



# Leadership Roundtable Meeting (LRT)

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**May 04, 2021**

Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer moderated the meeting.

## State Forester's Report

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Rob Farrell mentioned the following:

- ◆ Thanked everyone that came out for Arbor Day and tree dedication to Page Hutchinson Friday, April 30.
- ◆ Great work on fires the last weekend of spring fire season.
- ◆ New website has gone live, job well done. A lot of time and effort has gone into it. Thank you to Janet Muncy and all who helped with this huge task.
- ◆ Multiple pieces of legislation, budget item and House Joint Resolution all referring to VDOF doing a study on retention of urban trees during development and not infringing on landowners right to practice forestry.
  - Working through multiple different versions of the enabling legislative.

## Presentations

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- ◆ None

## Change Proposals

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- ◆ None

## Updates

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### COVID-19

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Ed Zimmer mentioned that VDOF has not made any changes to the COVID-19 procedures.

- ◆ The Governor updated the guidelines and increased the number of people allowed to gather.
- ◆ VDOF is not opening up conference rooms to outside guests at this time.

## Website – (Janet Muncy)

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Janet Muncy reviewed the status of the new website.

- ◆ Doing a soft opening and will publicize in a couple weeks.
- ◆ Website has an employee only site (new intranet).

- Passwords will be sent to everyone (check your spam for e-mail).
- Partially set up, essentials have been moved over (Policy and Procedures, Forms, Templates, etc.).
- Please review what is on the old intranet and anything that you need to move over, please review, update and send to Janet Muncy for insertion on the new intranet.
- The old intranet will be removed in the next month or so.
- ◆ There is an Agency Directory that links all field staff to the counties they serve.
  - Phone numbers are listed as primary and secondary.
  - Field staff have their cell phones as primary and office staff have work phones as primary.
  - Please review numbers to ensure correct. Contact Janet Muncy if a correction needs to be made.
  - Support staff will be able to make edits to the Agency Directory in the near future.
  - Janet Muncy and the IT department will handle adding and removing employees.
    - A form is being developed that will be required to add new employees.
- ◆ Procurements and calendar events are now able to be submitted from the website.
  - Additional information will be sent out.
- ◆ If you find any errors or broken links please contact Janet Muncy.

## Round Robin Updates

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### Human Resources (Hector Rivera)

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- ◆ COVID-19 posture remains the same, no changes.
- ◆ Virginia State Employee five percent pay raise.
  - All employees hired by March 10, 2021 will be eligible.
  - Effective date of pay raises will be June 10.
  - July 1 paycheck will reflect the pay raises.
  - Announcement will be put in The Branch.
  - P-14's and firefighters are eligible for pay raise but agency will need to absorb the cost.
- ◆ We have five interns for the summer.
- ◆ Competing for Commonwealth of Virginia Engineering & Science (COVES) Fellowship
  - Identified as one of thirteen agencies eligible to host a fellow.
  - Will put message in The Branch if we receive a fellow.

### Conservation (Terry Lasher)

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- ◆ Four easements are schedule to close by end of June with a total of approximately 1700 acres.
- ◆ Reach out to Karl Didier with any conservation requests.
- ◆ Utilization and Marketing Program Manager has been hired. Sabina Dhungana and will start on May 25.
- ◆ Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provided through the Regulatory Accountability Program \$350,000 over a three year period for Canopy and Turf to Trees Programs.
- ◆ Third Industry Roundtable meeting will be held on May 19 virtually.

### Eastern Region (Bryant Bays)

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- ◆ Planning for two urban forestry planting projects in the Northern Neck for this fall.

- ◆ Application put in by Northern Neck Planning District Commission for a GIS analysis.
- ◆ Costal Forest Resilience Project for the York River watershed is nearing the end of the Threats Analysis phase.
- ◆ Had 53 fires with total of 500 acres for the spring fire season.
- ◆ Out of 89 prescribed fires approved, 23 were completed or partially completed.
- ◆ Hired a forester for the Blackwater work area; Edward Richards starts May 25.
- ◆ Interviewed for the Capital work area forest technician position.
- ◆ Currently two vacancies; mechanic and a P-14.
- ◆ Two potential retirements in July.

## Nursery (Ed Zimmer for Josh Bennicoff)

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- ◆ Lifting and grading season went great. Fumigation is done and the seeding process has begun.
- ◆ Identifying the equipment that will be purchased for the Augusta Forestry Center (AFC).

## GIS (Parik Patel for Jason Braunstein)

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- ◆ Helped Secretary Ring and Ag partners by developing a web application that compares American farms under threat layer and a Conserve Virginia data layer. Will meet in June.
- ◆ Continue to prioritize addressing the IFRIS bugs and enhancements with Timmons.
- ◆ Last IFRIS release updated the My Property Inventory Report.

## Forest Health (Lori Chamberlin)

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- ◆ If anyone sees signs of gypsy moth and fall canker worm let the Forest Health staff know.
- ◆ Reviewing the southern pine beetle surveys. Will send out a report once all samples have been reviewed.
- ◆ Actively taking applications for the emerald ash borer cost-share program. Any organization in Virginia and only landowners in the Eastern region are eligible. This is the last year of this program.

## Finance (John Colligan for Fernanda Crandol)

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- ◆ Budget is in good shape for the rest of the year.
- ◆ Goochland and Fluvanna tractor sheds are officially open. Hanover and Powhatan tractor sheds are next. Cost of construction may delay those sheds.

