



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Virginia 2016



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2015 Final
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$1,524,250
Forest Legacy	\$1,136,091
Forest Stewardship	\$334,665
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$623,030
State Fire Assistance	\$4,044,002
Urban and Community Forestry	\$407,974
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$307,541
Total	\$8,377,553

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, and conservation practices.
- The overarching goal is to maintain and improve the health of urban and rural forests, the related economies, as well as, to protect the forests and citizens of the state. 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 its 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 Best Management Practices on silvicultural sites. The department monitored 5,578 timber harvests to ensure voluntary BMP compliance.
- Rapid urbanization in recent years has greatly increased fire danger in the more than 4,200 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.
- Divestiture of industry land and continuing fragmentation of non-industrial private forestlands (NIPF) is causing concern as to the direction of forest management assistance that will be needed in the future.
- VDOF was mandated by the five-state Chesapeake Bay Agreement to achieve the adoption of urban tree canopy (UTC) goals by at least five municipalities by 2010. VDOF has engaged 15 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 a strong growth area in Virginia and includes 10 wood pellet mills for both domestic and foreign markets, five biomass and one hybrid coal/biomass electrical generation plants, and several biomass energy plants providing both heat and energy to industrial, commercial, and public operations.
- 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. The emerald ash borer, the European wood wasp, and southern pine beetle are serious threats to Virginia's forests.
- Virginia's forest industry is expanding and improving markets are increasing the more than \$17 billion of annual industry-related economic output. Employment is also increasing beyond the more than 103,000 jobs reported in the "2013 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 2015 Accomplishments	Value
Population	8,001,024	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	8,325
Acres of Forest Land	15,915,281	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	40,419
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	12,256,000	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	25,715
Number of NIPF Landowners	410,000	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	400
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	1,692,400	State Fire Communities Assisted	1,900
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	13,500,000	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	76,910
Number of Rural Fire Departments	580	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	229	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	107
Forest Based Employment	103,000	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	6,307,336
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	4	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	38,673
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	29,275,254		

Program Highlights

Cooperative Fire Protection

State Fire Assistance provides funding to support firefighting resources throughout Virginia, including the development of 265 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 in local partnerships to look for new markets to utilize woody biomass. 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 in promoting biomass utilization through use of waste wood, harvesting residues, and urban wood waste. 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 study was completed that highlighted the importance of forest and the forest industry in Virginia. VDOF is promoting forest industry and products through membership in or partnering with groups such as the Virginia Forest-Based Economic Development Council, the Virginia Biomass Energy Group, the Virginia Forest Products Association, Piedmont Sustainable Woods, the Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D), 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 12th year in 2015. Since its inception, over 40,000 acres of prevention thinning have been conducted to lower the risk of infestation in the state's pine belt. Gypsy moth produced almost 9,000 acres of defoliation this year. The emerald ash borer is a major threat to the ash resource and has been confirmed in 31 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. 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

During 2015, the most recent Forest Legacy grant (FY15) was utilized to conserve a 1,219 acre forested property near the confluence of the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers. This property, known as the Ellis Mine Tract; protects the City of Fredericksburg's water supply as well as historic stone locks of the Rappahannock Canal Company; protects shafts and pits where gold mining occurred in the late 1800's; and protects the site of a historic stamp mill that utilized the gold ore. In addition, three significant proposals were submitted for the FY 2017 grant round that, if funded, would add significant acreage to the Legacy-funded Big Woods State Forest, add to the Legacy-funded Cove property along the Staunton River, and/or conserve a significant forested property adjacent to the Jefferson National Forest near the Appalachian Trail.

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, esthetics, 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 been the 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 who want to manage their forest resources properly. The department's ground and aerial herbicide program continues to provide a mechanism for private landowners to manage their pine plantations at a reasonable price and provide a venue for landowners to connect directly with private spray contractors. The reforestation program uses the same approach as the spray program to aggregate landowner acres and provides state contracts that are offered for bid to private contractors. This process most often provides a lower price per acre for the landowner and allows the Department the ability to maintain quality control on the projects. Recent evolution of these programs has led to empowerment and development of the private sector in providing these services. VDOF is working with state and federal partners to improve the planting and survival of hardwood seedlings, especially the tracts that are cost-shared with state or federal funding, and implement plans to increase the planting and management of diminished pine

species (longleaf and shortleaf) in Virginia. And finally, work continues with state agencies and public utilities to slow the conversion of forestland to other land uses by developing a mitigation framework to help value and conserve forested lands for future generations.

Urban and Community Forestry

The USDA Forest Service, through a partnership with the VDOF, provides communities technical, financial, educational, and research services so they may plant, protect, and maintain community trees and forests. In FY 2015, VDOF's program provided assistance to communities comprising 85% of the Commonwealth's population and increased its number of Tree City USA communities to 58. 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) helped the adoption of urban tree preservation legislation and provided educational opportunities in several venues across the state. The VUFC maintains a scholarship program for urban forestry. VDOF continues its leadership in the southern state's effort to train personnel in storm damage response for urban areas. VDOF continues to assist the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) in promoting the Certified Arborist Program by hosting two training programs each year. VDOF has engaged 15 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 MTRP program.

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