



May 6, 2024

Upcoming Events

[Eastern Region – Water Quality Program Training](#) – May 9

[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!

Josh Miller has been hired as the new Natural Resources Specialist for the Blackwater District. Josh began his career in forestry in 2007 on a Type-1 Hotshot crew. From there, he went into the Tennessee Division of Forestry and then the North Carolina Forest Service. Josh lives in Courtland with his wife, who is a schoolteacher, and his 7-year-old son. Josh enjoys spending time with his family and two labs.



We would like to welcome **James Whipp** to the DOF family as our newest GIS Analyst. James comes from Orange County with over eight years of experience in GIS field. James has extensive experience in running the GIS program at Orange County including creating and maintaining all data with the County's Enterprise SDEs, publishing web services, and deploying numerous ArcGIS Online applications. He joined the IT team on April 25.

Arbor Day 2024

DOF Celebrates Arbor Day Across Virginia

Urban and Community Forestry staff provided an “Autumn Brilliance” Serviceberry tree to be planted at the Science Museum of Virginia for Arbor Day. State Forester **Rob Farrell** joined First Lady of Virginia Suzanne Youngkin, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matt Lohr, Science Museum of Virginia Chief Wonder Officer Richard Conti, City of Richmond Sustainability Engagement Coordinator Michael Smart and Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources Jennifer Walle to plant the tree.



Urban and Community Forestry staff attended Virginia Tech's Arbor Day Celebration, along with University Arborist Jamie King, other VT faculty and staff, students and community volunteers and members of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arborists. 14 trees were planted on campus by the group as they discussed the positive effects of trees in an urban landscape.



Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager **Lara Johnson**, District Forester **Dan Hosack** and Area Forester **Bill Miller** attended the Town of Marion's Arbor Day celebration at Marion Middle School. Students planted a dogwood in memory of Billie Hall, former Mayor of the town.



District Forester **Dan Hosack**, Buchanan County Forester **Greg Estoll**, Buchanan County Technician **Logan Mcglathlin** and Russell County Technician **Collin Sapp** assisted the Virginia Department of Energy and Metallurgical Coal Producers Association (MCPA) along with other partners, for an Arbor Day event on April 25. Over 150 high school students from Buchanan County planted over 1,000 trees on a reclaimed strip mine site. Greg Estoll and Collin Sapp also gave a presentation to the students discussing the importance of reclaiming mines with trees. The students were given DOF tree ID books purchased by MCPA as well as Smokey swag.



Urban and Community Forestry staff attended a Food Forest planting at Surry Elementary School alongside faculty, staff, and students on Arbor Day. Over 27 fruit and nut trees were planted in an open area behind the school. Classes throughout the day discussed the benefits of trees for people, wildlife, and their surrounding environment while learning how to properly plant trees.

Agency Updates

Virginia Farm Bureau Office of Farmland Preservation Discussion

State Forester **Rob Farrell**, Assistant State Forester **Terry Lasher**, Working Lands Conservation Program Manager **Amanda Scheps**, and members of the Virginia Farm Bureau met to discuss the transition of the Office of Farmland Preservation to DOF from its current home at the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The group discussed needs, priorities and next steps in combining the two conservation programs into the Office of Working Lands Conservation in July. The group identified two areas of focus, farmland conservation easements and the support of generational business and agriculture transition. Additional meetings will be scheduled.



Success: Callery Pear Exchange

On April 20, DOF staff held a “native tree drive-thru” at HQ for Virginia’s first Callery pear exchange. Registered participants showed photo proof of a Callery pear they had removed from their property and received a free native tree. Staff manned several stations around HQ to check people in, provide expertise on native trees, and load up the trees. The event was a resounding success, with plenty of positive feedback and hundreds of native trees given away.



2024 Virginia Forestry Association Summit

The 2024 Summit was held at Boar’s Head Resort in Charlottesville last week from April 23-25. The annual conference brings together forest landowners, forest products businesses, and industry and natural resource professionals from across Virginia’s forestry community for educational sessions, networking, and tours. Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matt Lohr (pictured) gave keynote remarks and Assistant State Forester **Terry Lasher** participated on a panel with members of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to discuss attracting new markets to Virginia.



As a component of the summit, DOF’s Urban and Community Forestry and Urban Wood teams partnered with the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program and University of Virginia (UVA) to host an urban forestry field trip. Approximately 20 attendees visited the Apex Energy mass timber building, participated in a tree walk and visited newly planted forest patches on the UVA Grounds. The tour concluded with a stop at UVA Sawmilling, the school’s urban wood program and upcycling initiative. This included a visit to the fabrication lab where students were working on end-of-semester projects.

