



May 10, 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

Employee Updates

Deya Ramsden has stepped into a new role as coordinator of DOF's new statewide flexible buffer program, Riparian Forests for Landowners (RFFL) within the DOF Watershed Program. For the last five years, Deya has served as the James River Buffer Program coordinator working with partners to significantly increase riparian forest buffers in the Middle James River Watershed. She's excited to apply her experience and knowledge to launching RFFL. Prior to joining DOF, Deya worked as an urban forester for 10 years with the Forestry Division of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. She holds a Master of Science in Natural Resources from Oregon State University.



Spring Fire Season Ends

During Virginia's spring season, which ended April 30, DOF responders directly protected approximately 750 homes and 400 other structures with a total value protected of over \$163 million. Virginia's spring wildfire season by the numbers:

- ◆ DOF suppressed 411 wildfires that burned 19,933 acres, damaged or destroyed 29 homes and 28 other structures. (This represents a significant increase over last spring, when DOF and partners suppressed 353 fires for 2,752 acres.)
- ◆ This was the highest number of acres burned in a spring fire season going back more than 30 years.
- ◆ The total acres burned by wildfire in Virginia over the last seven months (which includes our fall 2023 and spring 2024 seasons) represents the most acres burned in any similar period going back more than 40 years.



Agency Updates

Accident Investigation Reports Available on the Intranet

Two recent accident investigation reports for the bulldozer rollover at Quaker Run and the part-time firefighter fatality are now available on the DOF Intranet. All accident investigation reports can be found here: <https://dof.virginia.gov/employee-access/program-areas-support/workplace-safety-for-employees/>.

Submit Your Events for the DOF Website Calendar

You can submit upcoming events (both internal and public) to be added to the website calendar by completing the submission form on our Intranet, here: <https://dof.virginia.gov/events/community/add/>. Filling this form out for events increases your reach and allows the Office of Communications to direct interested audiences to the best source for details.

Public Service Week

Public Service Week was celebrated May 6 - 10 in recognition of your service to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Celebration events were held across the state this week, including one at HQ on May 8. State Forester **Rob Farrell** gave a short speech then employees enjoyed lunch from Wayside Chicken, donuts, ice cream, outdoor games and time catching up with colleagues.

Deep Run Ponds Natural Area Preserve Timber Cruise

DOF's State Forest staff assisted the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Natural Heritage team with a timber cruise in the Deep Run Ponds Natural Area Preserve in Rockingham County. Timber cruises are essential tools used to collect information to determine the value of a specific area of land, including the trees. To date, 115 acres have been cruised.



Assessing Invasives at Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery

DOF has responsibility for forest management on lands owned by many other state agencies. On May 2, Research Manager **Zoe Bergman**, State Lands Manager **Ed Stoots**, Invasive Species Specialist **Lindsay Caplan** and State Forest Forester **Zach Olinger** met at Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery near Dublin in Pulaski County. The area was recently harvested and will be replanted with white pine. A heavy barberry (shrub) infestation needs to be controlled before planting can occur. The site was assessed for possible herbicide application using a drone, and if it could be included as a part of DOF study.

Hardwood Initiative Steering Committee Meets in Martinsville

Hardwood Coordinator **Joe Rossetti** organized a meeting of the Hardwood Initiative steering committee in Martinsville on May 2. Topics discussed included hardwood management challenges and opportunities, cost share, service rates and more. Martinsville was the meeting location due to several Hardwood Initiative Cost Share projects in the area. The committee visited private property where Area Forester **Kevin Keith** worked with the landowner to conduct a mid-story removal to increase light for growing oak seedlings and a timber stand improvement to remove cull trees and perform a pre-commercial thinning. The landowner is excited to improve deer habitat and overall conditions.



DOF Launches the Riparian Forests for Landowners Program

The Riparian Forests for Landowners (RFFL) program is live! RFFL provides flexible, no-cost riparian forest buffer installation and one year of maintenance to landowners throughout Virginia. This program aims to fill gaps in buffer landowner assistance not met by programs geared toward agricultural producers or on public lands. RFFL is open to private property owners including homeowner associations and civic leagues in rural, urban and suburban areas. The program is being implemented by DOF and partner organizations in a unique watershed-based partnership. Partners include Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, James River Association, Friends of the Rappahannock, York River Steward, and Terra Habitats LLC. Funding for RFFL is provided by the Inflation Reduction Act through the USDA Forest Service and the Commonwealth of Virginia's Water Quality Improvement Fund Act.

In the coming weeks, the DOF Watershed team will be providing details on program operations to the districts. You can learn more on the DOF website here: <https://dof.virginia.gov/water-quality-protection/water-quality-protection-landowner-assistance/financial-assistance-programs-protecting-water-quality/riparian-forests-for-landowners-program/>

Drone Survey for Invasive Scotch Broom

Forest Health Specialist **Katlin DeWitt** met with Area Forester **Dave Slack** in King William County on April 30 to survey a property for scotch broom using a drone. This invasive plant species can rapidly invade disturbed areas and is difficult to manage on a large scale. The tract being surveyed had been harvested five years prior and the previous landowner did not perform any forest management practices following harvest. The new owners purchased the property and are interested in reforesting with pine. The drone was utilized to assess the level of invasive plant infestation to help guide the forester in developing a management plan.

Record Tick Bites That Happen While at Work

With warmer weather comes ticks. Remember to complete form 8.24 (search in the [employee forms page](#) on the DOF Intranet) to record tick bites acquired while at work. If you suffer illness as a result of a recorded tick bite, you can fill out and send Form 8.21 Employer's Accident Report to Benefits and Talent Acquisition Coordinator **Tammi Olivia** to apply for workers compensation to pay for medical treatment.

To help prevent tick bites, employees can send two pairs of pants every two years to be treated with permethrin by [Insect Shield](#). The treatment repels ticks and other biting insects for up to 70 washings. Employees must pay up front but can then file for reimbursement of treatment cost and shipping both ways via a standard expense voucher. Please contact your immediate supervisor for further guidance on the treatment process. Contact Safety and Training Coordinator **Chad Briggs** for more information about tick bites and tick-borne diseases.

