



February 15, 2024

Upcoming Events

[Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conference – Northern Virginia](#) – Feb. 24

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

[DOF Targeted Training-Hardwood Management 2024](#) – May 14-15

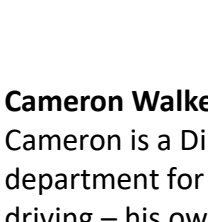
Have an agency-relevant event to share? Email **Mary Weaver** at Mary.Weaver@DOF.Virginia.gov

Employee Updates

Zachary Keys is our new technician in Henry County. Zach has been a volunteer firefighter for 10 years and a part-time wildland firefighter with us for the last two years. Zach lives in Bassett and enjoys hunting, fishing, and spending quality time with his wife, Abbie. Zach is eager to hit the ground running and learn his new position at the agency.



Ryan Yates has been selected to fill the vacant forest technician position in the Southern Rivers District. Ryan, who is a native of Halifax County, has a B.S. in Forestry Operations and Business from Virginia Tech plus 6 ½ years of forestry experience, most recently at Huber Engineered Woods. Ryan will primarily be assigned to Halifax and Pittsylvania counties and will assist **Evan Slabach** with technician duties. This provides DOF with much-needed capacity in conducting harvesting inspections and pre-harvest assistance in an area that averages 400 harvest notifications for over 18,000 acres a year.



Cameron Walker is our new forest technician in the Five Forks District. Cameron is a Dinwiddie native who has been a volunteer for the local fire department for over 25 years. He likes hunting, fishing and building – and driving – his own racecar. Cameron is also a lieutenant in the Carson Volunteer Fire Department.



Transfers

Stuart Baker has been selected as the new area forester for the Shenandoah District, primarily covering Rockingham County. Stuart has served as an area forester in the Rappahannock District for the past nine months and will now be transferring to his home county of Rockingham. He has a B.S. in Forestry from Virginia Tech and over five years of forestry experience.

Matias Pineiro has accepted the Water Quality Specialist role for the Tidewater and Capital districts. His official start date was Feb. 10.



Jeremey Falkenau has been selected as the new deputy regional forester for the Central Region. Jeremey, who has a B.S. in Forestry from Virginia Tech and an MBA from Longwood University, has spent his 11-year career at DOF spanning all three regions, first as an area forester in Bedford County, then as an area forester in the Northern Virginia Work Area, and finally serving as a senior area forester/district forester over the past seven years in the Capital District in the Eastern Region. Jeremey has been involved in many programmatic and leadership initiatives within the agency and brings to us a well-rounded skill set

in both forestry and leadership.

Agency Updates

Spring Fire Season Is (Already) Here

DOF joins fire departments across Virginia to announce spring fire season and raise awareness of the statewide burning law, in effect from Feb. 15 through April 30. Over the last week, DOF suppressed 39 fires which burned 691 acres. During this period, no homes or other structures were damaged, however, our suppression efforts protected 15 homes and seven other structures with a total protected value estimated at \$2.6 million.



Mid-Atlantic Compact Academy Registration

Registration for the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Fire Academy has opened **for compact members only**. Virginia is a participating member of the Mid-Atlantic Compact. The Academy will run from June 10 - 14. Most classes will be located at Garrett County Community College in Garrett, Maryland. One class will be taught both online and in person in New Jersey and one class will be held completely on location in New Jersey. Contact Safety and Training Coordinator **Chad Briggs** Chad.Briggs@DOF.Virginia.gov for registration information. More details available here:

<https://www.garrettcollege.edu/fire-academy.php>

Classes offered this year are as follows:

- FAL3/2 Tree Falling Evaluation
- FI-310 Fire Investigation
- FLOP Forklift Operator
- J-253 Receiving and Distribution Manager
- RX-410 Smoke Management Techniques
- S-130 Firefighter Training
- S-211 Portable Pumps and Water Use
- S-230 Crew Boss (Single Resource)
- S-231 Engine Boss (Single Resource)
- S-236 Heavy Equipment Boss (Single Resource)
- ROV Basic Driver Course (UTV Operator)
- S-270 Basic Air Operations (online or New Jersey)
- S-273 Single Engine Airtanker Manager (New Jersey)

Eastern Region Annual Pre-Fire Season Meeting

The Eastern Region had their annual pre-fire spring season meeting and training on Feb. 7. Approximately 55 field staff from the region and state forests received the latest hands-on safety training, heard a fire season weather overview from the National Weather Service, and participated in a safety inspection of a DOF truck from the Virginia State Police Motor Carrier Unit.