Earth Day Event at Matthews State Forest

State forest staff hosted two days of Earth Day activities at the Matthews State Forest for nearly 200 second grade students from Galax and Grayson County. Students learned about many aspects of natural resources from DOF staff as well as partners from the New River Soil and Water Conservation District, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Wildlife Resources, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and volunteers.

Virginia Certified Prescribed Burn Manager Course

This free online course held Sept. 23 – Oct. 4 will cover fire history and uses, burn planning and implementation, fire effects, and smoke management. Certified prescribed burn managers can apply for an exemption to the 4 PM Burning Law to complete specific types of burning during the restricted period of February 15 to April 30. The course takes approximately 12 hours and is self-paced. Register by August 16: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSep023h_M7dc8A3WZ-MyphcTtnTwpYKAP5R00FL0PxDA1ibQ/viewform?pli=1

Northern Virginia Urban Forest Roundtable

The Northern Virginia Urban Forest Roundtable will be held in Alexandria on Thursday, May 30. Topics include native biodiversity, soil profile rebuilding, bees and trees and more. Full itinerary: <https://treesvirginia.org/services/events/roundtables/nova-roundtable>. To register, get permission from your supervisor then contact Urban and Community Forestry Partnership Coordinator **Molly O' Liddy** at Molly.OLiddy@DOF.Virginia.gov. ISA CEUs will be available for this event.

Southern Group of State Foresters Solar Incentivized Deforestation Meeting

Assistant State Forester **Terry Lasher** represented DOF on a virtual meeting with the Southern Group of State Foresters' policy team, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Agriculture Committee to discuss solar incentivized deforestation and whether there is a federal funding nexus aiding the conversion. The call focused on three southern states: Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia, that were represented by their respective forestry agencies. It was determined that all three states are experiencing deforestation due to renewable energy infrastructure, but at varying scales.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Committee Meeting

On April 25, Natural Resource Specialist **Jesse Bander** attended the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Technical Committee near Richmond. In attendance was USDA State Conservationist Edwin Martinez, Ph.D., who highlighted the partnership with DOF. NRCS resources have significantly increased thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act. This has enabled more funding for conservation programs as well as several new conservation practices available in Virginia. These include silvopasture, alley cropping, and forest farming (the cultivation of high-value crops under the protection of a managed tree canopy). The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is still very active in Virginia and the Forest Management Incentive (FMI) is available to landowners with stands established through CRP contracts to assist with a significant portion of the implementation costs for several management practices. Learn more: https://fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/FactSheets/2023/fmi_factsheet.pdf.

State Forests Renew Certifications

Virginia's state forests recently completed an annual audit for compliance with the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and American Tree Farm Standards, two voluntary certification programs that our state forests have been a part of since 2018. To obtain certification, state forests must meet standards in 17 objectives ranging from biodiversity to fire resilience. The audit determined our state forest managers are doing great work with the state forests to keep them compliant with the rigorous standards.

Report Spongy Moth Observations to Forest Health

The invasive Spongy Moth caterpillar that feeds on hardwood tree foliage is beginning to emerge in some areas of Virginia. DOF's Forest Health staff monitors spongy moth populations and attempts to map damage every spring. If you see spongy moth activity in your area, please report it to the Forest Health team as a Forest Health Ground



Observation (FHGO) in IFRIS, or email Forest Health Program Manager **Lori Chamberlin**: lori.chamberlin@dof.virginia.gov. Learn more about Spongy Moth from this new topic sheet:
https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/FT0068_Spongy-Moth-Control-Methods.pdf

Staff Investigate Pine Decline at Big Woods State Forest

Forest Health Specialist **Katlin DeWitt** met with State Forest Forester **Dennis Gaston** and Longleaf Pine Coordinator **Jim Schroering** at Big Woods State Forest in Sussex county on April 25 to investigate a report of dead and declining pines. Using the forest health drone, images were taken to show where damage was within the stand. Ground truthing locations showed a small beetle spot in one location, which was not aggressive and very localized. Natural enemies were also found in this location, indicating that beetle populations were being controlled. This combination of field reports, drone survey and ground truthing worked well to diagnose the cause of the condition and to formulate prescriptions for management.

Picnic Table Team Build at HQ

Headquarters and facilities staff (foreground: **Parik Patel, Caitlin Verdu and Joe Rossetti**, background: **Lesley Newman and David Queen**) worked together to construct three new picnic tables for the HQ campus. The new tables are now available for employees to take a break, have lunch, hold a meeting or just simply enjoy our outdoor spaces.

