



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Virginia 2019



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2018 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$600,000
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$1,317,088
Forest Legacy	\$1,850,000
Forest Stewardship	\$259,718
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$1,041,786
State Fire Assistance	\$1,859,329
Urban and Community Forestry	\$466,235
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$221,739
Total	\$7,615,895

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

Program Goals

- The cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership among the Commonwealth of Virginia, the USDA Forest Service, and many other entities. They promote the health and productivity of forestlands and rural economies. Emphasis is on timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, rural economies, community forest, and conservation practices.
- The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of community and rural forests, the related economies, as well as to protect the forests and citizens of the commonwealth. These programs maximize cost effectiveness through the use of partnerships in program delivery, increase forestland value and sustainability, and do so in a voluntary and non-regulatory manner.

Key Issues

- Virginia's forests are under increasing pressure to provide an array of critical services to citizens and the nation. The most obvious benefits are productive jobs, strong communities, and excellent environmental health including clean water and air, bio-energy, habitat, and buffers for climate change. Our focus is equipping forest landowners with the information and knowledge to sustainably manage their forests for current and future generations.
- Protecting and maintaining healthy streams and enhancing water quality and quantity are drivers in strategic planning at the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF). VDOF is supporting a unique position among southern states through a statewide logging inspection audit program and is supporting a southeastern regional effort to provide consistent monitoring of BMPs on silvicultural sites. VDOF monitored 4,774 timber harvests to ensure water quality protection and voluntary BMP compliance.
- Rapid urbanization in recent years has greatly increased fire danger in the more than 5,315 at-risk wildland urban interface areas throughout Virginia. A concentrated focus on improvement efforts in Virginia's highest risk communities as well as a continued focus on maintaining a high level of agency readiness is important to limiting the potential for wildfire-related damages.
- Swift and efficient initial attack of wildfire is key to the protection of Virginia's assets. Agency response efforts protect an average of 1600 homes and other structures annually with an estimated value of more than \$115.
- Divestiture of industry land (now nearly complete) and continuing fragmentation of non-industrial private forestlands (NIPF) present new opportunities and some challenges as the number of landowners needing services increases.
- VDOF was mandated by the five-state Chesapeake Bay Agreement to achieve the adoption of urban tree canopy (UTC) goals by at least 5 municipalities by 2010. VDOF has engaged 37 communities in

assessing their UTC goals and supports the UTC effort with both technical and limited financial assistance. VDOF must maintain the interest in UTC in the face of limited budgets at all levels of government.

- Ecosystem services and benefits provided by forests are undervalued. Even with the financial contribution provided by the forest products industry (\$17 billion annually) losses to the forestland base are unacceptable. It is imperative that we better develop markets for ecosystem services, such as water quality, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. It is also imperative that we better account for the conservation of these important services.
- Traditional forest industry jobs continue to transition to new markets with globalization. The carbon sequestration market-driven bioenergy sector, for example, continues to be strong. As the economy and the housing sector improve, some forest markets are growing; however, other under-performing markets are impacting forest landowners and industry. Increasing efforts in exports and value-added manufacturing such as Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) and other emerging markets will be needed.
- Wavy leaf basket grass has joined tree of heaven, kudzu, and a long list of other non-native invasive plants that are crowding out or killing a number of native species of trees. Additionally, invasive pests are negatively impacting hundreds of thousands of trees. The hemlock wooly adelgid is killing a large proportion of the hemlock trees in Virginia, and the emerald ash borer is devastating the state's ash resource. Gypsy moth and SPB are also serious threats to Virginia's forests.
- Despite the economic improvement, VDOF still needs to be aware of challenges and issues that impact our forests and forest industries. Timber harvesting is at record levels and these increased harvests are very positive to Virginia's private forestland owners and the economy. VDOF needs to continue to actively monitor our resource availability and sustainability to ensure that the Department can continue to receive all the benefits the citizens of Virginia depend on from our forests.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2018 Accomplishments	Value
Population	8,001,024	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	11,526
Acres of Forest Land	15,915,281	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	46,358
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	12,256,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	28,897
Number of NIPF Landowners	410,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	400
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	2,223,500	State Fire Communities Assisted	550
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	13,222,900	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	21,899
Number of Rural Fire Departments	580	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	2,833
Cities and Towns	229	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	124
Forest Based Employment	107,900	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	6,597,455
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	3	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	46,128
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	34,513,853		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance provides funding to support firefighting resources throughout Virginia. The main focus areas of Cooperative Fire Protection in the Commonwealth include the training of more than 900 firefighters in wildfire suppression and incident command; development of additional volunteer fire department capacity through federal property programs and Volunteer Fire Assistance grant funding; focused efforts on wildfire hazard mitigation in Virginia's highest risk woodland home communities; and wildfire prevention efforts that use both targeted public messaging, as well as law enforcement efforts, to reduce unwanted fire starts. Specific program areas include use of the Federal Excess Personal Property Program to assist Virginia in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the

state; the use of Volunteer Fire Assistance funding to provide much needed personal protective equipment, tools, and equipment to rural fire departments across the state; and focused efforts through the State Fire Assistance program to reduce the threat of wildfire damages in Virginia's highest risk communities.

Economic Action

The VDOF is actively involved with partners and other stakeholders to look for new markets to improve utilization of our forest resources. The VDOF continues to maintain one of the most active traditional economic development programs in the southern region. Examples of this include work with Virginia Tech and other partners on emerging markets for low-grade and underutilized wood including biomass energy, urban wood utilization, Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) production and specialty forest products. To help with forest management on small forest acreages and urban/suburban forests, VDOF and partners created workshops to address the lack of service providers that work in these areas. A database of forestry service providers focused in these areas is also being developed. To diversify forest-based economic development in the state, workshops and research are being conducted on specialty forest products and developing potential uses for Ailanthus and other invasive species to assist with control efforts. An updated economic study was recently completed that highlights the importance of forestry and the forest industry in Virginia. VDOF is promoting forest industry and products domestically and internationally through membership in or partnering with agencies and groups such as the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Virginia Department of Ag and Consumer Services, the Virginia Biomass Energy Group, the Virginia Forestry and Forest Products associations, Virginia Loggers Association, the Southern Group of State Foresters Services, Utilization & Marketing Committee, and state universities.

Forest Health Protection

Southern pine beetle (SPB) populations continue to be low. The SPB prevention program (in cooperation with the USFS Forest Health Protection Program) completed its 14th year in 2018. Since its inception, nearly 60,000 acres of prevention thinning have been conducted to lower the risk of infestation in the state's pine belt. Gypsy moth is a recurring pest and damaged hardwood trees were observed over 23,000 acres in southwest Virginia and the Shenandoah Mountains this year. The emerald ash borer is a major threat to the ash resource and has been confirmed in 71 counties. The Commonwealth's hemlock trees continue their decline due to the hemlock woolly adelgid. The release of the adelgid's natural predator continues and offers long-term hope of reducing the adelgid's impact. The release of biological control agents of the emerald ash borer and the hemlock woolly adelgid offers long-term hope of preserving ash and hemlock trees across the landscape. A new pest, the spotted lanternfly, was first discovered in Virginia in 2018. This invasive insect feeds on over 70 host plants and is a threat to multiple industries. Currently, the area of infestation is limited to the city of Winchester and Frederick County just north of Winchester. In addition, wavy leaf basket grass has joined the long list of non-native invasive species that are negatively impacting the state's forest resources.

Forest Legacy

The VDOF recorded our largest easement to date, on the 2,833-acre Little Stony property in Giles County. This easement was awarded a FY17 Forest Legacy grant for \$1.275 million and was a partnership with the New River Land Trust and the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest. This easement will protect significant conservation values including nearly twenty miles of streams, habitat for 12 natural heritage resources, and a long-term forest research plot associated with the Smithsonian Institute. The property is adjacent to the University of Virginia's Mountain Lake Biological Research Station and shares a 4.5-mile border with the Jefferson National Forest, and fronts on two miles of the Appalachian Trail. The property contains eight miles of Little Stony Creek, which flows over the Cascades – a hugely popular USFS day use area – about two miles downstream. In addition, VDOF in partnership with the Nature Conservancy has been awarded a FY18 Forest Legacy grant for \$1,300,000 to nearly double the size of Big Woods State Forest in Sussex County and acquire a conservation easement on 710 acres on ecologically sensitive lands at the confluence of the Nottoway River and Austin Branch. The City of Charlottesville, with the assistance of VDOF and the Piedmont Environmental Council, was awarded a \$600,000 FY18 Forest Legacy Community Forest grant for the acquisition of approximately 143 acres of forestland adjacent to the Ragged Mountain Reservoir (which provides drinking water to Charlottesville) and Natural Area. Pending is a \$1,000,000 FY19 grant application that would preserve 1,658-acres on Jack Mountain in Highland County as well as a \$7 million FY20 application for the acquisition of the 4944-acre Stanley Land and Lumber property in Charlotte County. This property is

currently VDOF's highest priority for acquisition of a new state forest and is in partnership with the Conservation Fund.

Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship program continues with consistent and steady accomplishments, with VDOF field foresters working with private forest landowners to plan and improve management on their lands. The benefits derived from a forest stewardship plan extend far beyond those enjoyed by the landowners.

Every citizen enjoys clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, aesthetics, and recreational opportunities afforded to them by healthy, sustainable forests. VDOF continues a strong partnership with Virginia Tech, through Stewardship funding, to provide outreach information and training events to forest landowners. Significant events have included forest landowner retreats, outreach to real estate professionals, bus tours, electronic newsletters, and teaching.

Landowner Assistance

VDOF continues to provide information, recommendations, and technical assistance to landowners in managing their forest resources. VDOF field foresters and technicians work closely on developing practice plans and providing guidance in implementation of these plans. This is often done in concert with forestry service contractors and consulting foresters. VDOF operates two seedling nurseries, with a capacity of more than 30 million seedlings, used to support very active reforestation and conservation programs. In some areas, VDOF provides state-sponsored planting and herbicide spraying contracts, in which many private sites are aggregated to bring economics of scale and contractor access to private landowners. VDOF is focusing on pine sustainability in southern Virginia, with two new dedicated pine resource specialists and additional state cost-assistance for landowners. VDOF is also developing a hardwood initiative strategy, which will focus on training, demonstration and outreach. VDOF is working closely with the USDA, state, and private partners to reinvigorate the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and riparian forest buffer establishment in general. Buffers play a key role in water quality, habitat and agricultural conservation. Significant activity with federal, state, and private partners is taking place in southeast Virginia with efforts to restore the nearly extinct longleaf pine ecosystems. Additionally, there is growing interest and activity in restoring shortleaf pine.

Urban and Community Forestry

The VDOF, through a partnership with the US Forest Service, provides communities technical, financial, and educational support so they may plant, protect, and maintain community trees and forests. In FY 2018, VDOF's program provided assistance to communities comprising 95 percent of the Commonwealth's population and partnered with 58 Tree City USA communities. VDOF assisted with planning assistance for several under-served communities through the VA Tech Community Design Assistance Center. VDOF and the VA Urban Forest Council (VUFC) provided educational opportunities at multiple venues across the state. The VUFC maintains a scholarship program for 2-year, undergraduate and graduate level students in natural resource fields. VDOF sponsors the VA Natural Resources Leadership Institute, which takes participants through a year-long process of investigation into various environmental issues and leadership training. VDOF continues its leadership with the UFST program by training state personnel in protocols of evaluating tree damage following major natural disasters. The UFSTs have responded to multiple events during the past year to assist communities in recovery after tree damage caused by natural disasters. VDOF continues to assist the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) in promoting the Certified Arborist Program by hosting two training programs each year and providing scholarship funding through the local MAC-ISA chapter. VDOF has engaged 37 communities in the process of establishing urban tree canopy goals to help meet Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Agreement commitments. Also, VDOF continues to support the evaluation of utility-friendly tree cultivars under its Municipal Tree Restoration Program to encourage the planting of trees under power lines that will not cause interference. Through the VA Trees for Clean Water grant program, communities and non-profits all across VA have received grant cost-share funding for tree planting.

Water Quality

VDOF has been involved with the protection of our forested watersheds since the early 1970's with the development of our first set of Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality. The Department utilizes the fifth edition of those guidelines, which came out in 2011. The backbone for the Department's water quality effort is the harvest inspection program, which began in the mid-80's. This program has provided for one-on-one contact between VDOF and the harvest operators and is a

welcomed opportunity to educate the operators on BMPs and the latest in water quality protection techniques. In fiscal year 2018, VDOF field personnel conducted 18,086 field inspections on 4,774 timber harvest sites (3.8 inspections per site) across Virginia on 216,077 acres. Another main focus of the VDOF water quality program is logger education. This occurred through training that the agency sponsored and recently, through VDOF participation in the SFI® program, has enabled VDOF to assist in training 9,272 harvesting professionals in 304 programs related to water quality protection. For fiscal year 2018, there were 20 training programs offered reaching a total of 606 individuals. Six of these courses were in the core area (148 attendees) and the remaining 14 courses were for logger continuing education (458 attendees). Results from the calendar year 2017 data show that BMP harvest median implementation rate on 240 randomly selected tracts is 95 percent (the harvest median score is the best judge of central tendency of the tract score). The audit results also showed that 100 percent of the sites visited had no active sedimentation present after the close-out of the operation.

Contact Information



Virginia Department of Forestry

Rob Farrell
State Forester
900 Natural Resources Drive
STE 800
Charlottesville, VA 22903
434-997-6555
rob.farrell@dof.virginia.gov

US Forest Service Southern Region

Ken Arney
Deputy Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
1720 Peachtree Street, Suite 760S
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-347-4178
ken.arney@usda.gov