First Recipients of the Hardwood Initiative Tax Credit

DOF staff met with the first recipients of the Hardwood Initiative Tax Credit in Rockingham County. The landowners have been performing invasive species control, planting trees, and restoring native plants on their property for five years without cost-share assistance. In 2023, they were ready to add timber stand improvement activities when they learned of DOF's Hardwood Initiative Tax Credit. The landowners are planning to continue their improvements on the property and are considering several cost-share options to accelerate their work.

Virginia Commonwealth University Wood Materials Class

Forest Utilization and Marketing Specialist **Joe Lehnen** and Urban and Community Forestry Project Manager **Delaney Long** visited a Virginia Commonwealth University Wood Materials class to present on urban forestry, tree lifecycles and the connection with urban wood utilization.

Southern Group of State Foresters Committee Meetings

Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program Manager **Lara Johnson** attended the Southern Group of State Foresters U&CF committee meeting in Fort Worth, Texas to discuss strategic plan updates, regional projects and meet with USDA Forest Service representatives about federal funding opportunities. Forest Health Program Manager **Lori Chamberlin** was also in attendance to meet with the Forest Health committee, who discussed a variety of topics including federal funding, regional priorities for invasive species funds, and a regional outreach campaign.

Forest Management Incentive Program

The USDA Farm Service Agency Forest Management Incentive (FMI) program helps landowners manage and maintain riparian buffers and pine plantings on erodible or sensitive lands. Aimed at landowners who established forests through the Conservation Reserve and Conservation Reserve Enhancement programs, FMI provides an excellent opportunity to implement intermediate management practices and invasive species control. The program also creates the perfect opportunity for DOF staff to connect with landowners and assist with both pine and hardwood forest improvements. See more information on the [USDA Farm Service Agency website](#).

Trees Virginia Tree Care Workshop – March 12

Registration is now open for the Roanoke Tree Care Workshop hosted at Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke on March 12. This year's theme is managing urban forest patches. Speakers will discuss land use change of forests in the region, chipper safety, forestry mulching, building resistance in trees and invasive plant management. The Urban and Community Forestry team has budgeted for up to 15 DOF staff to attend this event. Please discuss with your supervisor and email [Jennie McClenny](#) **prior to March 1 to register**. The agenda is available on the [Trees Virginia website](#).

Cost-Share Program 1099-G Tax Forms Mailed

Finance has completed mailing 1099-G tax forms for our cost-share program recipients. In case you receive any questions from landowners:

- The forms were mailed the week of Jan. 29.
- If the landowner participated in multiple programs, they will receive only one 1099 showing a total incentive amount from DOF.
- Everyone who participated in a cost-share program in 2023 will receive a 1099. However, *using the 1099 depends on the recipient's filing status*. Refer landowners to their tax consultant if they have questions. Resources to assist landowners in handling taxes related to cost-share incentives are available at www.timbertax.org and www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/tax
- Landowners who used their incentive to cover the cost of DOF services may notice the amount shown on their 1099 is higher than the check they received. The full incentive amount is reportable income, regardless of payments made to DOF.

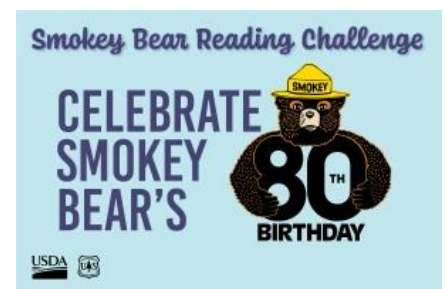
If you have any questions about the 1099-G tax forms, please contact Fiscal Technician **Cindy Harris** Cindy.Harris@DOF.Virginia.gov.

Seedling Lifting Operations

DOF's Sussex Nursery began loblolly pine seedling lifting operations in late January. To date, 6,581,000 seedlings – 28% of this year's crop – have been lifted, graded and packaged. Operations have run smoothly and on Feb. 8, more than 1,000,000 seedlings were lifted and graded, representing exceptional output.

Smokey Bear 80th Birthday Reading Challenge

Help us celebrate Smokey Bear's 80th birthday by promoting the "Smokey Bear Reading Challenge," which supports reading about wildfire prevention, forests and careers in natural resources. The challenge is designed to complement the 2024 Collaborative Summer Reading and iREAD Summer Reading programs. Readers earn badges by completing various activities. DOF has been in contact with the Library of Virginia and the Commonwealth has 350 libraries enrolled in the reading challenge. Later this spring, DOF and the Library of Virginia will hold a webinar for library staff to discuss the importance of wildfire prevention and fire safety.



The challenge ends in November. Contact Assistant Director for Wildfire Mitigation and Prevention [Michael Downey](#) for more information.