



Leadership Roundtable Meeting (LRT)

July 27, 2021

State Forester's Report

Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer opened the meeting. Rob Farrell was unable to attend.

- ◆ There is a surplus of state budget funds from the COVID Cares Act and the FY21 budget.
 - Looking for any ideas/suggestions on items that are needed or would be helpful to have.
 - Send items to an executive staff member to be placed on the wish list for review and prioritization.
- ◆ Big thanks to all for the great response and support for staff going out West to assist in the wildfire incidents.
 - Looks like it will be ongoing through October.

Presentations

An online and mobile mapping application for visitors to explore Charlotte State Forest – Claire Sherwood, Intern

Terry Lasher introduced Claire Sherwood a student at JMU working with the conservation team as a summer intern.

- ◆ Claire demonstrated an interactive online map that she created for the Charlotte State Forest.
- ◆ Map contains many interesting facts and information about the State Forest.
- ◆ Map is compatible for mobile phones.
- ◆ This format will be adapted for other state forests.

The internship program is growing every year with great participants and opportunities.

Change Proposals

- ◆ None

Updates

Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL) – Hector Rivera

- ◆ In accordance with [DHRM Policy 4.52 Public Health Emergency Leave](#) (PHEL) is activated only when there is a Public Health Emergency declaration, which expired June 30, 2021. Beginning July 1st, employees who

are ineligible for remote work and who must quarantine due to known exposure to COVID-19 must **use their available personal, annual, or compensatory leave to cover the absence.**

- ◆ Any employee who tests positive for the COVID-19 virus and becomes symptomatic or ill should use sick leave or other available personal leave and, if necessary and eligible, file a short-term disability claim.
- ◆ A one-time 8 hours of PHEL exception can be provided as an incentive to employees who need to make appointments for vaccinations and/or for their recovery after vaccination; if you have not been vaccinated and are planning on scheduling your appointment, please reach-out to [Tammi Oliva](#) for guidance and approval.

DHRM Policy 1.05, Alcohol and Other Drugs – Hector Rivera

Hector discussed the coming updates to the DHRM Policy 1.05, Alcohol and Other Drugs.

- ◆ The state still requires a negative drug test to be considered for employment.
- ◆ Random drug testing for all state employees will begin when the new DHRM Policy 105 is published..
 - Employees that test positive will be treated as substance abuse.
- ◆ Reminder, according to federal law marijuana is still illegal.
 - Commercial Driver Licenses (CDL) holders are held to federal laws to maintain CDL Licenses.

VDOF Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan – Hector Rivera

Hector discussed the next steps for the VDOF DEI Strategic Plan.

- ◆ This plan is looking at how to have diversity and equity for everyone in the next four years.
- ◆ Our mission is to protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for all Virginians .
 - Need to positively engage with, effectively communicate with and influence and increasingly diverse population in Virginia.
 - Need to establish VDOF as one that reflects the diversity of Virginia at all levels and ensure that we enable the full potential of all VDOF employees.
- ◆ Four goals for this plan are:
 - Recruit and Retain: Create and sustain an equitable and inclusive organizational climate.
 - Engagement: Achieve and sustain greater diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the forestry enterprise and all stakeholders (workforce, communities and partners)
 - Education and Awareness: Create a robust instructive and co-educational experience to advance diversity, equity and inclusion internally and externally.
 - Progress and Accountability: Develop, implement, assess and report on DEI activities.
- ◆ The DEI Strategic Plan will be incorporated in the Policy and Procedures.

Round Robin Updates

Fire and Emergency Response (John Miller)

- ◆ Western fire activity – the fourth interagency crew left on July 17, another crew will be leaving August 17.
 - 47 VDOF staff (full-time and part-time) so far have been assisting with the fire out West.
- ◆ There will be a \$250.00 boot allowance this year. Details will be announced in the Branch.
- ◆ GSA has a version of crew boss pants, new style. Ordering procedures for these will also be announced in the Branch.

- ◆ Three to five courses will be offered in the fall Fire Academy. Information will be forthcoming.
- ◆ Certified Prescribed Burn Manager Course will be September 24-25 and will be virtual. Contact Fred Turck for information.
- ◆ Pack test is back to a normal basis at this time.

Fleet (John Miller for Danny Fortune)

- ◆ Just received the valves for the transport ramps and the Headquarters shop will be helping put those in.

Eastern Region (Bryant Bays)

- ◆ Site prep burn was done in Gloucester County using a drone.
- ◆ Heather Dowdy put a new group together called the New Employee Resource Group.
 - Getting new employees together at informal virtual meetings with guest speakers to meet other staff, ask questions and learn helpful information.
- ◆ New mechanic started July 26. Two forester positions to be filled.
- ◆ New Employee Orientation scheduled for October 12-14 at New Kent Forestry Center.
- ◆ A regional tractor training is scheduled for September 28.

Nursery (Josh Bennicoff)

- ◆ Loblolly Nursery inventory has been completed. We have approximately 23 -24 million seedlings to be held for our contractors this year.
- ◆ The germination on the short leaf containerized seedling is going well.
- ◆ Vaughn-Bassett is starting up their 1-for-1 program again.

GIS (Parik Patel for Jason Braunstein)

- ◆ Continuing to help Secretary Ring with Ag layers.

Forest Health (Lori Chamberlin)

- ◆ The elm zig-zag sawfly has been spotted for the first time in the United States in Virginia.
 - Please notify the forest health staff if you see any in your area.
 - So far have only been seen on Siberian elm.
- ◆ Beech leaf disease has been found in Prince William County, Virginia.
 - Caused by a nematode.
 - Possible fatality of tree in five years.
 - Doing a survey to see where all in Virginia it is.
- ◆ Spotted lanternfly has been found in Albemarle County.
 - Lots of outreach material available, contact the forest health staff.
- ◆ Some gypsy moth has been found in Virginia. It's possible that gypsy moth will be on the rise next year.

Administration (John Colligan)

- ◆ Fernanda Crandol has left VDOF as of July 23. John Colligan will fill in until her replacement can be hired.

- ◆ The headquarters phone system has failed. Actively pursuing options, currently phones are being forwarded to cell phones.
- ◆ Please send any budget suggestions to your executive staff representative. All ideas will be considered.

Research (Jerre Creighton)

- ◆ Collecting white pine pinecones for next year's crop.
- ◆ Loblolly cone crop is light this year and longleaf crop is light to moderate.
- ◆ The American Chestnut Restoration Program is becoming very active.
 - The propagation greenhouse shed is almost complete
 - Hosting the pro-activity cooperative in October.

Forest Resource Management (Dean Cumbia)

- ◆ Hardwood Initiative assessment tool is being tested.
- ◆ Piloting the Hardwood Incentive program.
- ◆ Prescribed burning is increasing in productivity.
- ◆ Forest Resource Training Academy scheduled for September 21-23.

Utilization and Markets (Sabina Dhungana)

- ◆ Planning a Forest Products Partners meeting for September 2 to discuss their needs and learn from them to help them.
- ◆ Working with the Public Information team on the Forest Products Week celebration.

Finance (Faye DiFazio)

- ◆ Added to cash reserves for the FY21.
- ◆ VDOF is in a good budget position.

Fleet (Danny Fortune)

- ◆ Voyager Cards are getting ready to expire at end of month.
 - Problem with chip cards, replacement cards will be swipe cards.
 - If you have voyager cards not being used, let Danny know and he will cancel them.
- ◆ Pool vehicles are not receiving notices from VCC when service is due.
 - Please make sure vehicles are serviced at least every six months.
- ◆ No longer a preventive maintenance (PM) rule for the state forests and nurseries. All light duty vehicles in the agency require an oil change once a year or every 6,000 miles.

Urban and Community Forestry (Lara Johnson)

- ◆ In partnership with the Science Museum of Virginia, Capital One, the Virginia Foundation of Independent Colleges (VFIC), VDOF participated in data collection for the 2021 Heat Island Study.
 - This was the largest study of its kind in the country.
 - Data is being processed and will be used by several colleges and VDOF.
 - Multi-state virtual urban meeting coming up.

- Draft analysis on land uses for the Chesapeake Bay coming out, should be available to public in February.

Assistant State Forester (Terry Lasher)

- ◆ Sentinel Landscape moving forward with a full application in August.
- ◆ State Lands Water Implementation Plan (WIP) working on a memorandum of understanding (MOU).
- ◆ Governor announced some investment into drinking water and water supplies for Eco Systems, Natural Resources and public waste water facilities.

Website (Janet Muncy)

- ◆ Website going well, working with Google to update links to our new site.
- ◆ Business directory going well currently 63 businesses signed up.
- ◆ Remember if you have a program page on the website as changes occur please report to Janet.
- ◆ Submit upcoming events directly on the intranet self-serve calendar.
- ◆ Old intranet deadline is August 1. If there is any information on the site that needs to be on the new intranet, please update the information and submit to Janet for the new intranet.
- ◆ Working on the 2022 calendar, Sustainability/Tree Farm theme.

Information Technology (Parik Patel)

- ◆ The IFRIS analyst is working on their final report analysis on the IFRIS system.
- ◆ A help desk position has been posted for hire.
- ◆ There is a current computer chip shortage.

FIA (John Pemberton)

- ◆ Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) program is 78% complete of the current year.
- ◆ Out of the 13 Southern states in the FIA program, VDOF was one of four that met or exceeded the target for production grant management.

Water Quality (Matt Poirot)

- ◆ Farm Service Agency (FSA) released a Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers Program.
 - Information has been posted on the website.
 - Deadline is October 15 to participate.
- ◆ The maximum Logging BMP Cost-Share Assistance Program amount has been increased from \$2,500 to \$4,000 per parcel. The new maximum has increased from \$5,000 to \$8,000 is a portable bridge is purchased as part of the project.

Human Resources (Hector Rivera)

- ◆ Will resend email in regards to a hybrid or limited telework schedule.

Public Information (Michelle Stoll)

- ◆ For the Reforestation Timberland (RT) 50th celebration:
 - Five major supporters of RT will receive a special plaque made out of an RT pine that is 50 years old.

- Virginia Loggers Association, Virginia Forestry Association, Virginia Farm Bureau, Virginia Forest Products Association, Virginia Agribusiness Council.
- Social Media and a featured video on RT.
- Framed RT Resolution
- ◆ Public Information Specialist position closes soon.
- ◆ Cindy Frenzel has started as the new Part-time Project Learning Tree Coordinator for VDOF.
- ◆ Working on sending out a news release in regards to VDOF's response to fires out West.
- ◆ Forest Products Week is coming up.
- ◆ Shared Stewardship Agreement signing will be September 24 at Green Pastures near Douthat State Park.
- ◆ Ribbon cutting for Charlotte State Forest will be October 19.

State Lands Coordinator (Ed Stoots)

- ◆ State Forest are Tree Farm and SFI recertified for another year.
- ◆ Shape files have been submitted to Natural Capital Exchange (NCX) for evaluation and enrollment into the carbon program. Approximately 67,200 state forest acres will be analyzed for enrollment.

Central Region (Justin Barnes for Robbie Talbert)

- ◆ Zoe Bergman forester for Rappahannock work area starts August 10.
- ◆ Had interviews for three forest technician positions.
- ◆ Posting for three vacant area forester positions next week.

Western Region (Chris Thompson)

- ◆ Interviewed for two area forester positions

Ed Zimmer thanked everybody for their continued hard work.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant