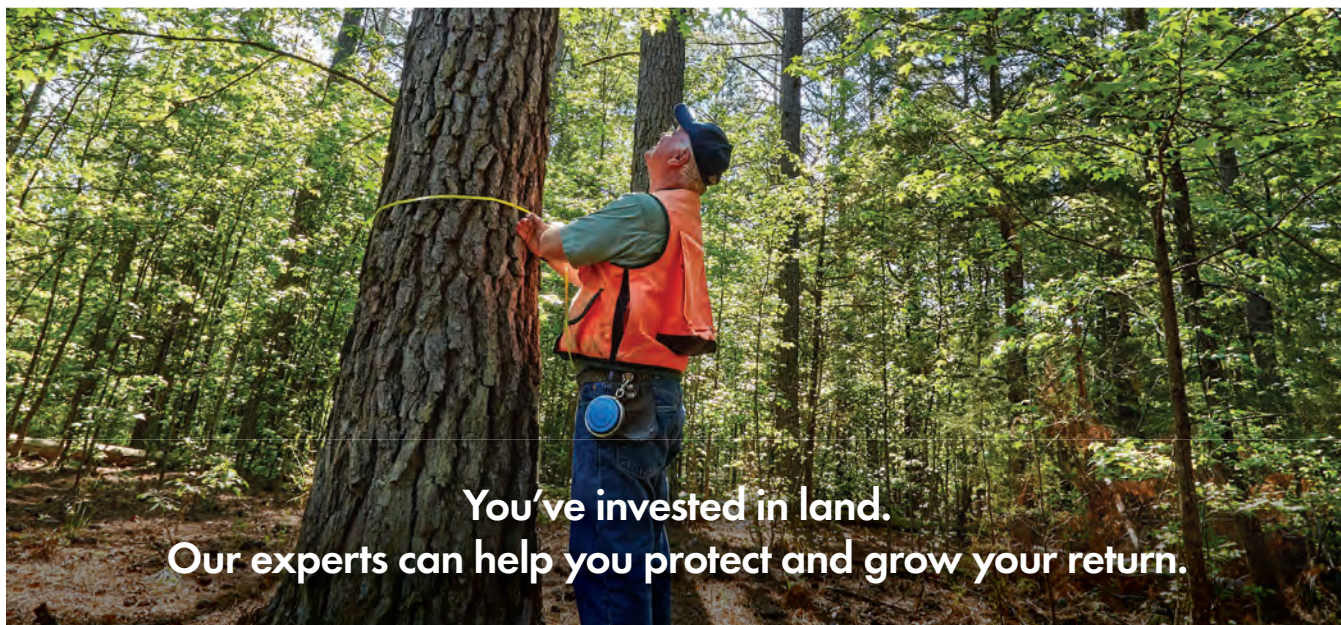


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# Virginia Forests

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Spring 2022

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**ON THE COVER:** Hikers near the Eagle Rock trail head of the Tuscarora Trail in Virginia. The Tuscarora Trail is a 252-mile hiking trail in the eastern United States, following the Appalachian Mountains through portions of Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. (PHOTO BY LILLY MOO)



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## *“Well It’s a Long, Long Journey to the Capital City...”*

**D**id you watch Schoolhouse Rock growing up? On Saturday mornings in the 1970s and early '80s, ABC aired this show featuring short, animated films intended to educate kids on several different subjects.

Math and science were featured in these musical cartoons, but I was usually most interested in the history and civics-based shorts. One in particular, “I’m Just a Bill,” garnered a cult following, driven by elementary school teachers looking to provide a simple answer to a complicated question: How does a bill become a law?

Elementary school teachers = the original influencers.

Admittedly, I often found myself humming that catchy tune this winter as HB180/SB184 wound its way through the Virginia General Assembly. This VFA priority legislation, creating a fund to support the statewide adoption of forest land use taxation by localities, was signed into law by Governor Youngkin on April 11, 2022. As the ink continues to dry on the parchment (please, let it be parchment), I’ve had some time to reflect on what happened and what comes next. I keep coming back to this:

*“When I started, I wasn’t even a bill. I was just an idea. Some folks back home decided they wanted a law passed. So they called their local congressman, and he said, ‘You’re right, there oughta be a law.’”*

—*“Bill” from Schoolhouse Rock*

When the VFA Board decided to do something about land use late last fall, the specific policy prescription was not clear. Cumberland County had just become the latest locality to repeal forest land use taxation. Since 1974, localities have been able to reduce the tax burden on owners of land used in producing food, fiber, and timber.

Unlike the more widely utilized tax relief for agricultural and horticultural lands, forests do not generate a tangible economic impact in the local community annually. When a county administrator or a Board of Supervisors is looking for a way to close a budget gap, axing property tax relief for



Corey Connors

forests quickly surfaces as a way to make ends meet. The fact that revenue deferred by the locality for land use has negative consequences on the formula for state education funding is also unhelpful to the cause.

This is the point at which Schoolhouse Rock begins to betray us. Turns out, a bill does not magically appear on the steps of the Capitol to hang out in committee for a spell. To make good public policy, many stakeholders must be engaged early in the process and solicited for buy-in. Not only patrons, but key staff, potential partners, and even prospective opponents. The groundwork for HB180/SB184 was established quickly with the help of Robert Crockett and our friends at Advantus Strategies.

What emerged was an innovative measure that incentivizes, but does not require, localities to utilize forest land use taxation. Reimbursing a portion (or all) of a locality’s forgone revenue with desperately needed funds for public education and/or projects related to outdoor recreation and forest conservation is a sizeable carrot for local officials. A good mechanism even as some questions are left to answer. Namely: 1) how big should/does the carrot need to be, and 2) from where among the presently bountiful fields of Virginia’s state coffers might said carrot be “harvested?”

If you followed our sprint through the General Assembly this session, either in these pages or the VFA Voice, you already understand how well things played out. Lesser known is that, in early January, our best hope was that we would have a good bill upon which to message the importance of private forest ownership, and that it could take years, not weeks, to get something across the finish line. We did not envision catching uncertain, swirling winds in our sails.

There is little use in denying it: we got lucky. But as the Roman philosopher Seneca said, “Luck is when preparation meets opportunity.” So, what happens next?

First, there’s the whole unanswered carrot thing. Virtually no data exists to understand the financial scope of revenues deferred by the 75 localities that utilize forest land use taxation. VFA and its partners have advocated for funding in the state budget that would allow the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) to work directly with counties to secure that answer. As of this print deadline, the 2022-24 biennial budget has not been completed. But





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we remain hopeful that the identical \$1 million in both the House and Senate versions of the budget will be retained to complete this important first step.

Next, the guidelines for a reimbursement program need to be developed by VDOF. For example:

- Under the current program, deferred tax revenues can be clawed back if a property is converted to non-forest use. With the new program, how will reimbursed funds be treated upon conversion?
- Not all counties require owners to maintain forest management plans for any property enrolled in land use. What requirements, if any, might new or current participating counties establish to enroll acres in a program?
- How will the timing for reimbursement, with fairly complicated state and local budget cycles, work?

That initial appropriation of \$1 million also intends to support VDOF in developing guidelines to bolster the program.

Finally, there are longer-term questions regarding funding for this program in perpetuity. Localities, correctly I might add, would not jump headfirst into the deep end without some assurances that funding sources would be sustained into the future. Our best guesstimate suggests that annual funding could total eight figures before the decimal annually. That puts the impetus on VFA and its partners to

continue working with the Administration and the General Assembly to find sustainable dollars for our Sustainability Fund. Chubbs Peterson, via the Carpenters, captured it perfectly: "We've only just begun, to live..."

Some legislators have conveyed to VFA that localities in their district have inquired about the adoption of a forest land use ordinance as a result of HB180/SB184. This is obviously welcome news. In reality, there are several outstanding questions to be answered and steps to be taken for the impact of the Forest Sustainability Fund to be fully realized. Until then, know that VFA will continue to work behind the scenes to deliver on this promise for you.

