



Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting

March 1, 2022

State Forester's Report

Rob Farrell opened the meeting.

- ◆ No announcement on reappointment of the State Forester yet.
- ◆ Reformatting the Leadership Roundtable (LRT) to the Senior Management Team (SMT)
 - Everyone's time is valuable, and it was taking a lot of time with the number of individuals on it.
 - Decided to go with a smaller group to make the best use of time.
 - This will require the SMT group to disseminate what is discussed in these meetings to staff and reach out before meetings to bring updates and questions to this group.
 - Always open to suggestions on how to do a better job of keeping folks informed.
 - SMT is not a decision-making body. It's a place where everyone has a chance to weigh in and then the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) makes the decision based on the discussions with the SMT.
- ◆ Headquarters Staff - please ensure the Headquarters Itinerary on the H:\ drive is filled out weekly. With VDOF's flexibility, it is important to know where employees are.

Presentations

None

Change Proposals

None

Updates

- ◆ VIP Visit – Rob Farrell
 - Secretary Matt Lohr, Deputy Secretary Beth Green, and Chief Deputy Parker Slaybaugh will be visiting the VDOF Headquarters on March 15th before the Board of Forestry meeting.
 - We would like to have a good presence in the building.
- ◆ Public Information Director – Rob Farrell
 - This position is high on the priority list. Working on filling the position as soon as possible.
 - Plan on keeping the position very similar to what it has been; strategically getting VDOF messages out to public.

- ◆ General Assembly Legislation – Rob Farrell
 - Virginia Forestry Association Executive Director Corey Connors is doing a lot of great things.
 - The Forest Sustainability Fund was established to reimburse localities for revenue they lost through Land Use taxation of forest lands.
 - VDOF will be responsible for developing a program and a plan for localities to apply for funds.
 - A bill to give a tax credit for landowner's share of the Hardwood Cost-share Program is also set to be signed by the Governor.
 - Lots of Urban Forestry legislation and discussion of VDOF's role in Urban Forestry.
- ◆ General Assembly Budget – Rob Farrell and John Colligan
 - Thanks to Secretary Ring and a great revenue year for the state, it's a great year for VDOF with budget amendments.
 - The urban forestry and state forest funding requests are the only two that were adjusted. All other VDOF budget request items are still in.
 - There will be either a 4% or 5% employee raise for the next two years.
- ◆ Reopening New Kent Nursery – Ed Zimmer
 - Reopening the New Kent Nursery will provide us the ability to provide up to 9 million hardwood and 7 million loblolly seedlings.
 - First step will be to hire a consultant to evaluate the property and buildings.
 - Hope to receive a plan by fall to begin reopening.
 - Next step will be to hire one or two staff to implement the plan and get everything up and running.
 - Goal is to be producing seedlings in 2025.
 - Virginia is producing 25% of seedlings provided by state nurseries in the entire nation.
- ◆ Agency Surplus – John Colligan
 - With position vacancies, an equipment surplus sale, and rearranging how certain bills are paid, it has left the agency with a one-time surplus of funds.
 - Funding for research, transponder updates for the dozers, technology improvements for Headquarters training room and board room, camera and video equipment for Public Information, improvements for all three regions, and updated lab equipment are some of the things for which these funds will be used.
- ◆ Headquarters Phone System – John Colligan
 - Replacing VDOF's phone system at Headquarters with a Verizon Voiceover IP through VITA.
 - The new system will have modern capabilities. Ability to download an app and not required to have a landline.
 - Would like to put in a limited number of landlines (main line, program areas).
 - John will send a list to the SMT with projected landline areas.
- ◆ Agency Calendar – Rob Farrell, Janet Muncy
 - We need a central agency calendar for when things are being scheduled so people can see what has already been scheduled.
 - It only works if people use it. How do we get people to use it?
 - Janet reviewed that there is an event calendar on the intranet that all employees are able to submit events.
 - Ed requested that Janet send instructions on how to use the events calendar.

- Ed will send a message out in regards to putting events on the calendar and the instructions on how to.
- Staff should be using the intranet to access policy and procedures, forms, templates, as well as events.
- ◆ Grants Management Project Update – John Colligan
 - We are in the process of putting VDOF forms and processes into the new grant system.
 - Once all programs are in, the program managers will test the system to ensure everything works as needed.
- ◆ IFRIS Transition to ESRI – John Colligan, Parik Patel
 - Working on moving from IFRIS to ESRI, a more cost-efficient system.
 - Transition will take approximately two years.
- ◆ Surplus Funds, Regional Forester Research Assignments – Ed Zimmer
 - Brad Carico is researching the use and need of tablets for staff. Information is due to Ed Zimmer by May 15.
 - Bryant Bays is researching retrofitting all the transports with backup cameras. Information is due to Ed Zimmer by April 1.
 - Bryant Bays is looking at VDOFs master keys, who needs universal access and how many locks are needed. Information is due to Ed Zimmer by July 1.
 - Robbie Talbert is researching where we need office cleaning and yard work contracts. Information is due to Ed Zimmer by April 1.
 - Robbie Talbert is researching ATV and UTV needs. Information is due to Ed Zimmer by April 1.
- ◆ All-Agency Meeting Plans – Ed Zimmer for Hector Rivera
 - There will be an All-Agency Meeting 9 am – 3:45 pm on June 29 at UVA Darden School of Business in Charlottesville. Everyone is expected to be there!
 - There will be limited opportunity for lodging.
 - Planned events currently:
 - Morning session will be all VDOF.
 - Eight one-hour breakout sessions in the afternoon.
 - Please solicit ideas for the breakout sessions and send ideas to Hector.
 - Agency photo, exhibitors, lunch and snacks
- ◆ Annual Forest Management Academy Plans – Dean Cumbia
 - There is a planning committee working on developing an enhanced training for field foresters, forest technicians, state forest and nursery staff.
 - Considering two separate events.
 - A Western Region event that will be hardwood focused.
 - An Eastern / Central Region event that will be pine and hardwood focused.
 - Both will have forest health and longleaf subject matters.
 - Possible dates are September 12-16 (East/Central) and September 26-30 (Western).
- ◆ Watershed/Stewardship Positions – Terry Lasher
 - The position description and job announcement are ready to go. Waiting on signed paper work from Secretary Lohr.
 - The next step will be setting up interviews for applicants.
 - There will be one position per region. A great opportunity for VDOF staff.

- ◆ Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Funding – Rob Farrell
 - Congress has passed and there will be billions of dollars coming to forestry. Much of it focused on catastrophic fires in the west.
 - Money was assigned to mitigation grants, forest thinning, and other things.
 - Congress left \$200 million for the State Foresters to decide what to do with it.
 - The State Foresters have decided to implement forest actions plans with the funds.
 - \$200 million divided over the next five years allocated to the existing core programs: fire, forest management, forest health, and urban and community forestry.
 - Each year, each state gets to decide what percentage goes to what program.
 - The USDA Forest Service is working on having no match for these funds.
 - Think about what we would do with these funds that won't require a match.
- ◆ Jason Braunstein has moved to the Fire and Emergency Response Branch in a GIS/IT supporting role.
- ◆ Jim Pugh has moved under the supervision of the Utilization and Marketing Branch supporting the Conservation Branch.
- ◆ Lisa Deaton is heading the uniform committee. If you have any ideas or suggestions on uniforms, reach out to her or the uniform committee member in your region.
- ◆ Information Technology – 73 laptops are being replaced. Working on replacing all leased copiers and printers with purchased ones.
- ◆ Public Information
 - We have myvaforest.org domain that is currently not being used. Currently redirecting to dof.virginia.gov but could be used for specific campaign for forest landowners, state forests, or other ideas. If you have ideas, please let Janet Muncy know.
- ◆ Western Region
 - Have been trying to lease the houses at Matthews State Forest but that didn't work out. Current plan is to lease the Matthews State Forest Office out to the local NRCS and VDOF is moving to the Matthews State Forest houses.
- ◆ Conservation
 - Forestry Inventory Analysis (FIA) has moved from the Forest Resource Management Branch to Utilization and Marketing Branch.
 - Forest Carbon Symposium will be held in June.
 - Easement monitoring is in the field this year.
- ◆ Finance
 - EVA's new platform will be online May 1. New training will be required for some staff. As more information comes in, Lauren Sumner will let you know.
 - Quick quotes will be stopping on April 15 and will not be available until May 2. If you have any quick quotes, please get them to Corey Richie prior to April 15.
 - Cardinal Human Resource module is on hold until fall of 2022. Will keep you informed of updates.
- ◆ Future SMT meetings
 - Next meeting April 5
 - Reschedule May 3 to May 10
 - Reschedule June 7 to June 28

- Cancel July 5

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, executive assistant