

Virginia Department of Forestry  
Partner Update  
December 2022

**Overall:**

DOF has reorganized its internal structure, moving from work areas back to Districts.

Visit our website at <https://dof.virginia.gov> and click on “Find a Forester” to identify your local contact.

**Watershed Program**

- Increasing riparian forest buffers is a big priority. Want to get some buffers planted? Reach out to Caitlin Verdu at [Caitlin.verdu@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:Caitlin.verdu@dof.virginia.gov).
- We are advertising a facilitator to begin work on a Statewide Riparian Forest Buffer Action Plan which will emphasize:
  - Coordinating outreach to landowners to better match landowners to best-fit programs
  - Increasing the capacity for planting and maintaining buffers
  - Setting realistic goals and timelines for implementation
  - Improving recording and reporting protocols
- If we're not already working with you, we'd like to!

**Forest Management**

- The Reforestation of Timberlands Program was able to offer three million dollars in incentives to landowners across the Commonwealth who are planting pine trees on open land or reforesting their harvested timberlands. This is the largest amount of incentives that the program has ever offered in a single year. Since 1972, the Reforestation of Timberlands program has provided over \$68.5 million dollars to 53,361 landowners who have reforested or improved over 2 million acres of Virginia's pine forests.
- The Department of Forestry is preparing to proportionally award a total of 1 million dollars to tax localities across the Commonwealth. The Forest Sustainability Fund, established in the 2022 Virginia General Assembly, is available to any locality that has offered a reduced forest land use taxation rate to landowners to promote forest land conservation in their locality. Each locality that applies will receive a proportion of the forgone revenue that they could have collected if they did not offer the lower tax rate.

## **James River Buffer Program**

- The James River Buffer Program is a flexible cost-share option for landowners looking to install a riparian forest buffer. The program is run in partnership with the James River Association and is funded by the Virginia Environmental Endowment.
- More than 350 acres of buffer have been planted through this program since 2020.
- For more information or to apply for this program, please visit the website at: <https://www.jamesriverbuffers.org/>

## **Hardwood Initiative**

- The Hardwood Initiative is moving along. VDOF will continue next year with training staff to increasing capacity for program delivery. Training will also include Consulting Foresters in 2023.
- The Hardwood Habitat Incentive Program is active and available for landowners to receive assistance for upland hardwood management. Capacity to deliver assistance is still limited, but will increase with the 2023 staff trainings. Landowners can contact their forester regarding it, but we ask for patience as our ability to deliver the program grows.
- Beneficial Hardwood Management Practices tax credit (also known as the Reforestation and Afforestation tax credit) was passed effective January 1, 2022. VDOF is working with the Department of Taxation to define procedures and eligibility. Taxpayers will be able to apply for this credit in time to file their 2022 taxes. We encourage anyone interested to check the VDOF website and contact their forester in January, 2023.

## **Forest Health**

- VDOF's Ash Treatment Program has received additional funding from the USFS to continue for another couple years.
  - Goal is to protect ash from the invasive emerald ash borer
  - Ash treatment cost-share available to private landowners (including organizations such as schools and home owner's associations). Enrollment will open in April 2023
  - Biological control release on public lands – please contact VDOF Forest Health staff if you discover stands of ash trees that are still relatively healthy ([foresthealth@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:foresthealth@dof.virginia.gov))
- Hemlock treatment program coming soon
  - Goal is to protect hemlock trees from the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid
  - VDOF continues to treat hemlock trees on State Land
  - Releasing more predator beetles as biological control
  - Plans to develop a hemlock treatment cost-share for landowners in 2023

## **State Nurseries**

- \*Exciting news: VDOF is in the early stages of re-opening the New Kent Nursery, in anticipation of increased seedling demand for several reasons, including seedlings for mitigation projects.
- The bare root inventory of the Sussex nursery this year was 23,140,266 seedlings (mostly loblolly pine). Augusta Forestry Center has grown 3.7 million conifers and 2.67 million hardwoods with a total of 52 different species products in addition the nursery grew a total of 370,000 shortleaf bare root pine.

## **Silvicultural Water Quality Program**

- Number of notifications: 3,624 (3,742 for previous year)
- Acres notified: State: 180,719 acres (176,213 for previous year)
- Number of inspections: 15,904 (16,667 for previous year)
- BMP implementation rate based on the quarterly audits: 94.4% statewide, 95.7% within the Chesapeake Bay watershed

For more information, feel free to contact DOF's Watershed Program Manager Caitlin Verdu at [Caitlin.verdu@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:Caitlin.verdu@dof.virginia.gov).