## Research (Jerre Creighton)

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- ◆ Loblolly pine control pollination effort at New Kent came in over target. 31,000 bags of flowers were pollinated which will be VDOF's CP cone crop for 2022.
- ◆ Project underway to clean out the older white pine seed production orchard in anticipation of picking cones in the upcoming years.
- ◆ Have currently sewn 10,000 American chestnuts at AFC.
- ◆ In partnership with the Virginia Chapter of the Chestnut Foundation, a portable greenhouse has been purchased and moved to AFC for chestnut propagation.
- ◆ Continuing data analysis and writing reports.

## Forest Resource Management (Dean Cumbia)

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- ◆ Training continues with the Hardwood Forest Habitat Initiative and new employees with forest management planning.
- ◆ Developing hardwood demonstration areas and refining the hardwood assessment tool.
- ◆ Will have an intern or two in the Southside Southeast area.

## Fire Emergency and Response (Dave Houttekier)

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- ◆ Several significant fires this fire season. Goshen fires occurred on last day of spring fire season.
- ◆ May is a busy month for fire training.

## Urban and Community Forestry (Lara Johnson)

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- ◆ The Urban Forestry Community Policy and Procedures have been updated.
- ◆ Very busy with Earth Day and Arbor Day. Lots of trees were planted.
- ◆ Issuing the Virginia Tree Circling Water Awards.

## Fire and Emergency Response (John Miller)

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- ◆ Training demo on VDOF new IGNIS firing system. Drone based platform that uses “dragon balls” dropped by drone to ignite fire for the purposes of both prescribed burning and burn-out in support of suppression.
- ◆ May 1, Pulaski County Emergency Management, in conjunction with numerous local cooperators and the VDOF, completed Virginia’s largest Community Wildfire Preparedness Day event.
- ◆ VDOF’s Incident Management Team (IMT) has provided approximately 120 continuous days of assistance to Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) Virginia Department of Health (VDH) in support of Virginia’s vaccination efforts. VDOF’s IMT personnel will be demobilized from the effort on May 7.

## Fleet (John Miller for Danny Fortune)

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- ◆ Danny is now up to speed with the Fire Fighter Program (FFP) and Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) programs and will be working on getting rid of existing old equipment that is not in use and actively screen for some new equipment based on fire department requests.

## Information Technology (Parik Patel)

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- ◆ Building a new server for Quick Books.
- ◆ All managers who have shared mailboxes for the website should have access.
- ◆ Interviewing for Database Analyst.
- ◆ Computer refreshes running slower than expected.
- ◆ Actively working towards hiring a third party consultant to look at IFRIS for options.

## FIA (John Pemberton)

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- ◆ VDOF was one of six out of the 13 southern state FIA programs that met the grant billing and production goals for the last quarter. Kudos to Jackie Newton and the field crews for achieving that.
- ◆ In the last two months, the inventory completion rate has gone from 30 percent to 50 percent, a significant jump.

- ◆ Four FIA wage employees participating in fire training.

## Water Quality (Matt Poirot)

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- ◆ 2020 Best Management Practices (BMP) monitoring report is on the new website.
- ◆ East Coast Logging Expo is coming up at the end of May.
  - Two virtual SHARP Logger classes will be held.
- ◆ Funded three new drones and have two new drone pilots in the Eastern Region.

## Public Information (Michelle Stoll)

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- ◆ Community Wildfire Awareness Month
- ◆ Media advisory to Central Virginia on the Red Flag warning.
- ◆ Working on videos for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Reforestation Timberland (RT).
- ◆ Will be putting out videos and announcements about the new website.
- ◆ Thanks to everyone who continues to support Field Notes with pictures and stories.
- ◆ Thanks to everyone that came out and participated in the event for Page Hutchinson.
- ◆ The Project Learning Tree (PLT) position will be advertised as part-time.
- ◆ Raina Defonza will be leaving VDOF June 2 and relocating to New Jersey.

## State Lands Coordinator (Ed Stoots)

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- ◆ A report on the Stewardship and Status of Virginia's State-Owned Historic Property: 2021-2023 by the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) mentioned Zoar State Forest and other state-owned lands.
- ◆ Internal surveillance audit coming up.
- ◆ External surveillance audit will be in June with the focus on the northern State Forests in Bourassa and Moors Creek.
- ◆ Sold the second timber sale from Catawba Hospital.
- ◆ There are two positions in recruit; one to manage Charlotte and Prince Edward-Gallion State Forests and another to manage northern state forests and help with state-owned lands.
- ◆ Having discussions with local community colleges to find ways to help with demonstrations and training.
- ◆ Charlotte Phase 2 work is progressing.

## Central Region (Robbie Talbert)

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- ◆ Forty-three exemption burns were completed this spring for a total of 2,800 acres.
  - Sixteen of those burns were conducted by VDOF personnel.
- ◆ Spring fire season brought 112 fires on 302 acres.
- ◆ Attended 12 Arbor Day events and supplied materials to 19 Tree City USA communities across the region.
- ◆ Ten VDOF personnel went to Western Region to assist with the Goshen fire.
- ◆ Engine refresher trainings coming up.
  - Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest on June 8.
  - Rockingham County on June 10.

- ◆ Dan River work area Forester Tom Burke will be leaving VDOF to pursue a position with NRCS. Last day to be determined.

## Western Region (Chris Thomsen)

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- ◆ Total acreage of Goshen fire is 170 acres, and the cause is still undetermined.
- ◆ Blue Ridge work area has two vacancies and Mountain Valley has a forester vacancy.

Ed Zimmer thanked everybody for their continued hard work. Stay safe and be vigilant with COVID-19.

*Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant*