**Virginia Forest Cover Types Poster and Lessons**

**A resource for middle and high school teachers from Va. Dept. of Forestry**

**Almost 2/3 of Virginia is covered by forests… but are all those forests the same?**

You may have noticed that forests look different as you travel from Virginia’s mountains to coast. Five distinct forest types comprise most of our state’s forested land. Each type has features that define it, suit it to its region, and affect the other plants and animals that live there.

Studying forest types helps students understand the complexity of natural ecosystems. In this lesson series, middle and high school students will explore the forest types in their area and across the state. They will gain an understanding of how climate, soils, and human actions influence the forest. They will observe how forests in Virginia have changed and continue to change over time. They will learn about threats to forests and address the challenges involved in managing and maintaining them. The lessons incorporate small group work, field data collection, computer applications, and discussion. All components are easy to download (documents in Word, map in PDF format) at [***http://dof.virginia.gov/edu/resources-educators.htm***](http://dof.virginia.gov/edu/resources-educators.htm). A poster-sized map with photos of forest types is also available in hard copy.

**Components included are:**

* Overview
* Map of major Virginia forest cover types
* Background information with forest type descriptions
* Glossary
* Photos from major Virginia forest types
* 8 lesson plans with SOL references, discussion questions, and other resources

**Lessons:**

1) What Grows Where? – Students compare maps and speculate about why different forest types occur where they do.

2) Soils and Forests - Students identify the most common tree species on a forested site and use observations and Web Soil Survey to learn more about the site conditions.

3) Forest Succession – Students learn about the process of forest succession, and examine and compare plants from different successional stages.

4) Wildlife in the Forest - Students research wildlife species associated with different forest types.

5) The “Hidden” Forest - Students define urban forestry, list some values of urban forests, and calculate ecosystem benefits and other values of trees on a local site.

6) Threats to Virginia’s Forests - Students use a simulation to understand factors that increase, decrease, or conserve Virginia’s forests.

7) What Would You Do? - Students work in “family” groups to set goals and decide how to manage a hypothetical piece of forest land.

8) Going, Going, Gone? – Working in teams, students research tree species or groupings that are now uncommon in Virginia, present their findings to the class, and offer possible solutions for species restoration.