



# Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting DWR Facility in Richmond

**February 7, 2023**

## State Forester's Report

Rob Farrell opened the meeting.

- ◆ Thanked DWR for hosting at their building in Richmond.
- ◆ Welcomed David Powell to the SMT as the District Forester representative.
- ◆ Reviewed potential budget items from the General Assembly.
  - Potential Tree Canopy study
  - Policy Analyst position
  - Funding for invasive species positions.
    - If funding is received VDOF will be the leader.
  - State employee raises will be 5% plus possibly an additional 1 or 2% and may also include a December bonus.
- ◆ VDOF personnel number is 248 employees if every position is filled. Currently 15 vacancies – 6%.
- ◆ Strategic Plan needs to be updated by end of the fiscal year.
- ◆ This Administration business philosophy is Objectives and Key Results (OKRs).
  - Each secretariat was asked to come up with some OKRs. Secretary Lohr asked us to come up with our own related to forestry.
    - Pine Sawmills – new or expansions
    - Riparian Buffers
- ◆ Potential Budget Items
  - Safety Training items (fire extinguisher training, stretchers, CDL training, respirators, ergonomic desks, etc.)
- ◆ 4pm burn signs
  - Internal message of last flip of 4pm signs.
  - Signs will be coming down and other methods will be used to notify the 4pm law.
- ◆ On-call bonus
  - At end of spring fire season there will be a \$1,000 bonus for those individuals who were on call.

- Message will be sent out today.
- Requirement for bonus is:
  - Completion of S – 130/190
  - Meet physical fitness requirements.
  - Be with agency entire spring fire season.
  - Bonus available as long as funding allows.

## Presentations

---

### Page Up Training – John Habel

- ◆ John Habel (chief human resources officer) explained and demonstrated the new applicant tracking system for hiring new employees.

### Watershed Program – Caitlin Verdu

- ◆ Caitlin Verdu (watershed program manager) reviewed last quarter results and upcoming expectations of the watershed program.
  - First quarter results for the Watershed Program (Oct 1 - Dec 1, 2022)
    - 40% towards annual buffer establishment goal.
    - As of December 31, planted 135 acres out of 350-acre goal. 15% increase over the past five-year average.
  - Department of Forestry Buffer Action Plan
    - Discussed the creation of the VDOF Forestry Action Plan.
      - Challenges of getting buffers on the ground.
      - Possible solutions to challenges.
  - Creating a Virginia Buffer Action Plan
    - Advertised a Request for Proposal (RFP) a couple of times to hire a facilitator to create this plan and organize meetings with our partner agencies.
    - US Forest Service has agreed to fund this effort. Have not seen the funds yet.
    - Would like to readvertise RFP to get action plan moving forward.
    - Request VDOF to fund.

## Change Proposals

---

None

## Updates

---

### Western Region (Brad Carico)

- ◆ Forestland owners workshop coming up Saturday, February 11.
- ◆ Forestry 101 workshop was held last week in Galax.
- ◆ Two arson fires were set February 6 in Blackwater.
- ◆ Conducting equipment inspections.

- ◆ Eight open positions

### Eastern Region (Bryant Bays)

- ◆ Eight open positions
- ◆ 4pm exemption season, received 105 applications.
- ◆ Regional meeting tomorrow, February 8 at New Kent Conference Center.
  - Focus will be on fire training.
- ◆ Hosting a Learn and Burn event on May 12, in Wakefield.
- ◆ Need direction on using chart fields, would like a job aid to use chart fields.
  - Finance is working on reevaluating chart fields and looking at conducting a virtual meeting and training for supervisors.
  - A group will be together to discuss best options for chart fields.
  - Will send a message to program managers by Monday, February 13.
- ◆ Would like to look at replacing the Master Keys.

### Central Region (Robbie Talbert)

- ◆ Currently have three vacancies
- ◆ Working on having localized consulting forester meetings in May or June.
- ◆ Receiving a lot of questions on the Northern Long-Eared Bat.
  - Would like some talking points for the field.
    - We have no information at this time and should not make decisions.
    - Expecting clarification by March 31.

### District Forester Representative (David Powell)

- ◆ District Foresters are settling into their new position.
- ◆ So many new employees, difficult to have a cohesive training schedule.
- ◆ Need to invest in training wisely for the agency.
  - A group of district foresters are going to meet with the Agency Safety, Compliance and Fire Training Officer and discuss best training strategies.

### Information Technology (Parik Patel)

- ◆ Tablet needs - Regional Foresters will let Parik know how many tablets are needed.
- ◆ ESRI is working on the Water Quality module and will be ready by end of March.
  - Page design will be done at end of this month.
- ◆ IFRIS announcement will be coming out in regard to:
  - Updating the password according to VITA requirements
  - Removing the time sheet entry portion.
- ◆ Conference Room AV Updates
  - Waiting on one piece of equipment and will be ready to install by May.

- ◆ Copiers and Printers
  - Seven copiers are coming and will be installed next week for Headquarters.
  - Forty printers and multifunctional copiers are coming for regions.
- ◆ Phones
  - New phone system for Headquarters is coming soon.
- ◆ Wi-Fi
  - Wiring scheduled for New Kent on Thursday, February 9.
- ◆ Security Training
  - Everyone has completed the security training.

## Finance (Lauren Sumner)

- ◆ New Web Grants System
  - Secure system access portal is a phased-in process.
  - The Forest Sustainability Fund program has been implemented.
  - Virginia Trees for Clean Water opens on January 20.
  - Volunteer Fire Department is scheduled for mid-February.
  - Urban & Community Forestry programs will be next.
- ◆ Over 1,000 1099's were sent out for cost-share programs.
- ◆ The Procurement Officer position has been posted.
- ◆ New eVa platform is working well and user friendly.

## Fire and Emergency Response (Ed Zimmer)

- ◆ Outlook of weather for the spring fire season
  - Warmer than average, normal participation is expected.
- ◆ Will continue with the centralized weekend dispatch for the whole state during spring and summer.
- ◆ Issue with ordering vehicles - requested 34, received 13.
  - Looking into purchasing used vehicles.
- ◆ Recently acquired 16 drones and 2 Ignis drones.
  - Jason Braunstein is working on a training plan to present to the regions for drone training and pilots.
  - Will distribute to regions, one per district.
- ◆ All new STARs radios are being programmed and will be distributed to regions next week.

## Forest Resource Management (Todd Groh)

- ◆ Would like to keep the internship program going. Helps with retention and recruitment.
- ◆ Potential weeks for the 2023 Forest Management Academy:
  - Week of September 11 or 18. (possible conflict with week of September 18)
  - Would like to incorporate the New Employee Orientation the same week.
  - Possible locations – Sweet Briar College, Natural Bridge Inn
  - Ed Zimmer suggested for the new employees to be out in the field seeing what VDOF does.

- ◆ Forest Health Conference next week in Blacksburg, virtually and in person.
- ◆ Forest Sustainability Development Fund
  - Distribution went smoothly.
  - Awaiting results of post-award survey to see what localities spent funds on.
- ◆ Reforestation of Timberland Committee meets on Thursday, February 9 to discuss rates.
- ◆ Looking at providing containerized shortleaf pine for fall 2024.

### Administration (Amanda Davis)

- ◆ Working on budget amendments to ensure we're on track for end of fiscal year.
- ◆ Working on budget surplus with the executive team.
- ◆ Reviewing the Policy and Procedures to see what updates are needed.
- ◆ Working with Lauren Sumner on the inventory.
- ◆ Looking at 2024 Budget Planning.
- ◆ Created a job aide for e-signatures.
  - Clarify security of which documents can be signed.
  - Send job aide to regional foresters to figure out any issues.

### Office of Communications (Greg Bilyeu)

- ◆ Agency is launching a DOF Alert system for emergency incidents only. (Inclement weather, active shooter, etc).
  - Employees can select primary emails, phone numbers and text messages.
  - Messaging will be going out explaining this system and how to put your preferred information in the portal.

### Human Resources (John Habel)

- ◆ Wildlife Action Plan for 2025
  - Looking for VDOF representatives to be on committee.
    - Joe Rossetti, Todd Groh or Dean Cumbia and need one more.
- ◆ Summer Internship Program
  - Would like to see a more detailed, robust program to use as a recruiting tool.
  - Thinking of a nine-week program.
  - A rotation between three very different and meaningful programs.
  - Something that highlights different career paths at VDOF.
  - Paid with 35-40 hours per week.
  - Six to nine interns with three mentors.
  - It's a significant time investment to give a meaningful experience.
  - Set up a meeting with the Regional Foresters and State Forester to discuss opportunities.

### Assistant State Forester (Terry Lasher)

- ◆ Generation Next Program received the National Family Education Award.
- ◆ Sentinel Landscapes
  - Tier 2 application, submitting final submission on February 14.

- ◆ February 16 is closing date for Charlotte State Forest Phase III.
  - Adds another 334 acres to the State Forest.
- ◆ The Virginia James River Buffer Program received the WIIP Task Fourteen Agency Collaboration Award for cooperating with other state agencies on the state farm.
- ◆ The Virginia Land and Energy Navigator (VaLEN) is a new GIS database map of prime farmland, identifying land with conservations easements, and describing certain electrical grid infrastructure information.
- ◆ Looking for feedback from partners using the new grants Secure Access Portal (SAP). If you hear anything, let Terry know.
- ◆ My Trees Count App version 2 is being worked on and should be out before spring planting season.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, executive assistant