



Leadership Roundtable Meeting (LRT)

February 2, 2021

State Foresters Report

Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer narrated the meeting.

- ◆ Rob Farrell let everyone know that meeting was being recorded as a practice run for the first virtual Board of Forestry meeting coming up in March.
- ◆ Working on some great ideas not quite ready for discussion yet.
- ◆ General Assembly crossover is coming up.
 - No significant legislation for VDOF, following legislation for pesticides.
 - Lot of discussion on tree preservation and solar.
 - VDOF will be holding a big stakeholder process to discuss tree preservation.
- ◆ Working on a resolution to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Reforestation Timberland (RT) program.
- ◆ No new information on the budget.
- ◆ VDOF has a 5 percent rate of cases of COVID-19 which is consistent with other agencies and work places.
 - Don't have a time frame of eligibility for COVID-19 vaccinations for VDOF.
 - VDOF Incident Management Team (IMT) is doing a great job getting a plan in place for vaccination distribution.
 - Lot of discussions on mask wearing (single or double).
- ◆ Hardwood initiative training coming up next week as long as weather cooperates.
- ◆ Having interviews with the US Endowment, which has the pipeline mitigation fund, for contract foresters to work on the mitigation money in the pipeline work area.

Presentations

Fire Season Preparation (John Miller)

- ◆ Predicted weather for this season is a weakened La Nina pattern. Currently extremely wet, long term proposed warmer than normal into the summer. Less than average spring season.
- ◆ Approach this fire season with same safety precautions as last fall with the COVID-19 precautions (social distance, personal protective equipment, etc...).
- ◆ Be ready to respond to whatever comes our way, personnel, equipment and agency readiness.

Ed Zimmer spoke on how meals will be handled on fires during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ◆ You will be given \$20.00 per day for qualifying fires for meals. Bring a packed lunch.

John Miller spoke on the COVID-19 Vaccine efforts.

- ◆ Supporting approximately 10-15 sites across the state.
- ◆ Goal is to ultimately use National Guard resources.
- ◆ VDOF is providing management, supervisor structure and logistical support to manage the sites.
- ◆ Vaccine availability is not expected to increase for the next three weeks.
- ◆ National Guard availability was delayed, expected to be available middle of February beginning of March.
- ◆ Approximately 140-150 sites across the state are providing vaccinations as vaccines are available.
- ◆ Ultimately will have 15 VDOF staff supporting sites.

Updates

None

Round Robin Updates

GIS (Jason Braunstein)

- ◆ Continue to support the regions with ad hoc mapping.
- ◆ Updated county work area map with new personnel. If you're interested in that map email Jim Pugh.
- ◆ Looking at the Harvest Notification Portal for improvements and updates that can be made.
- ◆ Tentatively scheduled an RGS Pro training for GIS power users.
- ◆ Serving as the Commonwealth of Virginia Incident Management Team (COV-IMT) Officer.

Fire and Emergency Response (Dave Houttekier)

- ◆ Spring fire season coming up working on getting everyone ready and the equipment and supplies they need.
- ◆ Mid Atlantic Academy is still in process for June.
- ◆ Working on a collaboration project with Virginia Interagency Coordination Center (VICC) to come up with an interview podcast to help educate and promote VDOF employees about the Administratively Determined (AD) Casual Hire program. Would like to double VDOF participation in that program.
- ◆ Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV) skid tank prototype should be finished with the production process and ready for testing.

Eastern Region (Bryant Bays)

- ◆ Wrapping up pine planting re-inspections. Have not heard or seen any major survival issues.
- ◆ Helping the nursery with seedling distribution and monitoring the planting crews.
- ◆ Currently assisting with four mass vaccination sites with another one to be added.
- ◆ Have 35 approved prescribed burn applications, anticipating to have approximately 70 this year.
- ◆ Four positions open, Blackwater, Capital, Mattaponi foresters and regional mechanic.
- ◆ Forest Action Plan has been submitted, tying up a few small projects.

Forest Health (Lori Chamberlin)

- ◆ Last year for the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) cost share. Funding is significantly reduced, only landowners from Eastern region and organizations from all three regions are eligible this year. Enrollment begins April 12. More information will be made available prior to April 12.
- ◆ The [Policy and Procedure 6-2 Emerald Ash Borer Cost-Share Program](#) has been updated and available on the intranet.
- ◆ New [Forest Health Review publication](#) is available. If you would like some copies to hand out please contact [Lori Chamberlin](#).

Administration (John Colligan)

- ◆ General Assembly has not addressed the budget yet. It's predicted that there will be a special session to address the budget.

Finance (Fernanda Crandol)

- ◆ No updates.

Research (Jerre Creighton)

- ◆ Measuring ongoing research plots, working on studies of containerized seedlings, hardwood competition control and more.

Forest Resource Management (Dean Cumbia)

- ◆ Working on the 50th Anniversary of Reforestation Timberland (RT) event.
- ◆ In person RT subcommittee will be held on February 23.
- ◆ Developing demonstration sites for the eleven practices VDOF is emphasizing for Hardwood Initiative.
- ◆ In the process of hiring a consulting forester to assist with management plans for the Joint Chiefs Lower Cowpasture initiative in Alleghany and Bathes County.
- ◆ Partnering with the Nature Conservancy on a longleaf pine grant.

