



Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting

June 28, 2022

State Forester's Report

Rob Farrell opened the meeting.

- ◆ Introduced Public Information Director Greg Bilyeu to VDOF.
 - Greg worked as the communications director for Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and has worked at a few other state agencies as well.
 - Looking at enhancing communications to everyone.
 - Changing how and what we send to the Secretary in the weekly report.
 - Looking at changing The Branch to benefit staff better.
 - Will be sending out an internal communications survey for feedback soon.
- ◆ Ed Zimmer is conducting interviews for the facilities manager position.
- ◆ Terry Lasher is attending the first solar mitigation workgroup meeting at DEQ.
- ◆ Posting the chief of administration position.
- ◆ All-Agency Meeting on Wednesday.
 - Take opportunity to meet and talk with others.
 - Dress code is business casual or field uniform.
- ◆ Rob Farrell and Ed Zimmer are on leave next week.
- ◆ The new state telework policy begins July 1.
- ◆ Headquarters staff itinerary needs to be filled out to account for where they will be.
- ◆ Working on creating a VDOF east office space in the Richmond area.
- ◆ Budget was approved.
 - Received everything asked for in the budget except general funds for urban and community forestry.
 - Lots of opportunities in the Fire and Emergency Response Branch; Fred Turck's position and new drone/training position.
 - Received three forester positions.
 - One million dollars for Logger Best Management Practices (BMP) Program.
 - Received funds to do something with IFRIS.
 - Received funds to do office IT upgrades for better internet connection.
 - IT security position.
 - Received \$400,000 for state forest recreation upgrades.

- Reopening New Kent Nursery and replacing the seedling coolers around the state.
- Study of where the fire towers are and who owns them.
- Spending authority to buy Phase 3 of Charlotte State Forest.
- Received \$2.5 million to purchase property that will connect Conway Robinson State Forest with the Battlefield, contingent on the county securing matching funds.
- Forest Sustainability Fund to reimburse localities for forest land use.
 - Use funds to research how much localities lose through forest land use.
 - Set up procedures to disperse Forest Sustainability Funds to localities.
 - Distribute funds to localities the have forest land use.
- ◆ Several studies have been assigned to VDOF.
 - Dean Cumbia and Todd Groh are working on the Forest Sustainability Fund.
 - Terry Lasher is working on how to mitigate forest and farmland being lost to solar.
 - Economic assessment of the forest.
 - Way to justify burning biomass for energy.
 - Urban tree during construction study.
 - Riparian Forest Buffer Strategic Plan for the state.
- ◆ Regional Reorganization
 - We evaluate every position that comes open to ensure it is the right position going forward.
 - Currently, five of 22 senior area forester (SAF) positions are open, presenting a good opportunity to evaluate this position.
 - Robbie Talbert and the regional foresters discussed the SAF position and came up with going back to districts vs. work areas.
 - 11 Districts – three in Western Region, four in Eastern Region, and four in Central Region, led by 11 district foresters.
 - District foresters will be full-time supervisors focused on supervision, training, development, and mentorship of field employees. They will report to the deputy regional foresters.
 - Interested SAFs will be interviewed for the first set of 6-8 district forester positions.
 - Current SAFs that don't become district foresters will return to area foresters and retain their current pay.
 - This reorganization will be announced at the All-Agency Meeting and go into effect on October 1.
 - The idea behind this reorganization is give field folks full-time supervisors to develop leaders and field staff.
 - Will be putting more full-time staff in the field to spread the workload.
 - First six positions will be a panel process for current SAFs and water quality engineers only. Remaining five will be open for agency-only applications.
 - The focus is emphasizing on-the ground accomplishments.

Dean Cumbia spoke about the upcoming Forest Management Academies.

- ◆ Focused training for VDOF field staff that have some experience and desire to attend.
- ◆ Two academies will be held in September.
 - Forest Management Academy – West – September 27 – 29 at Mountain Lake Biological Station, Pembroke, VA – Focus on hardwood and wildlife.
 - Forest Management Academy – East – September 13 – 15 at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, Toano, VA – Focus on pine and wildlife.
- ◆ Will have 50 spaces available for each academy.

- ◆ These academies are being funded with the savings from the wave of retirements we had and difference of salaries for new hires.

Presentations

None

Change Proposals

None

Updates

Western Region (Brad Carico)

- ◆ Western Region will hold a Fall Fire Academy. Dates to be determined. Will be open to VDOF full- and part-time staff.

Eastern Region (Bryant Bays)

- ◆ Will hold first aid and UTV Training this summer.

Fire and Emergency Response (John Miller)

- ◆ Looking at doing centralized fire dispatch at headquarters for fall fire season.
- ◆ Quite a few opportunities for federal fires out west.

Information Technology (Parik Patel)

- ◆ Going back to Microsoft and moving away from Google. Have until June 2023 to convert.
- ◆ Ember Jenson filled the Helpdesk vacancy, and the junior database analyst position closes this week.

Human Resources (Hector Rivera)

- ◆ Pay raise will go in effect in July and be on the August 1 paycheck. Anyone hired on or before April 1 will receive pay raise.
- ◆ There will be a \$1,000 bonus in December.
- ◆ Tree Improvement Workshop on July 12 and 14 at New Kent.
- ◆ UTV Training went well. Regions will receive some extra money for UTV training equipment.
- ◆ Submit training requests to HR by mid-July.
- ◆ Plan to have CDL training at New Kent and possibly one day at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College.

Central Region (Rodney Newlin)

- ◆ Filled the Dan River forest technician slot as of August 10.

Minutes recorded by Executive Assistant Mary Weaver.