, DOF has been involved in research involving American chestnut restoration. Much of this work has focused on breeding trees with higher degrees of resistance to the often-fatal chestnut blight. DOF collaborates closely with partners including the American Chestnut Foundation (ACF), which for the last eight years been developing the “Darling 58 Chestnut,” a transgenic chestnut that used a wheat gene to express blight resistance.

ACF recently made the decision to discontinue development of Darling 58 due to striking variability in blight tolerance, significant losses in growth competitiveness and increased mortality. It was discovered that many of the chestnut seedlings ACF had been breeding were actually Darling 54, a sibling of Darling 58. Consequently, the pollen ACF provided to partners may have also been from Darling 54. DOF's involvement with Darling 58 was low; some of our chestnuts at Lesesne State Forest were control-pollinated with ACF pollen, but these seeds were taken to an ACF nursery. More information about Darling 58 and next steps on ACF's website: <https://tafcf.org/darling-58/>

Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Protection Compact

Chief of Fire and Emergency Response **John Miller** and Assistant Director for Wildfire Mitigation & Prevention **Michael Downey** attended the Mid-Atlantic Forest Fire Protection Compact meeting in Gettysburg, PA on Dec. 12 and 13. The Mid-Atlantic Compact was formed in the late 1940's to facilitate the sharing of state forestry wildfire suppression resources in support of wildfire outbreaks across state boundaries throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. The Compact works together to hold an annual training academy each June in Maryland and prepares new wildfire prevention tools and messages annually. Virginia used its ties with the Compact to order a 14-person group of wildland firefighters out of Pennsylvania in November to assist with Virginia's busy 2023 fall wildfire season.

Invasive Species Ambassador Training

Invasive Species Specialist **Lindsay Caplan** attended the Invasive Species Ambassador Training in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho from Dec. 5-8. Over 80 attendees and speakers from across the U.S. learned techniques and strategies to launch invasive species management efforts from paper and planning, to implementation and success. The event was a coordinated effort by the University of Georgia Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health, Invasive Plant Control, Inc., and the U.S. Forest Service.



Chesterfield Kindergarten Students Learn About Trees

Area Forester **Kathleen Ogilvy** taught a unit during the Head Start program (sponsored by Virginia Tech) at Jacobs Elementary in Chesterfield. During the program, Kathleen helped 18 kindergarten students explore and learn all about trees. The students got to “build a tree,” discuss what each part of the tree does and how it’s similar to the human body, examine seeds, and even got to try and make themselves into the shape of leaves. Highlight of the day? When the students discovered weevils in their acorns.

Riparian Buffer Planting at Henrico Government Center

James River Buffer Program Coordinator **Deya Ramsden**, Forest Utilization and Marketing Specialist **Joe Lehnen**, Urban and Community Forestry Project Coordinator **Delaney Long** and Community Forestry Specialist **Alanna Ostrowski** teamed up with Henrico County officials and 30 volunteers last weekend to install a riparian buffer planting around Lake Hening at the county government center. Over 150 trees and shrubs were planted to increase the environmental resilience and beauty of the area.

