



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Virginia 2018



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2017 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$722,680
Forest Legacy	\$1,320,000
Forest Stewardship	\$316,583
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$468,214
State Fire Assistance	\$1,809,030
Urban and Community Forestry	\$503,489
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$221,739
Total	\$5,361,735

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 5,010 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 1300 homes annually with an estimated value of more than 140 million dollars.
- 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 underperforming 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 woolly 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.
- Virginia's forest industry is expanding and improving markets have increased annual industry-related economic output to over \$21 billion. Employment has also increased to 107,900 jobs based on the new "2017 Economic Impacts of Agriculture and Forest Industries in Virginia Study".
- Despite the economic improvement, we still need 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. We need to continue to actively monitor our resource availability and sustainability to ensure that we can continue to receive all the benefits that we depend on from our forests.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2017 Accomplishments	Value
Population	8,001,024	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	10,510
Acres of Forest Land	15,915,281	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	40,062
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	12,256,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	24,818
Number of NIPF Landowners	410,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	460
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	2,223,500	State Fire Communities Assisted	650
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	13,222,900	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	46,953
Number of Rural Fire Departments	580	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	229	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	110
Forest Based Employment	107,900	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	6,418,748
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	3	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	63,962
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	33,014,311		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance provides funding to support firefighting resources throughout Virginia, including the development of 242 Community Wildfire Protection Plans. The Federal Excess Personal Property Program assists Virginia in acquiring and placing fire equipment in rural communities throughout the state. In addition, VDOF administers Volunteer Fire Assistance Program funds to support the fire prevention and protection efforts of rural community fire departments.

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 will be completed in early 2017 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, Southern Group of State Foresters' Services, Utilization & Marketing, 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 2017. Since its inception, almost 50,000 acres of prevention thinning have been conducted to lower the risk of infestation in the state's pine belt. Gypsy moth produced almost 33,000 acres of defoliation this year. The emerald ash borer is a major threat to the ash resource and has been confirmed in 53 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. An outbreak of the native variable oakleaf caterpillar caused defoliation in 14 counties, primarily in eastern Virginia. 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 Little Stony property, a 2,833-acre potential conservation easement in Giles County, was highly ranked during the FY2017 Forest Legacy grant round. The project was funded at approximately \$1,350,000 and VDOF expects to complete this landmark deal in the first half of calendar year 2018. Due to administrative decisions at the federal executive agencies, the project ranking and funding amounts for the FY2018 grant round, which included VDOF's proposal to double the size of Big Woods State Forest, have yet to be officially announced. VDOF works within the state's land conservation community to identify properties that possess significant conservation values and that would be good candidates for Forest Legacy Program submission. One property identified in this process was developed this year into a grant application for consideration during the FY2019 grant round. This year's proposal would preserve a 1,658-acre tract in Highland County encompassing the peak of Jack Mountain. Legacy funds were utilized during 2017 to pay for due diligence work on the Little Stony project, to cover some administrative costs of operating the program and to support professional educational opportunities on topics and issues at the forefront of VDOF's land conservation program.

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 weekend 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

practices 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 sustainability 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 USDA Forest Service, provides communities technical, financial, and educational support so they may plant, protect, and maintain community trees and forests. In FY 2017, VDOF's program provided assistance to communities comprising 95 percent of the Commonwealth's population and partnered with 56 Tree City USA communities. VDOF assisted with planning assistance for several underserved communities through the VA Tech Community Design Assistance Center. VDOF and the Virginia 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 Virginia 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 in the southern state's program to train personnel in storm damage response for urban areas. The Urban Forest Strike Teams have responded to multiple events during the past year to assist communities in recovery after storm 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. 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 research to identify utility-friendly tree cultivars under its Municipal Tree Restoration Program. Through the Virginia Trees for Clean Water grant program, communities and non-profits all across Virginia have received grant cost-share funding for tree planting. VDOF has supported green infrastructure planning in 10 communities and has invested in additional green infrastructure planning.

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 2017, VDOF field personnel conducted 22,143 field inspections on 5,010 timber harvest sites (4.4 inspections per site) across Virginia on 220,105 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 8,666 harvesting professionals in 284 programs related to water quality protection. For fiscal year 2017, there were 15 training programs offered reaching a total of 536 individuals. Seven of these courses were in the core area (152 attendees), and the remaining ten courses were for logger continuing education (278 attendees). Results from the calendar year 2016 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 98.32 percent of the sites visited had no active sedimentation present after the close-out of the operation.

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