

FORESTRY News



A Newsletter of the Virginia Department of Forestry

Spring 2009

MISSION: "We Protect and Develop Healthy, Sustainable Forest Resources for Virginians."

AREA LANDOWNERS PROTECT FOREST LAND WITH CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Submitted by Rob Suydam, forest conservation specialist, Eastern Region

Landowners in Spotsylvania and Stafford counties have donated the first two forest conservation easements in the area to the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF). Dr. Mary Powell Lewis granted the Agency a conservation easement on 473 acres in Spotsylvania County, and The Falls at Able Lake LLC has protected 128 forested acres with an easement in Stafford County.

As Virginia loses more than 27,000 acres of forest land each year to development, conservation easements are ever more important to the health and well-being of the Commonwealth's citizens. Large blocks of forest land are critical to sustainable forest management; interconnected wildlife habitat, and the flow of other ecosystem services, such as improving air and water quality, carbon sequestration and recreational opportunities. Unbroken forests also enhance the overall quality of life of area residents.

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and VDOF that protects the conservation values of a property. Most easements place permanent

limits on the future development of each tract to protect the conservation values while the donor maintains the ownership, use and control of the property.

The forests on Dr. Lewis' property, known as Plentiful

continued on page 3

CONTENTS

Area Landowners Protect Forest Land With Conservation Easements...	1
Message from the State Forester...	2
David Richert Honored.....	4
Virginia Longleaf Pine Seed Production Areas Underway	5
Conway-Robinson State Forest Hunt A Success!.....	7
VDOF Brings Holiday Cheer to the Capitol	8
Carroll/Grayson First Responders Workshop	9
Urban Forestry Strike Team Members Respond to Hurricane Gustav.	10
Investigate This.....	12
Wheelin' Sportsmen at the Matthews State Forest	14
Landowner and Logger Outreach Program a "Succulent Success".....	16
Human Resource News	17
Dominion inspires young arborists with Project Plant It!	18



The Falls at Able Lake Conservation Easement in Stafford County.

Carl Garrison III, State Forester

Janet Muncy, Editor

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE FORESTER

Carl Garrison



I'm sure you've heard the phrase "economic stimulus package" quite a lot over the past few weeks. Well, regardless of your personal feelings in this matter, the fact is that forestry will benefit in a number of ways from some significant provisions within this recently signed legislation. The stated purpose of the stimulus package is job creation and/or job protection. While some of the specifics are still being ironed out, as much as \$5.5 Billion could be invested in forestry and forestry-related projects nationwide.

The \$5.5 Billion includes: \$250 million for hazardous fuels reduction, forest health protection, rehabilitation and hazard mitigation on Federal lands; up to \$50 million for wood-energy grants to promote utilization of biomass; \$250 million for hazardous fuels reduction, forest health and ecosystem improvement activities on State and private lands; \$290 million is available to the Natural Resources Conservation Service for watershed and flood prevention operations, including purchase and restoration of floodplain easements; an additional \$50 million to NRCS for watershed rehabilitation; at least \$800 million was appropriated to the Environmental Protection Agency for the clean waters state revolving fund for projects to address green infrastructure, water and energy efficiency, and other innovative environmental activities; not less than \$200 million appropriated to the Secretary of the Army is available for certain water-related environmental infrastructure activities authorized under the Flood Control Act and the Water Resources Development Act; an additional \$375 million was appropriated to the Secretary of the Army for energy and water-development activities on the Mississippi River and its tributaries; a loan guarantee program through the Department of Energy (DOE) is available for leading-edge biofuel transportation demonstration projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and \$3.2 billion is available for block grants and state energy grants at the DOE for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

So what's Virginia's share of this stimulus package, and what do we plan to do with these funds? Well, at this point we don't know how much we will receive, but we do have a number of projects across many areas ready to go. Specifically, we plan to 1) hire 65 people to plan and implement at least 200 hazard mitigation projects in Virginia's highest risk communities; 2) contract the planting and maintenance of thousands of trees in urban and suburban areas across the Commonwealth; 3) engage a number of forestry consultants to prepare stewardship plans for dozens of landowners who need these plans, and 4) expand our ongoing efforts in the forest health arena.

With the reductions we've taken at VDOF, the stimulus money will enable our Agency to provide some much-needed services to our citizens without adding more work to your already full plates.

Before I close, I did want to tell you how proud I am of you. We are stretched about as thin as we can go and still continue to protect the public and provide for their safety. Yet, with all the budget difficulties we've faced this year, you have met the challenge head on. Since the first of this year, you've already responded to more than 300 wildland fires. You've protected more than 260 homes and other structures. And you've done so without any injuries or loss of equipment. Even under the best of conditions, this is a record of which you should be proud. But given the economic realities that we've faced, your actions and deeds are even more impressive!

Unfortunately, you can't stop and rest on your well-deserved and hard-earned laurels. Fire season is underway and much of the Commonwealth is already well under its annual rainfall totals. If that trend continues, fire danger will only increase. Your health and well-being are of utmost concern to me, and I urge you to be safe each and every day but especially when you are engaged in wildfire response. The public needs you and your skills to keep them safe, but that won't happen if you are injured. Take time to think about what you are doing. Wear all of your PPE. Communicate well. The life you may be saving could be your own!

AREA LANDOWNERS PROTECT FOREST LAND... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

Farm, have been managed for several decades with a history of forest management plans from VDOF dating back to 1953. In 1990, Dr. Lewis received the State Forestry Best Management Practices Award for the conservation work she had done on this tree farm.

Dr. Lewis said, "Planting and replanting trees was something my mother, Dorothy Powell, taught me to do, and she always did it with the help of [VDOF]. My mother would be very glad to know this land of mine is now protected from development." Most of the property's forested uplands support stands of planted loblolly pine, the majority of which were since 1980. The forested stream bottoms contain hardwoods, including yellow poplar, red maple, sweet gum and various red and white oaks.

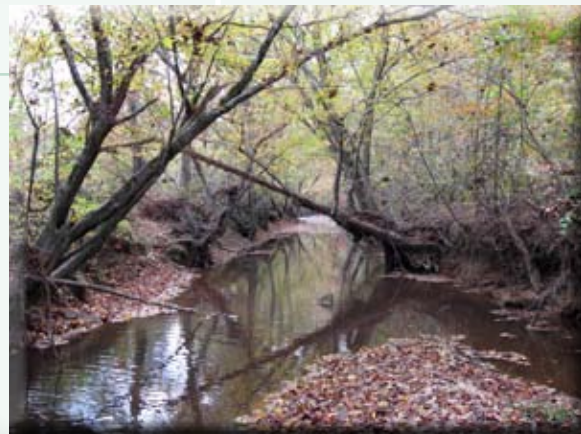
Dean Cumbia, director of VDOF's Forest Resource Management Division, worked with Dr. Lewis for many years as an area forester. He said, "When we discussed her objectives for the property many years ago, she described her interest in what is now called sustainable forest management. Through her conservation easement, she has made it quite clear that she will continue down this path and keep her land as a productive forest."

The 128 acres of forest protected in Stafford County was purchased in the early 1990s for future development, originally slated to be a residential subdivision called The Falls at Able Lake. The name originates from the multiple pristine waterfalls meandering through the eastern end of the property that cascade down to the site of an old grist mill from a bygone era. The forest land is adjacent to Able Lake and Long Branch Creek.

Andy Garrett, president of The Garrett Companies, said, "With the incredible growth that we have seen in the county and in Virginia, The Garrett Companies are pleased to have the opportunity to preserve this special piece of nature for posterity. We are equally pleased to be working with the Virginia Department of Forestry as the conservation easement holder."

Rob Suydam, forest conservation specialist for VDOF, said, "Virginia will lose more forest land and agricultural land in the next 40 years than we have since the founding of Jamestown. The loss of forested acres and the fragmentation of the remaining acres reduce the potential of the forest to provide the economic, social and ecological benefits on which we depend. This continues to be one of the most significant

continued on page 4



The Plentiful Farm conservation easement in Spotsylvania County.



The Plentiful Farm conservation easement in Spotsylvania County.



The Falls at Able Lake conservation easement in Stafford County.

DAVID RICHERT HONORED

Submitted by Denny McCarthy, assistant regional forester, Western Region

During the month of December, VDOF's David Richert, RC&D Forester for the New River Highlands RC&D Council, was recognized by the Council for several of his most recent accomplishments individually, as well as for his team role with the Council.

While David assisted in the planning and operation of the four-day Southeast RC&D Conference attended by more than 325 people this past fall, he was also integral in organizing a forestry bus tour for approximately 70 RC&D council members. The tour included stops at a Rural Retreat rain garden, the Matthews State Forest ("Forest Equipment for the Changing Forest" – see the following link for information and pictures <http://www.nnfp.us/ironinthewoods.html>), the Turman Hardwood Pellet Mill in Galax, and a final stop at one of his Firewise fuel reduction projects. David, accompanied by his wife Suzie, also doubled as bartenders, managing the evening event's cash bar, "off the clock," he points out.



David has been extremely effective at both acquiring monies from various sources, as well as applying those funds to implement a wide variety of real value projects throughout the New River Valley area. David is working with Virginia Tech staff on a street tree inventory for the City of Radford that will inform citizens and officials about the economic benefits provided by street trees, including their contribution to stormwater management, reduction in air pollution, carbon sequestration, energy conservation (summer shade, windbreaks, etc.) and aesthetics (market value of home prices can be positively impacted by street trees). This information will help generate support for a tree maintenance program and encourage additional street tree planting.

There are eight RC&D Councils covering more than half the state of Virginia, and work is in progress to build four additional Councils. Consider your local RC&D Council as a source of assistance for some of your forestry projects.

AREA LANDOWNERS PROTECT FOREST LAND... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3...

threats to the forest resource in Virginia, especially in the coastal plain where the rate of development has been very high."

With 15.7 million acres of forest land and more than 144,000 Virginians employed in forestry, forest products and related industries, Virginia forests provide more than \$27.5 billion annually in benefits to the Commonwealth.

The VDOF conservation easement program is the only one in the state that focuses solely on protecting working forests. To be considered, a property must be at least 50 acres in size; 75 percent forested, and the landowner must be willing to have a forest stewardship management plan prepared. Landowners who want to ensure that their land will be forever maintained as forest should consider a VDOF easement.

VIRGINIA LONGLEAF PINE SEED PRODUCTION AREAS UNDERWAY

Submitted by Bill Apperson, forester, James City and York counties, Eastern Region

Economically, longleaf pine is valued as a source of raw materials – wood products, pine needles and naval stores. Ecologically, it is a primary component of a unique ecosystem that is resistant to southern pine beetle infestations and is home to unique flora and fauna. It is considered by many to be one of the more aesthetically pleasing pines.

The species remains in viable numbers in the sand hills of North Carolina and southward, but only 150 to 200 mature native longleaf trees remain in Virginia. A few longleaf pines also exist in the northern counties of neighboring North Carolina which, together with the Virginia trees, form a population representing a small but potentially significant northern-range seed source. Recent VDOF studies have demonstrated that “native” seedlings outperform those from other geographic areas in early survival and growth, so it is hoped that the remaining longleaf trees and their progeny can form the basis of a new program to produce significant quantities of longleaf seedlings to be made available to Virginians for restoring longleaf pine forests in the Commonwealth.

All of the native longleaf parent trees are south of the James River. The most northern tree we have found so far is in Surry County, just south of Dendron. The majority of the native trees are located in the City of Suffolk along the Blackwater River on International Paper Company lands. The second highest concentration is on the Bain Estate Tract in Southampton County – three miles south of the Zuni Pine Barrens Tract.

There are three primary options for producing seed from these “native” trees: 1) protect the existing trees and collect as many cones and seeds from them as are available each year; 2) collect open-pollinated seed from each remaining tree and use it to grow seedlings that can be planted together in one area for future seed collections, or 3) collect cuttings from each of the remaining trees and graft them onto rootstock in one seed production area.

The first option has been our only course over the last several years, but the remaining trees are widely scattered and difficult to access, and the seed crops are small and highly variable from year to year. The second course (the “seedling” orchard) would



Martha and Nathan Lojewski with a newly planted grafted longleaf pine.



Grafted longleaf in Bobcat on way to the orchard.

continued on page 6

VIRGINIA LONGLeAF PINE SEED PRODUCTION AREAS UNDERWAY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5...

solve the problem of access and allow us to protect the cones and seeds from insect predators, thereby increasing yields, but the seedlings used for seed production would all originate from open-pollinated seed, so there would be a chance that their "father" could have been a non-Virginia tree planted nearby over the last several decades (i.e. they could be only "half-native"). The final option (the "grafted" orchard) would solve problems of access and production capacity and also ensure that the seed-producing trees are genetically identical to the native trees from which the cuttings were taken; the recent development by VDOF of successful grafting techniques for longleaf has made this a reality.



Jeff Stout and Woody Washington with a longleaf graft ready for the orchard.

Progress is taking place on establishing both grafted and seedling seed orchards for native longleaf pine seed production.

In late January, the first 100 longleaf pine grafts were moved into permanent locations at the New Kent Forestry Center. This "grafted orchard" will contain two or three grafts from each native tree we have found in Virginia – a total of approximately 500 grafted trees. This should produce 500,000 longleaf seedlings per year. This spring, we will make an effort to graft all of the remaining native trees for representation in the grafted orchard, and grafting will continue for one or two more years until all of the native trees are successfully preserved in the orchard.

Concurrently, open-pollinated seedlings from native mother trees are being planted at the Garland Gray Forestry Center. This "seedling orchard" will contain five or six seedlings from each native tree – a total of approximately 1,000 grafted trees capable of yielding enough seed to produce even more seedlings than the grafted orchard. Because it will take longer to collect seed and grow seedlings, this area will be later coming into seed production than the grafted orchard. This spring, we plan to cross-pollinate (by hand) all of the mother trees that are too isolated to produce viable seed with natural pollination. By the fall of 2010, we will collect this seed and should complete establishment of the seedling orchard in the fall of 2011.

CONWAY-ROBINSON STATE FOREST HUNT A SUCCESS!

Submitted by Joe Rosetti, forester, Fauquier County, Central Region

In the last edition of The Forestry News, you read about the planned managed hunt on the Conway-Robinson State Forest. With the four days of hunting completed on February 2, we can now call the effort a success! Thirty-one hunters and alternates were selected to participate in the hunt, of which 23 put in the time and energy to participate in a pre-hunt meeting and prove their marksmanship ability at local shooting ranges. We are sorry to report that four hunters violated hunt rules and were asked not to return for future days of hunting, but the alternate hunters who took their places were happy to get the opportunity to hunt.

Thirty-five deer were taken during the four days of hunting, 29 antlerless and six antlered. Most of the deer were kept by the hunters, but several were given to friends or taken to Hunters for the Hungry. We are very happy to report that there were no injuries. This is a testament to the quality of hunters who participated. All were very cooperative, professional, ethical and did exactly what they were asked.

Those of us who planned this hunt learned a great deal about deer management, behavior, biology and managed hunts. We were grateful for the opportunity to work with our neighboring landowners and sister agencies. Thank you to everyone from the VDOF who helped with this project: Terry Lasher, Bryant Bays, Chris Clayton, Jim McGlone, John Hisghman, Ed Zimmer, Tom Zaebst, Gary Heiser and John Carroll. Your input and support not only made this possible, but made it a success. Thank you to John Rohm, Ron Hughes, Joe Ferdinandsen and Tommy Willingham from the DGIF for your expertise, experience and help on the days of the hunts. Thank you also to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Northern Virginia Park Authority and the Fairfax County Park Authority. They have all been running managed hunts in Prince William and Fairfax counties for many years and helped us a great deal in our planning by providing us with advice learned from their years of experience. We look forward to planning for next year's hunt so we can build and improve upon this year's successes.



Once again, I want to thank you and your staff for the opportunity to hunt Conway-Robinson. I was lucky enough to harvest three does this time and had a chance at a fourth. All meat will be donated to either Hunters for the Hungry or to families that I personally know that are in need. -Jack Groseclose



VDOF BRINGS HOLIDAY CHEER TO THE CAPITOL

Submitted by Chris Thomsen, assistant regional forester, Western Region

On November 24, 2008, Western Region personnel (Neil Brooks, Chuck Hutsell, Denny McCarthy, Stuart Sours, Matt Spencer, Ed Stoots, Chris Thomsen and Jon Willoughby) and Dabney S. Lancaster student volunteer Ben Ports ventured into Roanoke City's urban forest to harvest the perfect Christmas tree that would soon become Virginia's Capitol Christmas Tree. The 22-foot Norway spruce, selected earlier in the year by a VDOF committee, was planted many years ago by Mr. and Mrs. David Huffman. It had outgrown its space in their front yard, and it was now time to put this "family tree" to an even greater good.

In the early morning hours of that cold day, VDOF personnel climbed ladders to remove strings of old Christmas lights and wrapped the tree with twine. Note to anyone doing this in the future, trees should be wrapped from top to bottom. Matt Spencer then donned his PPE (personal protective equipment) and laid the tree down perfectly between the driveway and the lamp post. Using every bit of manpower available, the one-ton tree was moved to the back of a VDOF stakebody while four crews of local media flashed cameras nearby.

The soon-to-be celebrity tree would spend its Thanksgiving holiday alone in the back of the truck, though it did receive curious visitors from time to time. On the morning of December 1st, Willoughby and Thomsen set out on the long trek from Southwest Virginia to deliver the spruce to its new home in Richmond. Winding the truck through Richmond's city streets, we arrived at the Capitol Building where we were directed to the South Portico of the Capitol. We were met there by VDOF's own Ron Jenkins and employees with the Department of General Services. A short time later, a crane arrived and made short work of pulling the tree out of the stakebody and lifting it to its resting place on the second story of the Capitol's South Portico. The Capitol Christmas Tree was decorated by General Services staff later that day and officially lit by Governor Kaine several days later.

Supplying the citizens of Virginia with the "official" Capitol Christmas Tree is not only a source of pride for Christmas tree growers in our state but also a bit of a competition. A local grower in Craig County has already offered a possible tree for this year. Most nominated trees are overgrown yard trees. Residents wishing to donate the next Capitol Christmas Tree simply need to

alert their local VDOF personnel as to its whereabouts to get it into the next Christmas in Richmond sweepstakes.



CARROLL/GRAYSON FIRST RESPONDERS WORKSHOP

Submitted by Chad Austin, technician, Carroll and Grayson counties, Western Region

On January 15, 2009, a volunteer fire department workshop was held at the Matthews Conference Center in Galax, VA. All first responder departments and agencies in the Galax/Grayson/Carroll area were invited to attend. Forty local, state and federal firefighters, and law enforcement, as well as emergency services providers, attended the workshop. This meeting was also attended by the USDA Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Virginia Department of Fire Programs and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

Attendees were treated to a supper and featured speakers from the Virginia Department of Forestry, including John Miller, Steve Counts, David Edwards and Chad Austin. The VDOF speakers covered topics ranging from grants and equipment programs offered by the department, to procedures for incident command on wildfires, down to regional and local procedures for wildfire suppression and response.

Harold Sutherland with the USDA Forest Service discussed its procedures for wildfire response on Forest Service lands within the counties. Dennis Price from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs discussed the services he offers to volunteer fire departments. Willie Richardson also discussed what the Virginia Department of Emergency Management could assist with on a large-scale wildfire.

Information was exchanged and gathered among all attendees. The information and contacts will be important for future cooperation and wildfire suppression in the area. Thanks go out to all who took time out of their busy schedules to speak and attend this workshop. A special thanks to John Miller, Steve Counts, David Edwards, Harold Sutherland, Dennis Price and Willie Richardson.



URBAN FORESTRY STRIKE TEAM MEMBERS RESPOND TO HURRICANE GUSTAV

Submitted by Paul Revell, urban forestry coordinator, Resource Management Division

In 2007 and again in 2008, VDOF employees attended storm damage response training put on by our Agency in cooperation with the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources and Urban Forestry South Centers for Urban and Interface Forestry. The most recent training was held at the New Kent Forestry Center in July of 2008. The USDA Forest Service provided the training with assistance from VDOF personnel. Staff attended this training from 10 state forestry agencies in the South, Mid-Atlantic, and Northeast areas. Personnel attending had to be from state forestry agencies and also have ISA Certified Arborist status. To date, VDOF has more personnel trained in urban storm damage response than any other state, with 14 of our employees now trained.

In September, our team members were asked to respond to the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav. This storm spared New Orleans, but the storm did a tremendous amount of tree damage in Baton Rouge, about 70 miles inland. Trees grow very large in that region and many came crashing through power lines and homes. VDOF personnel responded with personnel from several other southern states, including North Carolina, Georgia and Arkansas. This was the second deployment of our personnel, who are called "urban forest strike team" members. Several VDOF personnel had responded in February 2008 to an ice storm event in Oklahoma.

The Louisiana Department of Forestry and the City of Baton Rouge requested our help. They wanted us to evaluate all public trees ahead of debris removal crews, which had already begun their operations. The city arborist preferred trained arborists to evaluate trees for either pruning or removal and not leave this task to debris crews who did not have arborist training. The city arborist feared that debris clean up crews might miss potentially hazardous trees and also might remove trees that only needed pruning work to restore their vitality. Further, FEMA had agreed to reimburse the city based on the tally of marked trees done by our professionals. Anyone familiar with FEMA knows that this arrangement is a departure from its usual operating procedures and meant Baton Rouge would recover its costs in a much shorter time frame.

VDOF had the majority of personnel in both eight-day work segments of the detail. The first wave included Jim McGlone, Drew Arnn, Erik Filep and Paul Revell. In the second wave were David Stone, Rich Reuse, Jim Clark (a recent VDOF retiree from Montgomery County), Bruce Harmon, Tom Callahan and Erik Filep again (who stayed the entire deployment). In addition, we had another Virginian, Hugh Whitehead, from Fairfax County. Hugh had taken the training last summer and had previously done this type of work after Hurricane Katrina and was the only non-agency person on the team.

The strike team crews worked long days and were able to evaluate almost every public street tree on Baton Rouge streets before the



URBAN FORESTRY STRIKE TEAM MEMBERS RESPOND TO HURRICANE GUSTAV, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10...

deployment ended. Early in our deployment, the Baton Rouge Parks Department learned what we were doing and asked us to work on park trees as well. The strike teams evaluated trees in more than half the parks in the city in addition to the street trees for the city arborist.

Each public tree was marked with paint according to FEMA standards and logged into a GPS data recorder so detailed location maps could be provided to the city and FEMA. At the end of 16 days, the Urban Forestry Strike Teams had covered more than 500 miles of streets, recorded 5,498 street trees, 1,882 park trees and 208 stumps. A map was generated that showed the location of all these trees and stumps and a written report detailed the species, size and recommended treatment for each of them.

While it was mostly hard work, the crews discovered fine Louisiana cuisine in the evening. They learned all about crawfish etouffee, blackened alligator, catfish fingers and other unique Louisiana foods.

Everyone involved learned a great deal about how the process can be improved and streamlined. The deployment of the urban forestry strike team also demonstrated that the southern states and the USDA Forest Service can cooperate to do an efficient job of quickly determining tree damage following a storm. Efforts are under way to formally include urban forest strike teams in various interstate emergency response contacts. There is an additional storm damage response training in the planning stages for qualified individuals. Anyone interested in becoming a certified arborist or participating in this training should contact Paul Revell or Barbara White at the headquarters office.



INVESTIGATE THIS...

Submitted by Michelle Quesenberry, technician, Buchanan County, Western Region

Following the methodology, I began placing red, blue and yellow flags, according to the macroscale and microscale indicators, just as I had learned a month earlier to determine the path of the fire. What is this? I was not exactly sure what the homemade device was, but it happened to be in the point of origin area. I gathered the device and placed it in the bag for safekeeping. For a split second (perhaps a little more), I felt like I should be on CSI. After interviewing several individuals who live near the site of the two-acre fire, I was unable to gain any leads to the possible perpetrator(s). However, I still felt the need, the duty, to do more with the ignition source that I now had in my possession. The Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Determination course hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Law Enforcement Training Center provided me an excellent training opportunity for this wildland fire investigation.



The next step was to positively identify the ignition source. I turned to the specialists at the Virginia Department of Forensic Science (DFS). In 1972, the General Assembly created the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS), which eventually grew into DFS in 2005. The DFS provides forensic laboratory services to more than 400 law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth. VDOF is one of the agencies that DFS has worked with over the years. After calling and speaking with several very informative employees at the Western Lab of Forensic Science in Roanoke, it was recommended that I bring my collected evidence in for testing and analysis. During the phone conversations, I learned valuable tips on storing evidence collected from a fire scene. To preserve any residue accelerant material that is likely to evaporate quickly,

it is recommended to keep the object in a clean, lined, air-tight paint can. However, the laboratory will never accept live explosive devices. It must be rendered safe for the protection of the examiners. Any investigator must fill out a special form called the Virginia Department of Forensic Science Request for Laboratory Examination before the department can accept the evidence. A brief description of the evidence being submitted, the case number (fire report number), agency contact information and possible suspects or victims. Check with your local police, State Police or County Investigators' Office to get the current documentation. Always remember to properly record the chain of custody on the container or bag containing the evidence. Often times, an officer from your county will be submitting several pieces of evidence and is likely to deliver your evidence to the



INVESTIGATE THIS... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12...

laboratory if requested. Make sure that the chain of custody procedures are followed and all appropriate forms are attached.

Once I arrived at the Roanoke office, I went to the Trace Evidence Section (TES) within the department. The TES examines fire debris, explosives, paint, hairs, fibers, glass, gunshot residue (GSR), fracture matches and fabric separations. In addition, the section analyzes unknown substances for identification or comparison. I greeted everyone in the room, most of whom I had interacted with by phone, and then the specialists went to work. Dialogue existed freely among everyone involved; each expert asked me questions concerning the evidence that was still in the sealed bag. After I described the item, it was decided to place the item into another container. It was almost comical watching the experts peer into my evidence bag, with their wide inquisitive eyes already working to make a discovery. The gloved specialist did not seem too excited when he pulled the item out, but seemed content. All the collaborating personnel seemed to agree that the ignition source was more than likely, "a firework gone badly." The device was placed in a new container, labeled and placed on a cart and wheeled away. The testing procedure would attempt to identify the object and search for any latent fingerprints and the use of accelerants. The laboratory technicians indicated that the results from the lab could take several months or more to be processed.

Why not use this valuable resource? Did I mention that this is a service that the Commonwealth provides free of charge to law enforcement agencies? I feel that it is important to learn all that one can about what starts fires. Moreover, the extra work to find answers may pay off. Any person found guilty of intentionally setting a fire may be charged with a possible Class 1 misdemeanor and may be subject to a fine of \$2,500 or even 12 months of jail time.

I would strongly recommend visiting the DFS Web site listed below to learn more. Even better, visit one of the Virginia laboratories located in Roanoke, Richmond, Fairfax or Norfolk.

<http://www.dfs.virginia.gov>

Happy Investigating!



WHEELIN' SPORTSMEN AT THE MATTHEWS STATE FOREST

Submitted by Zach Olinger, state forest education specialist, Matthews State Forest

The Matthews State Forest is usually open to bow hunting only, but on November 21 and 22, 2008, the property in Grayson County was opened to rifle-toting deer hunters for the first time since it became part of Virginia's state forest system. Six hunters applied and were chosen to be a part of this first-time event. As the hunters began to arrive at the state forest conference room early Friday, there was a tinge of excitement in the air. This was the excitement that comes to any hunter with the anticipation of going afield – especially in a new area that is full of promise. As you would expect from any gathering of sportsmen, the conversations quickly moved to stories from seasons past, rifles, tactics and big bucks. And while this could have been the scene at any hunting camp, the hunters that gathered on this day were exceptional. Each day, they face challenges that most of us will never have to face. These hunters are disabled, and were here to participate in a Wheelin' Sportsmen event. Wheelin' Sportsmen is an outreach program of the National Wild Turkey Federation that provides opportunities for people with disabilities to enjoy outdoor activities.

The Virginia Department of Forestry worked in conjunction with the Grayson County Chapter of the NWTF to host this event. Several months of planning went in to preparing for the hunt. The chapter provided overnight accommodations for those who were traveling; four hearty meals for everyone involved; wheelchair-accessible portable blinds, and nice take-home gifts for hunters and their family members. Aside from the land and facilities, VDOF personnel provided transportation, guide services, game recovery and processing and logistical support.

The hunters had the opportunity to hunt Friday afternoon, Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon. It was cold, and the temperature never rose out of the 20s all weekend, but all of the hunters endured enthusiastically. Over the course of the day and a half hunt, two hunters were able to harvest deer. Every hunter saw multiple deer, but just weren't able to get the shot they wanted. But as any true hunter will tell you, the taking of game is not the most important aspect of hunting. The chance to be outdoors, to see wildlife and experience our natural resources is what really counts.

continued on page 15



The first hunters at the 2008 Matthews State Forest premier rifle hunt.



Pull-behind trailers help with getting the hunters out into the woods.

FORESTRY *News*



Spring 2009

page 15

WHEELIN' SPORTSMEN AT THE MATTHEWS STATE FOREST, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14...

For some folks, however, going hunting presents challenges that can be discouraging. Simple tasks, like steadying a rifle or just getting to a suitable location, that most hunters take for granted can be very difficult if not impossible without assistance. By sponsoring Wheelin' Sportsmen events, the NWTf has made it easier for some disabled hunters to participate in the sport that they love. The Department of Forestry's Chad Austin, who helped organize the event and served as an assistant to one of the hunters, said: "Being able to bring true conservationists (hunters and foresters) together for this event was truly special. Assisting others who may not have as many opportunities to hunt was humbling as well as rewarding. This was an amazing event. I believe that everyone who participated in, or assisted with the event, learned valuable life lessons and made memories that will last a lifetime." The event was such a success, that almost everyone involved expressed a sincere interest in returning next year to try it again.

Special thanks go to David Edwards, Chad Austin, Donnie Garman, Brad Carico and Zach Olinger with the Department of Forestry; Ricky Higgins, president of GC NWTf; all members of the GC NWTf that helped out; Robin Clark, coordinator for Virginia Wheelin' Sportsmen; Doug Vaughn for providing a fantastic barbecue supper Friday night, and Robbie Isom for a great lunch on Saturday.



Tent blinds help disguise the hunters.



Robin Clark poses with his take.

Hi Carl [Carl Garrison, state forester],

I hope you're doing well and are ready for the holidays. On Friday-Saturday, Nov. 21-22 six Wheelin' Sportsmen hunters had the pleasure of enjoying a fantastic deer hunt at your Matthews State Forest property near Galax. Zach Olinger and his staff, working with volunteers from the local Grayson County Chapter of the NWTf, put on a great hunt. I want to thank you and your management team, for allowing us this exciting opportunity.

The facility was perfect for our needs and the property is one of the most well-maintained we have ever had the honor of hunting. Zach, and his entire staff, stressed safety from the first moment we arrived, but also made sure that each participant was made to feel welcome. All six hunters, including myself, are excited about the possibility of returning to the property next year for another great hunt.

Thanks again for partnering with us for this great event! Please let me know if you ever need any help with anything.

Robin Clark, Volunteer State Coordinator, Virginia Wheelin' Sportsmen

LANDOWNER AND LOGGER OUTREACH PROGRAM A “SUCCULENT SUCCESS”

Submitted by Ben Parsons, water quality specialist, Western Region

The VDOF Western Region successfully hosted an evening of outreach for landowners and loggers of the Alleghany Highlands. The event was held February 12th from 6 to 9 p.m. at Jackson River Technical Center in Alleghany County with 72 guests from Highland, Bath and Alleghany counties braving the windy conditions to attend. The evening was filled with food for thought, and big appetites, thanks to the Jackson River Tech. Culinary Arts students and Tom Hamelman, culinary program head.

The event was kicked-off with social networking and enjoying the buffet meal, which was provided free of charge to attendees. The main course consisted of fire-roasted chicken, carved pork loin and a hearty beef stew with a large selection of salads, sides and desserts. A special thanks to Alan Craft, retired Alleghany technician, for the blessing over the meal.

Chris Thompson, assistant regional forester, warmed up the crowd with a historical overview of the VDOF, as well as the agency's mission, purpose and contact information. John Wright, forester, continued the discussion, providing an overview of topics that included fire; exotic and invasive species, and available cost-share funding for forest management practices. Matt Spencer, technician, focused the group on fire prevention and suppression with his portion of the evening. His visual presentation gave the audience a picture of techniques and equipment used in fire response, prevention, suppression and investigation. Time was also spent on fire danger classification, emergency deployments and, of course, the 4PM Burning Law.

A great deal of time was spent with Brad Carico, water quality engineer, discussing the do's and don'ts of the water quality program. Many loggers expressed interest in the BMP cost-share program and certified S.H.A.R.P. loggers in the group also earned two continuing education credits. Additionally, several landowners were exposed to Virginia's water quality laws for the first time. The evening was wrapped up with a question and answer session followed by a round of applause for students of the Jackson River Culinary Arts program. A well-deserved “thank you” goes to MeadWestvaco and Bennett Lumber for sponsoring the buffet; VDOF personnel Ed Stoots, Brad Carico and Ben Parsons for planning and organizing the event. A very special “thank you” goes to Debbie Zimneiwicz, administrative specialist, for taking nearly 100 registration calls for this event!



Landowners and loggers enjoyed a wonderful meal and informative sessions at the program.



The Jackson River Technical Center Culinary Arts students and Tom Hamelman, program head, prepared quite the feast.

NEW ARRIVALS!

Congratulations on your new addition to the family!

Brad Whittington, technician and bloodhound handler in Mecklenburg County, Central Region, and wife, Lori, welcomed a baby boy. Dalton, was born February 8 weighing 6 pounds, 14 ounces. Dalton is welcomed by big sister, Amelia, and proud grandpa, **Blair Dalton**, technician in Mecklenburg County.

Shannon Lawrence, program support technician for the Central Region, and her husband, Adam, welcomed new daughter, Harlow Evangeline, born December 28 weighing 6 pounds, 13 ounces. Amy Ricotta, procurement officer in General Services, is

the proud grandma!

WEDDING BELLS!

Sandra Stephens' daughter, Sabrina Stephens, married her sweetheart, Brian Shifflett, on October 18. Sandra is the administrative staff assistant for the Central Region.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Dennis Gaston, assistant regional forester in the Eastern Region, took over the duties of the State Forests forester effective January 10, 2009.

Tom Harlan, water quality engineer in the Eastern Region, took over the duties of the assistant regional forester from Dennis at the same time. These changes are effective through June 30, 2010.

DEPARTURES

John Wilburn, forester for King William County in the Eastern Region, left VDOF to accept a graduate assistantship with Virginia Tech. Best wishes on your new adventure!

CONDOLENCES

Sandra Booth, retired program support technician for the former Salem region, lost her mother November 14. Our thoughts are with you and your family.

Retiree **James "Swanson" Rigney** passed away on December 12 at age 83. Swanson started with VDOF in 1973 as a forestry aide on the road maintenance crew with Bud Shelton. He retired in 1989 as a carpenter leadman. He was buried with military honors having served in WW II. We have been told that his platoon was involved in raising the flag at Iwo Jima.



Brad Carico ~ Mar. 1 (WR)
Lisa Deaton ~ Mar. 2 (HQ)
Dwight Stallard ~ Mar. 2 (FC)
Jay Bassett ~ Mar. 3 (ER)
Gregg O'Donnell ~ Mar. 3 (HQ)
Mary Frazier ~ Mar. 5 (HQ)
Cindy Bronner ~ Mar. 6 (ER)
Phyllis Carruthers ~ Mar. 6 (Ret.)
Karen Stanley ~ Mar. 6 (WR)
Jack Kauffman ~ Mar. 7 (CR)
Robbie Talbert ~ Mar. 8 (CR)
Larry Wood ~ Mar. 9 (ER)
Bryant Bays ~ Mar. 10 (CR)
James Harris ~ Mar. 10 (Ret.)
Gary Heiser ~ Mar. 12 (SF)
Kathleen Ogilvy ~ Mar. 12 (ER)

Shannon Lewis ~ Mar. 13 (CR)
Harold Fisher ~ Mar. 14 (CR)
Rodney Keenon ~ Mar. 14 (Ret.)
Rich Reuse ~ Mar. 15 (ER)
Todd Groh ~ Mar. 18 (HQ)
Debbie Howe ~ Mar. 18 (HQ)
Bruce Harmon ~ Mar. 19 (CR)
Jim Pugh ~ Mar. 19 (HQ)
David Queen ~ Mar. 21 (HQ)
Richard Holman ~ Mar. 23 (SF)
Mike Womack ~ Mar. 29 (SF)
Rodney Newlin ~ Mar. 31 (CR)
Houston Roberts ~ Mar. 31 (CR)
Wayne Perfater ~ Apr. 1 (WR)
Jim Bowling ~ Apr. 3 (CR)
Larry Dunn ~ Apr. 3 (Ret.)
Orville Long ~ Apr. 4 (Ret.)
Gale Washburn ~ Apr. 4 (CR)
Kristi Woodie ~ Apr. 4 (HQ)
Paul Reier ~ Apr. 5 (ER)
Paul White ~ Apr. 5 (CR)
Carl Belew ~ Apr. 9 (HQ)
Bill Ruby ~ Apr. 9 (Ret.)
Ernie Thompson ~ Apr. 11 (HQ)
Zach Dowling ~ Apr. 13 (ER)
Joe Lehnen ~ Apr. 15 (CR)

David Milby ~ Apr. 16 (ER)
Woody Washington ~ Apr. 16 (HQ)
Zach Olinger ~ Apr. 19 (SF)
David Richert ~ Apr. 20 (WR)
Brian Irvine ~ Apr. 21 (ER)
John Pemberton ~ Apr. 21 (HQ)
Ralph Brubaker ~ Apr. 22 (Ret.)
Steve Counts ~ Apr. 25 (WR)
Ricky Gravley ~ Apr. 25 (CR)
Ken Mohler ~ Apr. 27 (WR)
Donnie Garman ~ Apr. 29 (WR)
Charlie Becker ~ May 1 (HQ)
Greg Winston ~ May 2 (Ret.)
Percy Ayers ~ May 3 (HQ)
Donna Hoy ~ May 3 (HQ)
Rob Suydam ~ May 3 (ER)
Jerre Creighton ~ May 4 (HQ)
Steve Moyer ~ May 5 (CR)
Stan Warner ~ May 8 (Ret.)
Al Brooks ~ May 10 (CR)
Paul Revell ~ May 10 (HQ)
Travis Rivers ~ May 10 (WR)
Chris Asaro ~ May 12 (HQ)
Kelli Craddock ~ May 12 (HQ)
James Guess ~ May 14 (Ret.)

Clara Rowe ~ May 15 (ER)
Lynwood Rogers ~ May 16 (HQ)
Arthur Cox ~ May 19 (Ret.)
Russell Proctor ~ May 19 (WR)
Dean Cumbia ~ May 20 (HQ)
Derek Keiser ~ May 20 (CR)
Bill Bruffey ~ May 22 (HQ)
Barton Pfautz ~ May 23 (ER)
Dennis Anderson ~ May 24 (WR)
Larry Layman ~ May 24 (Ret.)
Sara Shullaw ~ May 25 (HQ)
Jessica Carroll ~ May 28 (HQ)
Amy Ricotta ~ May 29 (HQ)
William Braford ~ May 30 (Ret.)
Richard Miles ~ May 31 (Ret.)

PROJECT PLANT IT!

DOMINION INSPIRES YOUNG ARBORISTS WITH PROJECT PLANT IT!

For the third consecutive year, Dominion, one of the nation's largest producers of energy, is offering Project Plant It!, its popular environmental education program, to elementary school students across the Commonwealth. More than 29,000 students in metro Richmond, Northern Virginia, Southwest Virginia and Eastern Virginia will learn about how trees improve the environment. In addition, all participating students will receive a blue spruce seedling to celebrate Arbor Day on April 24, 2009.

Foresters from the Virginia Department of Forestry will assist Dominion with several Project Plant It! classroom presentations in the spring. Also, thousands of students statewide will attend Tree Trivia assemblies at their elementary schools and receive goodie bags containing fun, educational items from Radio Disney and Dominion, as well as helpful information provided by the Department of Forestry.

Project Plant It! includes interactive educational materials – creative lesson plans, posters, a DVD and more – targeted to the Virginia Standards of Learning for third-grade, as well as a dedicated Web site (www.ProjectPlantIt.com) with lots of tree facts, games and even several short videos about trees. The educational materials teach students about the important role that trees play in our ecosystem including how they help to moderate climates, improve air quality, absorb carbon, harbor wildlife, prevent soil erosion and reduce heating and cooling costs.

Project Plant It! has more than tripled in scope and size since it first launched in the Richmond region in 2007. Providing tree seedlings to each student lets them make a direct contribution to the environment.

Experts at the Virginia Department of Forestry estimate that if 29,000-plus seedlings are planted, that would be equivalent to more than 72 acres of new forest land in Virginia.

For more information on Project Plant It! and to download teaching materials or view the videos about trees, visit www.ProjectPlantIt.com.



View the Forestry News and other Virginia Department of Forestry publications electronically.

www.dof.virginia.gov

**Submit articles to:
Janet Muncy, editor
janet.muncy@dof.virginia.gov**

The deadlines are as follows:

Summer Issue -- May 1, 2009

Fall Issue -- August 1, 2009

Winter Issue -- November 1, 2009

Spring Issue -- February 1, 2010

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02/2009