Forestland Conservation (Karl Didier)

Terry Lasher introduced the Forestland Conservation Program Manager Karl Didier.

- ◆ Glad to be here, excited to find innovative ways to conserve healthy productive forests in Virginia.
- ◆ Has done conservation all across the globe.
- ◆ Working on transitioning in new staff.
- ◆ Working on updating VDOF information for Conserve Virginia.

Budget (Faye Difazio)

- ◆ VDOF is on target to spend all general funds for FY21.

Senior Area Foresters Representative (Greg Estoll)

- ◆ Many new and fairly new employees with lack of fire experience. Need to try to get them trained and give them opportunities to get experience as much as possible.

Fleet (Danny Fortune)

- ◆ Colorado pickups ready to be rolled out to field.
- ◆ Working on overweight permits.

State Forest (Gary Heiser)

- ◆ State Forest timber sales on track.
- ◆ Working on parking lot at Charlottes State Forest.

Urban and Community Forestry (Lara Johnson)

- ◆ Reviewing applications.
- ◆ Arbor Day Foundation has waived the Arbor Day Celebration requirement but will require a signed proclamation.
- ◆ Virginia Trees for Clean Water applications are due by February 16.

Assistant State Forester (Terry Lasher)

- ◆ Sentinel Landscape Tree Application Request for Proposal (RFP) was released on January 26 and deadline is February 29.
- ◆ Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) discussions are continuing.
- ◆ February 8 is conservation easement ranking and batching period.
- ◆ Health Forest Watershed project is moving forward.
- ◆ New Forest Certification Owner's Manual that will be available by June.

Public Information (Janet Muncy)

- ◆ Website is coming, vendor has majority of content. Hope to be in test mode by end of month.

Information Technology (Parik Patel)

- ◆ No new projects
- ◆ Conducting interviews for data analyst position.
- ◆ Hoping to complete headquarters computer refresh by the end of the month.

FIA (John Pemberton)

- ◆ 24 percent completed with the Virginia 2020 panel.
- ◆ New employees on board.
- ◆ Interviewing for the Abingdon position.

Water Quality (Matt Poirot)

- ◆ Completed Best Management Practices (BMP) audits for 2020:
 - Have a state wide track audit average of 93 percent.
 - Median track score of 95 percent.

- Central Region has a 92.4 percent BMP implementation rate.
 - Eastern Region has a 96.7 percent BMP implementation rate.
 - Western Region has an 89.2 percent BMP implementation rate.
 - Chesapeake Bay median score was 95.5 percent.
- ◆ Riparian Buffer Forest Credit applications are due.

Human Resources (Hector Rivera)

- ◆ Stay vigil with COVID-19. Masks are still required.
- ◆ Back on a regular process for hiring employees.
- ◆ [Infectious Disease Prevention Plan](#) is now a permanent standard.
- ◆ Discussed when employees can return to work after testing positive with COVID-19.
- ◆ 80 hours of Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL) is available.

Assets and Infrastructure (Joe Schaefer)

- ◆ Now is the time to check your radios and cell phones for fire readiness. If you have any problems please let Joe Schaefer know.
- ◆ The BK Claim shells are in very short supply, make sure you remove batteries when you are done with them.
- ◆ If you have anything for the Building and Grounds (B&G) group, let Joe Schaefer know still short staffed.
- ◆ Goochland tractor shed is completed. Fluvanna tractor shed should be operational in the next six weeks.
- ◆ Several leases and agreements are in the works, hope to have some ready this summer. Will provide a list to the Regional Foresters on where the potential sites are located.

Public Information (Michelle Stoll)

- ◆ Working on the RT 50th anniversary event. Have a resolution in the Secretary's office for review.
- ◆ Looking for landowners willing to share their stories on RT to utilize in VODF's storying telling and social media.
- ◆ Working with the Secretary's and Governor's office on Black History month.
- ◆ Let Michelle Stoll know when events are going on around the state so she can share the stories.
- ◆ Working on rewording our forest land loss messaging.
- ◆ Page Hutchinson has suffered a health emergency, please keep her in your thoughts.

State Lands Coordinator (Ed Stoots)

- ◆ 40th Anniversary of State-Owned Lands.
- ◆ In process of awarding planting contract for State-Owned Lands and State Forests this season.
- ◆ Discussed timber sales.
- ◆ Working on the Catawba Hardwood Initiative Demonstration site.
- ◆ Received bids to cruise the second half of the Stanley acquisition.
- ◆ Charlotte State Forest parking lot is done and sign is up.

Central Region (Robbie Talbert)

- ◆ Received 41 burning exemption applications.
- ◆ Four position vacancies; two foresters in Rappahannock, forester in Meherrin and forest technician in Shenandoah.

Western Region (Chris Thomsen)

- ◆ Wet weather has kept staff busy working on several water quality issues.
- ◆ Training new staff
- ◆ Open position vacancies; forester in Blue Ridge and a forest technician in Mount Valley.

Fire Prevention (Fred Turck)

- ◆ No updates

Ed Zimmer asked everyone to stay safe and continue to be vigilant with COVID-19. Be prepared for fire season even though it looks like it will be a light season.

Hector Rivera will share information in regards to Page Hutchinson as he receives and is permitted to share from the family.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant