



# Board of Forestry Meeting

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June 15, 2021  
James Monroe Highlands  
Charlottesville, VA

## Convene Meeting, Call to Order:

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The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairperson Ken Morgan at James Monroe's Highlands in Charlottesville, Virginia. Chairperson Morgan reminded the Board of the Anti-trust policy legal requirements.

## Roll Call:

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### *Board of Forestry Members Present*

John Burke III, Michael Harold, Mike Hincer, Beth Flippo Hutchins, Ken Morgan Jr., Franklin Myers, Bill Osl, Heather Richards, Greg Scheerer, Dr. David Smith and Glen Worrell

### *Members Absent*

Jamie Coleman

## Adoption of Agenda:

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Motion was made to approve the agenda as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

## Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

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### *Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) Present*

Rob Farrell, State Forester; Ed Zimmer, Deputy State Forester; Terry Lasher, Assistant State Forester; Michelle Stoll, Director of Public Information; Karl Didier, Forestland Conservation Program Manager; Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant

### *Recognition of Guests and Visitors*

Katie Hellebush, Hellebush Consulting, LLC; Andrew Smith, Virginia Farm Bureau; Jay Phaup, Greif Packaging; Corey Connors, Virginia Forestry Association; Conner Miller, Virginia Forest Products Association; Lesley Mosley, Virginia Forest Products Association

## Hearing of Citizens:

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None

## Approval of Minutes:

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A motion was made to approve the March 4, 2021 minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

## Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

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Secretary Bettina Ring was unable to attend. State Forester Rob Farrell gave some remarks on her behalf.

- ◆ Dr. Jewel Bronaugh (former Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services [VDACS]) is now the US Deputy Secretary of Agriculture in Washington DC.
- ◆ Brad Copenhaver (former Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry) is now the Commissioner of VDACS.
- ◆ Heidi Hertz (former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry) is now the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry.
- ◆ Secretary Ring and Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer attended the Speyside Bourbon Stave Mill ribbon cutting ceremony in Glade Spring, Virginia.
- ◆ Several forestry projects are on the Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) list.
- ◆ Virginia revenues are up and exceeding forecasts.
  - Special session called to address state budget to be held August 2.
- ◆ New website is up and running.
  - Secretary Ring did a video with Smokey Bear to promote the new and improved website.
- ◆ One Virginia Plan is Virginia's strategic plan for increasing diversity and inclusion within all state agencies.

## State Forester's Report:

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State Forester Farrell reviewed with the Board the changes since the last Board meeting in March.

- ◆ Things are returning to normal pretty quickly from COVID-19.
  - Recognized the seedling nurseries, Josh Bennicoff (nursery manager) and Josh McLaughlin (assistant nursery manager) for having a very normal year in spite of COVID-19. The nurseries were the highest risk due to contractors, assembly line process and little time for delays during lifting season. A lot of good planning to make a successful season.
- ◆ Congratulations to Virginia Forest Products Association for a successful Richmond Logging Expo event.
  - Next Expo is scheduled for May 20-21, 2022.
- ◆ Very busy legislative year.
  - Thanks to VDOF partners for their work on the Department of Environmental Quality Stakeholder Advisory Group (DEQSAG) to define Mature Trees.
  - Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher represented VDOF on the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Solar Permit by Rule (PBR) task force.
  - State Forester Farrell is working with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) on the Wildlife Corridor Study.
- ◆ Urban Tree Conservation Study
  - VDOF attempted this study in 2020 in response to all the bills submitted by various localities related to tree retention during development. VDOF was unable to finish the process due to COVID-19.
  - Multiple legislators requested this study in the past session.
  - VDOF was tasked with taking the budget, house and senate versions and putting them into one plan.
  - Have been working with Secretariat of Agriculture and Forestry and Secretariat of Natural Resources on the process.
  - Thanks to VDOF partners that are participating. A preparatory survey will be out in the near future.
  - Want to ensure maintaining trees during development doesn't affect the right to practice forestry prior to development.

- ◆ Riparian Buffer Strategic Plan
  - The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) has aggressive riparian buffer goals and there are concerns on how the state will achieve them.
  - VDOF is working on getting all the agencies and non-profit organizations (NGOs) to agree to cooperate on identifying the landowners for the most beneficial/successful cost-share program for them and outreach to them.
- ◆ Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan
  - Each state agency was tasked with creating a DEI strategic plan by July 1. VDOF is requesting an extension to allow time for a good thorough plan.
  - VDOF's DEI strategic plan will include:
    - Diversity in our employee recruitment, employee development and retention.
    - Diverse representation in management and agency decision making.
    - Training and education about diversity and inclusion.
    - Incorporate DEI in VDOF policies and procedures.
    - Ensure VDOF services are accessible to everyone.
    - Outreach programs and services to all communities.
    - Address environmental justice by looking at potential concerns related to negative impacts from forestry on communities.
- ◆ Personnel Investments
  - VDOF had a large number of retirements in field positions. Refilling the positions with lower salaries created a retirement dividend.
  - Created a package of personnel reinvestments with the dividend.
    - Provided 3-5 percent raises for foresters and technicians that have 4 to 20 years of service in April.
    - In the coming year VDOF will increase funding for training and increase opportunities for professional development.
    - Re-establishing an annual forest management academy for VDOF employees and key partners.
- ◆ Website
  - The new and improved website is up and working well.
  - VDOF is no longer keeping a list of foresters, loggers and forestry contractors.
  - There will be a Private Consulting Forester Directory on the website that will be self-maintained.
    - Foresters, loggers and forestry contractors will register on the website and keep their information updated.
    - Cards with instructions on how to register are being created and will be handed out by VDOF field staff and available at all upcoming forestry related conferences and workshops.
    - Registered individuals will receive an email yearly to update/review information.
- ◆ Charlotte State Forest
  - VDOF continues to work with The Nature Conservancy on acquisition in phases.
    - Phase-1 closed December 2020 with 2,531 acres creating Charlotte State Forest.
    - Phase-2 will close in calendar year 2021 adding 2,480 acres.
    - The Forest Legacy List includes phase-3 for approximately an additional 2,500 acres.

Bill Osl arrived at 10:45 a.m.

- ◆ New Hires
  - Karl Didier has been hired as the new Forestland Conservation Program Manager for VDOF replacing Mike Santucci. Karl gave a brief summary of his forestland conservation background.
  - Sabina Dhungana has been hired as the new Marketing and Utilization Manager for VDOF replacing Charlie Becker.
- ◆ Sentinel Landscapes Partnership
  - Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher spoke on the status of the Sentinel Landscapes application process.
    - The Virginia State Level Coordinating Committee is a coalition of federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that works with private landowners to advance sustainable land management practices around military installations and ranges to ensure mission readiness.
    - Sentinel Landscape Designation process has a two-phase application requirement. VDOF has led the Virginia effort and has been successfully accepted for phase one.
    - Moving into phase two now with the full application due August 31. Virginia should know this fall if we are awarded the full designation.
    - Being accepted as a Sentinel Landscape will help VDOF and their partners to better compete against other states for funds to assist working farms and forest landowners.
- ◆ Virginia State Fair
  - VDOF is proposing a transition in our participation in the Virginia State Fair from staffing an all-day educational exhibit spanning multiple days, to attending on selected days and being more interactive, incorporating Smokey Bear moving around the fair. The VDOF Public Information Team would focus on two or three Regional/County Fairs each year and move the focus around the state to generate better outreach.
- ◆ Timber Theft
  - VDOF has their first timber theft case that has not been resolved and taken to the Commonwealth's Attorney by VDOF staff. It has been recommended to move forward with charges for not paying a landowner.
- ◆ State Lands Timber Sales
  - Deputy State Forester Zimmer spoke about the State Lands timber sales.
    - VDOF State Lands Coordinator Ed Stoots has had great success with state lands timber sales.
    - There have been 17 timber sales in the last two and a half years that brought in approximately \$900,000.
    - Almost all projects have resulted in ongoing management areas.
    - Harvested seven million board feet of pine and hardwood.
    - Very active program, have worked with five colleges and universities, five different correctional facilities, four historical properties, four hospital properties and VDOT.
    - VDOF is integrating cutting trees and proactive forest management with these state lands projects.
- ◆ Good Neighbor Authority Agreement
  - We are in phase-2 – working with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to timber harvest and manage 1200 acres of forest management area.

Chairperson Morgan thanked State Forester Farrell for his great work and remarked that the VDOF agency reflects the great quality of their people.

## Informational Items:

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### *Topics to Focus on in Upcoming Meetings*

State Forester Farrell reviewed the topics list from 2019 and passed out index cards for board members to list new topics they would like to see discussed in the upcoming meetings.

- Some of the items that made the list are; education, markets, Reforestation of Timberlands Program (RT), VDOF staff present information on their programs, hardwood and solar energy.
- Three meetings a year by code, can have a fourth meeting to go somewhere specific.
  - March meeting is in Charlottesville and RT rates are set. This would be a good time to have VDOF staff talk about their program.
  - The hardwood and markets topics would be good meetings to go somewhere and see hardwood demonstrations or specific markets.
- Board would like to focus on the topics that need to be addressed or will be missed. Solar energy, markets & market facilitation are a few.
  - The Forestry Summit in September will be focusing on practical information about solar energy.
- Options for upcoming meetings:
  - Possibility to have Board of Forestry meeting in conjunction with the VFA Summit.
  - Focus on markets at the March meeting in Charlottesville.
- State Forester will summarize the topics and send out to the Board members.

## Action Items:

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Dr. Smith spoke on proforestation as it relates to climate change.

- ◆ Society of American Foresters has created a position statement on proforestation that puts into perspective Forest Resource Management is everything.
- ◆ Everything is used in the forest and that needs to be taken into account when talking about forest management and climate change.
- ◆ Should this message become prevalent in Virginia, we need to be pro-active and get talking points about what forest management is all about to groups.

Heather Richards spoke about a renewed effort for dedicated state land conservation funding.

- Building a new core base coalition group. If interested in being on group, contact Heather Richards.
- Forest Legacy money needs to be matched by non-federal money or it can't be used.

Need to work on conserving big blocks of working forests.

## Committee/Liaison Reports:

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### *Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Committee Report*

RT Committee Chairperson Greg Scheerer reported:

- ◆ Committee has not met since last Board of Forestry meeting.
- ◆ \$2.6 million in RT funds have been allocated to the regions.

### *Hardwood Management Task Force*

State Forester Farrell addressed the Board about the status of the Hardwood Habitat Initiative Program.

- ◆ Identified a way to have a steering committee.
- ◆ Working on the Hardwood Initiative Incentive Program and how it will be run.
  - What practices, rates, who's eligible, etc.
- ◆ Would like to initially spend funds on state lands.
- ◆ Hardwood Coordinator position will be advertised and hired after July 1.
- ◆ Contractors in Southwestern part of Virginia with MVP mitigation funds working on hardwood practices and getting them implemented.
- ◆ Figuring out how to come up with projects, how will they be scored and what projects make the most sense to invest in.
- ◆ The Annual Forestry Academy will be heavily focused on hardwood management.
- ◆ Will have significant input from contractors, consulting foresters and foresters on the practices and rates.
- ◆ Working on demonstration areas to do the work and show the work in several areas.
- ◆ State Forester Farrell is now the Southern Group of State Foresters representative to the White Oak Initiative.

## Unfinished Business:

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None

## New Business:

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### *Recognition of Board Members*

State Forester Farrell recognized the five board members that were leaving the board and gave them each a plaque in recognition of their service.

- ◆ Ben Reeves represented the pine pulpwood industry for two years, 2019-2021.
- ◆ Franklin Myers represented the timber harvest industry for nine years, 2012-2021.
- ◆ Glen Worrell was an At-Large representative for nine years, 2012-2021.
- ◆ John W. Burke, III represented the small forest landowner for 11 years, 2010-2021.
- ◆ Dr. David W. Smith was an At-Large representative for 15 years, 2006-2021.

The Governor will be appointing the new Board Members soon. State Forester Farrell will send out the names of our new Board Members as soon as they are released.

## Schedule of Next Meeting:

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Looking at meeting in conjunction with the Virginia Forestry Association Summit in September. Will put options together and send out a doodle poll of dates.

## Adjournment:

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Chairperson Morgan called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made and seconded to adjourn the June 15, 2021 meeting at 1:20 p.m.. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant