



Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting

June 11, 2024

State Forester's Report

Rob Farrell opened the meeting.

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Have received the strategies and measurements that everyone was working on. Still working on plan and will discuss when it is complete.

Discussion of Participation at Regional Fairs

Just a reminder that we need to be present at regional county fairs as staff is able.

- ◆ We have greatly reduced our attendance at the State Fair with the intention of emphasizing our participation at regional fairs.
- ◆ If it is more beneficial for presence to be at State Fair vs County Fair, we will leave it up to the regions to decide what works best.
- ◆ We just want to make sure we are out and being present.

Presentations

None

Change Proposals

None

Updates

State Forester (Rob Farrell)

- ◆ Met with the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia about creating the Assamoosic State Forest.
 - The Nature Conservancy (TNC) had the Forest Legacy proposal for the State Forest in the tribal funding bucket of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) money.
 - One requirement is a co-stewardship agreement with a tribe.
 - What does it mean to have a state forest that is land conservation for a tribe that we manage through a co-stewardship agreement?
 - Waiting for TNC to let us know how we would develop a co-stewardship agreement and how we incorporate multiple elements of the tribe that don't get along.
- ◆ Terry Lasher is leading the Biomass Advisory Panel

- ◆ Greg Bilyeu is working on a Biomass BMP all-agency webinar for DOF staff, which will be recorded, on June 24.
- ◆ Board of Forestry meets on June 25 in the training room.

Conservation (Terry Lasher)

- ◆ There is a Lunch and Learn on June 27 in Williamsburg hosted by Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF).
 - U&CF staff will talk with the regions about U&CF management programs, funding etc. It's driven by what the area is interested in learning.
- ◆ The Office of Farmland Preservation is coming to the Department of Forestry on July 1.
 - This will create the Office of Working Lands (OWL).
 - Focus will be easements and farmlands.
 - Working on understanding the nuances for farmland and workshops.
 - No significant changes in the first year except for accepting the office and learning the process.
- ◆ The Tidewater Sentinel Landscape Coordinator Mary Bennett started June 10.
 - Her office will be in the VA Tech Center in Hampton with a satellite office at Old Dominion University.
- ◆ The Potomac Sentinel Landscape Coordinator Christopher Moi will start on July 10.
 - His office will be out of the Quantico Marine Base.
- ◆ Received a call from a group working with local economic establishments to develop biomass from forest and agricultural sources to create aviation fuel.
- ◆ Forest Canopy Conservation Plan is coming this fall.
 - Will put on the September agenda.

Chief of Administration (Amanda Davis)

- ◆ Getting close to the end of Fiscal Year 24.
 - Bank of America transactions need to be completed by June 20.
 - Travel needs to be submitted by June 18.
 - Invoices need to be submitted by June 21.
- ◆ Will start working on the State Forrest Regulations review and rewriting in July.
 - Trying to reduce regulations by 25%.
- ◆ Uniform committee is working on a Request for Proposal (RFP) to get a new uniform company.
 - Should be submitted in the next two to three weeks.
- ◆ Working on the space utilization plan for headquarters.
- ◆ Have two GIS interns that started June 10.
 - Dixon Haus working with IT and Aaron Hiss working with finance.
- ◆ SharePoint contractor Elisha Thompson started on June 10.
 - His first project will be the document library. Will come up with a naming mechanism and transfer items from the common drive to the new SharePoint.
 - This will reduce costs and save space on servers.

Central Region (Robbie Talbert)

- ◆ Personnel

- New Pittsylvania Forest Technician Davis Eades starts on June 25.
- Intern Nick Dawson from Mountain Gateway Community College is working with Cole Young for the summer.
- Four vacancies currently in recruitment:
 - Forester in Lunenburg
 - Forester in Orange
 - Forest technician in Madison
 - Forester in Cumberland
- ◆ Spongy moth is widespread and generating a lot of phone calls.
- ◆ Shenandoah District is going to pilot the new time-tracking beginning July 1 for about 10-12 months to see what kind of data we can gather.
- ◆ Have done three out of four User Story sessions. Last one is Thursday, June 13.
 - Will talk with Parik about next steps and getting more current area foresters involved.

Office of Communications (Greg Bilyeu)

- ◆ Working with Forest Health and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to send out a message about spongy moth.
- ◆ Reminder that t-shirts with DOF logo do not replace DOF uniform apparel.
 - Don't wear these to the office unless a special message goes out.
- ◆ A Sharpen the Saw on Carbon Credits will be coming up in July.
 - Rob Farrell and Jennifer Gagnon will be sharing guidance on what to tell landowners about carbon credit programs.

Western Region (Brad Carico)

- ◆ Personnel
 - Interviews in progress for two forest technician positions.
 - When filled Western region will be fully staffed.
 - McCray Sawyers started on June 10 as Franklin area forester.
 - Rachel Kim starts on July 10 as Community Forestry Specialist.
- ◆ First tornado in history to hit Salem, hit the Salem office causing minor damage.

Field Representative (David Powell)

- ◆ Kudos to the Fire Academy for a great tractor and saws class.
 - Received a lot of good feedback.
 - Instructors did a great job.

Facilities (Richard Schmidt)

- ◆ Finishing a lot of projects this summer.
 - Finishing up projects at Vansant, Big Stone Gap, Salem, Galax, Accomack, Central region, and Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest offices.
 - Waiting on demo request for fire towers.

- Finalizing RFP for transports.
- Pre-bid coming up for installation of emergency equipment in the trucks.
- Working on tractor sheds for Department of Juvenile Justice at Hanover and Mountain Gateway Community College.

Fire and Emergency Response (John Miller)

- ◆ Working on putting together the part-time firefighter crews for this fall and spring.
 - Three crews; two in the western regions one in the eastern region with 5 people in each crew.
 - Unsuccessful with getting LaSR grant funding so will fund out of state fire assistance response funding.
 - Start crews in early October through May.
 - Start building a potential list of practices crews can do. Have list ready for July SMT meeting.
- ◆ Would like to reconstitute a HQ Incident Management Team (IMT) for assistance. Plan will be ready for July SMT meeting.
- ◆ With FiResponse we've been trying to automate the daily summation report and CSI calculations.
 - Will calculate three regional calculations with the ability to look up county by county.
 - Using ISOS weather data to drive the calculations.
 - Will demonstrate at the July SMT meeting.
- ◆ Southeast Virginia has its first prescribed burn association which includes several counties.

Human Resources (John Habel)

- ◆ Next new hire training will be August 12-15 at New Kent.
 - Speakers will be Justin Barnes, Greg Bilyeu and Lara Johnson.
- ◆ Virginia Tech career fair will be September 25.
- ◆ Need to start doing background checks on part-time personnel.
 - Fingerprints will need to be done at a Fieldprint location.
 - There are several located throughout the state.
 - Need to create a more formal part-time hiring process.
 - Need to ensure all paperwork is done in Cardinal before fire season.
 - Will have a separate meeting to discuss in detail and what needs to be done.
 - Can we recruit our full-time crews from part-time firefighters?
- ◆ The Fair Labor Standards Act is increasing the base minimum salary for exempt employees to \$43,888 July 1.
 - All exempt employees (mostly foresters) that were below that threshold have been increased to that amount.
- ◆ Everyone that was due the spring fire bonus has received it.
- ◆ CDL drug testing is working smoother. Next testing is in August.

Eastern Region (Bryant Bays)

- ◆ Personnel
 - Russell Schmidt is area forester in the Five Forks district. He started on June 10.
 - Dalton Maddox is forest technician in the Capital district. He started on May 28.
 - Eastern region is now fully staffed south of the James.

- North of the James has three vacancies.
- Fully staffed in District Foresters.
- ◆ Kicking off a summer full of region-based training with all the new employees.
 - First Aid training, Water Quality training, UTV training, engine and tractor refresher training

Forest Management (Dean Cumbia)

- ◆ Personnel – Five new staff.
 - Brian Gillispie, Forestry Business Development Specialist, started May 28.
 - Levi White, Hardwood Forester, transferred from Central region June 10.
 - Sal Flower and Kaitlyn Harless are part-time invasive species technicians that started in Forest Health.
 - Laurel Finney started June 10 as a summer intern.
 - Interviewing for the Forest Management Coordinator position today, June 11.
 - Interviewing for a part-time position in tree improvement to assist Ones Bitoki.
- ◆ More invasive species staff coming.
- ◆ Southern Group State Forest Management Chiefs are working on a strategic plan.
 - Outreach and retention were the main topics.
 - Victor Harris put on a presentation on minorities in Natural Resources.
- ◆ Estimates of 60,000 acres of spongy moth damage.
- ◆ Southern pine beetle trapping is done, currently processing the numbers.
- ◆ 88 emerald ash borer treatment applications are in.
- ◆ Up to 44 hardwood projects for the year.
- ◆ Talking with Jennifer Gagnon about putting on a woodland class for DOF staff.
- ◆ Zoe Bergman will be working on chestnut pollination at Lesesne and Matthews State Forests.

Executive Assistant (Mary Weaver)

- ◆ Next SMT meeting is July 23 and there is no August SMT.
- ◆ Board of Forestry meeting is June 25 in the training room.

Deputy State Forester (Ed Zimmer)

- ◆ Facility Policy Change
 - There will no longer be personal use of quarters and equipment.
- ◆ Meeting with Job Timm, Deputy Regional Director from USFS in Atlanta, and The Nature Conservancy this evening to discuss our partnership.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, executive assistant