



March 26, 2024

Upcoming Events

[DOF Targeted Training, Hardwood Management](#) – May 14-15

[2024 Virginia Interagency Wildland Fire Academy](#) – May 28 - June 1

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

Have an upcoming agency calendar event to share?

*Email **Mary Weaver** at Mary.Weaver@DOF.Virginia.gov*

Welcome to DOF

Nathan Chewing is the new Nursery Technician at Augusta Nursery. Nathan has been working at the nursery for little over a year as a part-time employee. Before the nursery he worked for a major excavating company and as a snow maker at Massanutten Resort. In Nathan's spare time, he likes to deer hunt, grow a big vegetable garden, snowboard and spend time outdoors.



We are pleased to welcome new Buyer Specialist **Vanessa Blankenbaker** to the agency. Vanessa transferred from the Virginia Department of Corrections where she previously served as office services specialist for Culpeper Probation and Parole. Her first day with DOF was March 10. Please do not hesitate to reach out or stop by her office in HQ Finance to say hello.



Agency Updates

Wildfire Activity

Since last Wednesday, DOF and our firefighter partners have been battling hundreds of fires across Virginia, with most of the activity in the central part of the state.

Governor Youngkin, Secretary Lohr, Attorney General Jason Miyares, State Forester **Rob Farrell**, Deputy State Forester **Ed Zimmer** were on site on Saturday to visit incident command and receive briefings on the wildfires from the DOF team across Virginia. The Governor (pictured here with IC and District Forester **Matt Wolanski**) was extremely complimentary to the DOF team and thanked everyone for their dedication, hard work and service.

Yesterday, DOF suppressed seven new fires which burned 23 acres. The new fire activity occurred in Appomattox, Franklin, Henry, Grayson and Buchanan Counties. On the fires in Page and Rockingham counties, excellent progress has been made, reaching containment on the 700-acre Rocky Branch fire, and nearly completing containment on all remaining fires. Full containment of all fires in Page County is expected today.



University of Virginia Construction Projects Near DOF HQ

Several University of Virginia construction projects are developing near the DOF Headquarters in Charlottesville. Brief stops entering and exiting Headquarters should be expected, along with brief, intermittent road closures. DOF leadership is meeting regularly with the UVA project team to discuss ongoing developments. Due to the nature of this construction, ground blasting around the construction sites will begin May 20 that will also cause temporary road closures.

Board of Forestry Meeting

The regular meeting of the Board of Forestry was held at DOF Headquarters on March 21. Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Lohr briefed the Board on the recent General Assembly session, the events since the last Board meeting. State Forester **Rob Farrell** provided updates and discussion points on several items of interest, including this week's call with the Governor to provide an update on Virginia's wildfires, the Biomass Report and manual, and the Riparian Buffer Action Plan.

Southern Group of State Foresters FIA Committee Meeting

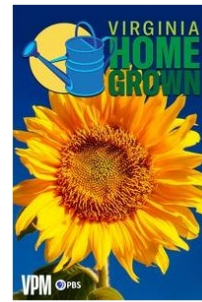
State Forester **Rob Farrell** attended the annual meeting of the Southern Group of State Foresters Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) committee in Williamsburg last week. FIA delivers current, consistent and credible information about the status of forests and the values they provide.

National Public Safety Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Program Manager **Jason Braunstein** attended the National Public Safety UAV Conference in Williamsburg on March 12-13. The conference brought together public sector UAV program managers from across the country to participate in a broad diversity of sessions covering the newest technologies, FAA training and certification of agency pilots, drone operation for search and rescue, incident management, imagery, public safety, and the latest standards affecting agency programs.

***On a related note**, “Virginia Home Grown,” a local PBS show, recently shot Jason and Forest Health Manager **Lori Chamberlin** (pictured) at Lesesne State Forest in Nelson County about DOF’s drone use. Area Forester **Bill Perry** was also part of the shoot, operating a drone. Drones have many applications in fire suppression, but also in forest health, particularly in detection and monitoring of insect and disease effects on forests. **The DOF episode premieres *tonight, March 26, at 8 p.m. on VPM and streamed via Facebook.** It will be the second feature and should start at approximately 8:25 p.m. More info:

<https://fb.me/e/1VwmgGuAe>.



Sentinel Landscapes Meeting

State Forester **Rob Farrell**, Assistant State Forester **Terry Lasher** and staff attended a meeting of the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC) to provide an update on the ongoing Sentinel landscapes program. Lasher and partners briefed installation commanders from across the Commonwealth on the new program and how their operations could benefit. Also in attendance were representatives from the Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, the Nature Conservancy, the Ward Burton Foundation and the College of William and Mary. Established under the [Code of Virginia](#), VMAC is an advisory council to the Governor to maintain collaborative relations between the Commonwealth and the leaders of each military installation in Virginia. VMAC holds quarterly meetings to explore issues impacting quality of life for service members and their families, relations between installations and surrounding communities, as well as effects of encroachment.

Callery Pear Exchange Outperforms

Registration for DOF’s [Callery Pear Exchange](#) opened on March 15, and quickly reached capacity. In less than two days, all replacement native trees were claimed. DOF is encouraging anyone else interested to move forward with plans to remove invasive Callery pears on their property and purchase replacement trees from DOF’s seedling store or from participating nurseries through the [Throwing Shade program](#).



Ailanthus Treatment at Mattanock Town

District Forester **Luke Marcek**, Forester **Scott Bachman** and Forest Technician **John Rose** joined Forest Health program staff on Nansemond tribal land in Mattanock Town on March 12 to inject more than 100 invasive Ailanthus (aka tree-of-heaven) stems using chemical lances. This is part of a larger invasive species management plan for the property which will involve multiple stages of invasive removal and re-planting with native trees.

Southside Virginia Community College Forestry Training

On March 11, Forest Management Director **Dean Cumbia** met with representatives from Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) and the Black Family Land Trust (BFLT) in Alberta (Brunswick County). The BFLT has been leading discussions with the college about forestry training opportunities. The SVCC service area covers 10 counties in southern Virginia that contain a significant swath of forest land (2.2 million acres) with many forestry businesses and service providers. Additional discussions regarding the role of SVCC in assisting forestry interests in the area are planned.

Central Hardwood Forest Conference

Area Forester **Greg Estoll**, Research Program Manager **Zoe Bergman**, and Hardwood Initiative Coordinator **Joe Rossetti** attended the 2024 Central Hardwood Forest Conference in Lexington, Kentucky on March 12-13. Attendees discussed hardwood management principles and techniques with foresters and researchers from Mississippi to Minnesota to Connecticut, and many states in between. Session topics included an extended discussion of white oak management and research highlights, and adaptive silviculture for climate change. Other sessions of interest were on reforestation of mine sites, re-examining the Gingrich stocking chart, regeneration and spatial patterning in group selections, and white oak tree improvement.

Virginia Tech Silviculture Class Visit

Forest Management Director **Dean Cumbia** made a presentation to a silviculture class at Virginia Tech on March 13. Dean described forestry and its importance in Virginia and highlighted DOF's role in active forest management. Additionally, he shared employment opportunities with the students, particularly the recruitment now open for summer interns at the agency: <https://www.jobs.virginia.gov/jobs/98423fa7-5919-404b-aaaa-7fb0f44f70e8?lApplicationSubSourceID=>

Advanced Woodland Owners' Retreat

Conservation Education Coordinator **Ellen Powell**, Hardwood Initiative Coordinator **Joe Rossetti** (pictured), Invasive Species Specialist **Lindsay Caplan**, and Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest Manager **Shannon Lewis** participated in an Advanced Woodland Owners' Retreat at Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest. The retreat was sponsored by DOF, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program (VFLEP), with additional support from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and Weyerhaeuser. The program included hands-on activities, field trips, and classroom learning.

Participants had previously attended either a beginners' retreat or other VFLEP programs and had already begun implementing forest management on their land. A highlight of the program was releasing several white oaks in a young hardwood stand. Joe instructed the group on development and management of the hardwood forest, and crop tree release. Other activities in the two-day session included wildlife management, soil study, invasive species ID and treatment options, and visiting an active logging job.

*(Captions: (Top image) Hardwood Initiative Coordinator **Joe Rossetti** discusses crop tree release with landowners. Bottom image: Andrew Brown of Weyerhaeuser explains how a grapple skidder works.)*

