



**June 11, 2024**

## Upcoming Events

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

[Virginia Certified Prescribed Burn Manager Course](#) — Sept. 23 - October 4

*Have an upcoming agency calendar event to share?*

Email **Mary Weaver** at [Mary.Weaver@DOF.Virginia.gov](mailto:Mary.Weaver@DOF.Virginia.gov)

## Welcome to DOF!

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Please welcome **Madeline Kenerly** as DOF’s new bay watershed specialist for the Rappahannock District. Madeline has a B.S. in Environmental Studies from Saint Mary’s College of Maryland and seven months of natural resource experience. Her start date was May 28.



**Dalton Maddox** has accepted the forest technician position in the Capital District. Dalton comes to us from the Tampa area of Florida where he worked for Polk County as an environmental field technician. He has experience with controlled burning, aquatic invasive species control, and other natural resources work. Additionally, Dalton was active with the Florida Native Plant Society. Dalton is currently living in the Richmond area with his wife, Stevie, and his dog, Georgia. Please welcome Dalton to DOF when you get the chance.

We welcome **Brian Gillispie** to the DOF family in the new role of forestry business development specialist. Brian comes to DOF with over 30 years of business experience in central Virginia. During his prior work, Brian overcame many challenges common to businesses and hopes his experience will assist him to help forestry companies.





**Sal Flower** (left) and **Kaitlyn Harless** have joined the Forest Health program as invasive species technicians. Kaitlyn studied Biology at James Madison University and is working on her master's degree in biology at Virginia Commonwealth University. Sal studied Environmental Science and Spanish Language at the New College of Florida. Sal and Kaitlyn will be working with Forest Health to conduct vegetation surveys on state lands and assist with invasive species removal projects. Their work will begin at Conway Robinson and Whitney state forests this summer.

## Policy Updates

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[Policy and Procedure 08-020 Workplace Safety – Chainsaw Operations](#) has been updated to NWCG standards and received operational updates. Field staff should review the policy and direct any questions to Agency Safety Officer **Chad Briggs** at [Chad.Briggs@DOF.Virginia.gov](mailto:Chad.Briggs@DOF.Virginia.gov).

## Agency Updates

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### *Virginia Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service*

State Forester **Rob Farrell**, Deputy State Forester **Ed Zimmer**, Director of Fire and Emergency Response **John Miller** and members of the agency's Honor Guard attended the Virginia Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service at the Richmond Raceway Complex on June 1. Governor Glenn Youngkin was the keynote speaker for the service. Two of the 17 fallen heroes were associated with DOF: Forest Technician **Rocky Wood** of Dickinson County and long-standing part-time firefighter **Chester Lauch** of Frederick County.



### *2024 Virginia Wildland Fire Academy*

DOF held its 23rd annual interagency wildland fire training academy on the campus of Longwood University in Farmville. This week-long training is one of the largest and longest-running wildland fire training academies in the nation. Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matt Lohr joined State Forester **Rob Farrell**, Deputy State Forester **Ed Zimmer** and Chief of Fire and Emergency Response **John Miller** to speak with firefighters during this year's training. More than 260 students participated in nine national-level training classes on wildfire suppression and emergency incident management. Attendees included DOF staff, five in-state agency cooperators, three federal wildfire agencies, and four other states. Additionally, a regional fall training academy is held each fall.

### *HB2026 Carbon Life Cycle Analysis Advisory Panel Meeting*

House bill 2026 (Renewable energy; biomass-fired facilities; Department of Forestry advisory panel; report) requires convening an advisory panel to examine the use of biomass for electricity generation and provide a report to the General Assembly by Dec. 1. DOF issued a request-for-proposals to perform a life cycle analysis (LCA) with guidance from the stakeholder group. Dr. Lisa Colosi Peterson from the School of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Virginia was selected to conduct this important work. Phase 2 was formally kicked off last week with an advisory panel meeting held at DOF headquarters in Charlottesville. Dr. Peterson was introduced to the advisory panel, who provided input for LCA criteria and began to chart a path forward. DOF will meet monthly with the advisory panel through October.

## *Throwing Shade VA Program Continues to Thrive*

In 2024, DOF's Throwing Shade VA program grew to include 13 nursery locations. During its promotional period of April 15 – May 1, more than 5,500 trees and shrubs were purchased and planted by nursery customers across the Commonwealth. Last year, approximately 1,550 trees and shrubs were sold through the program. The program's goal is to incentivize nursery customers to select native trees using discounts, with the secondary objective of raising awareness of the value of natives to the landscape.



## *Trees Virginia Board Meeting*

DOF hosted the Trees Virginia Board meeting last week at its Charlottesville headquarters. Professionals across the natural resources sector met to discuss work plans for the rest of the year. Trees Virginia is an educational entity that shares the latest arboricultural best practices and trends to exemplify why trees are essential to Virginia.

## *Spongy Moth Damage Surveyed in the Shenandoah Valley*

Forest Health Manager **Lori Chamberlin** and Forest Health Project Coordinator **Amanda Conrad** conducted ground surveys in Shenandoah, Warren, and Frederick counties for spongy moth defoliation. Area Forester **Connor Goolsby** and District Forester **Matt Wolanski** helped direct these surveys to areas that are experiencing severe spongy moth damage. Spongy moth damage is severe this year in many areas in the Northern Shenandoah Valley. In some areas, this is the second or third consecutive year of spongy moth infestation. The reoccurring impacts are expected to have long-term tree damage, especially to mature oak trees. Forest health staff are also conducting aerial surveys this week to map the extent of the damage.



## *Drone Herbicide Study Installed at State Forests*

Over the last two weeks, Research Manager **Zoe Bergman** worked with state forest staff to install a drone herbicide study at Whitney, Prince Edward, and Dragon Run State Forests, as well as SW Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Pulaski County. The varied study sites aim to establish herbicide rates of application for site preparation of pine plantings in various regions of Virginia, from coastal to mountain forests. Spraying will begin at the end of summer.

## *Chestnut Genotyping at Matthews State Forest*

On May 23, Research Manager **Zoe Bergman** partnered with staff from the American Chestnut Foundation to begin the process of genotyping hybrid chestnut trees at Matthews State Forest in Grayson County. The group collected leaf samples from newly emerged chestnuts to send off to the lab. These genotype results will inform us of blight ratings and American chestnut lineage for our orchard trees. These results will eventually be used to cross the best trees for new orchard specimens. Additionally, the crew marked which trees to cull in the Matthews Orchard so remaining, higher-quality chestnuts can thrive.

## *New Employees Participate in Forest Management Training*

On May 30, approximately 15 newer DOF employees participated in a forest management training session at Cedar Crest Conference Center and Prince Edward State Forest. The event was led by members of the Forest Management team and included presentations and field stops on pine and hardwood silviculture, management, forest health, and applied research. State Forest Forester **Kirby Woolfolk** led the group through four separate areas of the state forest, covering regeneration of both pine and hardwood forests, intermediate hardwood management, and a pine density/management study.

## *DOF Honored with PRSA Award*

DOF was recently honored by the Public Relations Society of America Richmond Chapter with a Commonwealth Award of Merit in Crisis Communications for the agency's efforts during last year's fall fire season: "When the Crisis Spreads Like Wildfire (Literally) — Virginia's 2023 Fall Fire Season." While our firefighters worked the firelines for more than a month straight, our Communications team worked to keep the public informed with news updates and social media outreach. Positive coverage was generated by local, national and international outlets including *The Washington Post*, NPR, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Guardian* and more. Well done, team!



## *Virginia Invasive Species Advisory Committee Meeting*

Forest Health Program Manager **Lori Chamberlin** and Invasive Species Specialist **Lindsay Caplan** attended the Virginia Invasive Species Advisory Committee meeting. Comprised of local, state and federal agency experts, university researchers, representatives of non-governmental organizations, private business and concerned citizens, the committee provides information and advice to the Invasive Species Working Group and makes recommendations to achieve the goals of the Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan, which will be updated this year. Joining DOF on the committee is the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, William and Mary, Virginia Tech and the University of Richmond.

## *Highly Invasive Plant is Controlled by Biocontrol Weevils*

Invasive Species Specialist **Lindsay Caplan** partnered with Virginia State Parks and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to release Mile-a-minute biocontrol weevils, *Rhinoncomimus latipes*, on three separate properties throughout Virginia. Mile-a-minute is a highly invasive plant listed as a Tier-3 noxious weed in Virginia and is particularly difficult to control. These weevils will defoliate and weaken the plant to assist control efforts and prevent further spread.



## *Students at Norfolk Academy Tour Lesesne State Forest*

Research Manager **Zoe Bergman** led a tour of Lesesne State Forest and the chestnut orchards for a group of high school students from Norfolk Academy on May 31. These students elected to take an "Eco"

Maymester with their school to further learn about Virginia's native ecosystems and agriculture. They were excited to be able to visit and learn about the breeding program with the American chestnut, as well as the history of DOF and our work to restore this foundational species to the native forests of Virginia.