Teamwork makes the dream work, and there are many stakeholders to thank for the efforts in securing passage of HB180/SB184:

***Our outstanding patrons.*** Sen. Frank Ruff and Del. Rob Bloxom are universally respected champions for forestry who shepherded this legislation through their chambers with broad bipartisan support.

***Our advocacy partners.*** The Virginia Forest Products Association, Virginia Agribusiness Council, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, and Virginia Association of Counties are the organizations among the most respected and effective advocates in Richmond. VFA was proud to partner with each of them on this initiative.

***Our contract lobbyist.*** Robert Crockett and the team at Advantus Strategies made the nearly impossible seem easy. Their generosity with their time and always valued counsel made our time together in the trenches both effective and enjoyable.

***And finally, you.*** Whether through your annual membership investment, your attendance at our community's Legislative Day on the Hill, through your support of VAForestPAC or of our new Advocacy Fund, we sincerely appreciate the support you have given VFA that allow us to better represent your interests. Thank you.

Onward! 🌲



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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# Vision and Legacy—Continuing

A year has passed by very quickly. It does not seem that long ago when I penned my first President's column titled "Vision and Legacy" in the Spring 2021 issue of this magazine. As you read this column, the President's gavel will have been passed on to Stephanie Grubb, our incoming President. Although this will be my last President's column it will not be my last work on creating a vision and legacy for forestry in Virginia. That will continue daily as I labor in my vocation as a forester and as I manage Brier Mountain Tree Farm, our family Tree Farm in Pittsylvania County.

Vision and legacy require a long-term perspective. Practicing forestry requires that, too. How else can you make a silvicultural recommendation on a hardwood stand that you may not see the full benefits of in your lifetime? That is why it is so important to be doing the things now that support long-term forest management in our Commonwealth. It is absolutely necessary to protect the right to practice forestry, free enterprise, and private property rights. These are essential for the maintenance of strong markets and a viable forest products industry that is the lifeblood for long-term forest management and forest land ownership.

In the Winter 2022 issue of *Virginia Forests*, I expressed my excitement about VFA's vision and plan for the future. Our association's two-year strategic plan includes the objective to enhance VFA's influence and advo-

—continued on page 28



Scott Shallenberger



# TIMBER SECURITY

## Stats and History



by Aaron Gilland, CFE

In the 21 years I've been in the timber security consulting business one of the more frequent questions is this: "Is timber theft really a problem?" I've also noticed over the years that the definition of timber security is different depending on the role of the person asking.

So, to ensure we are all operating within the same mindset, let's define terms. Timber security would be *the practice of preventing and detecting fraud within the forest industry*. If you are a mill manager, you tend to define timber security as raw materials inventory security or scale house security. If you're a procurement forester, zone jumping and fake billing schemes come to mind. If you're a landowner, you tend to define timber security as a timber trespass issue, harvesting security, or fraudulent invoices; and if you're a consulting forester, all of the landowner definitions apply along with the procurement forester definitions. For this article, the broader definition will be the practice of preventing and/or detecting fraud.

Again, ask yourself what your answer is to the question, "Is timber theft really a problem?"

At the risk of stepping on a few toes, I'd like to suggest the question stems from folks who aren't paying attention

to the news. Just with the COVID-19 relief packages there have been countless stories of companies and individuals who saw an opportunity for fraud in that program and invented employees they never had, inflated payrolls, and even invented companies to get the cash!

I know, the forest industry feels like a small, tight-knit group, and sacred ground where the foresters, landowners and loggers who work there would never game the system for personal gain. Frankly, that's one reason we all enjoy the work we do, whichever category we belong to. But the hard truth is our industry is not exempt from theft and fraud.

### National Report on Fraud Across Industries

The best statistical data on fraud comes from the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) who publish a "Report to the Nation" every two years. Their global membership is approximately 90,000. Since 1996 that report, based on actual fraud cases, has reported that the average organization (in any business) loses five percent of annual revenue to fraud. Multiply five percent by your company's annual revenue to get a good reference of how you are impacted by theft and fraud.



The ACFE's most recent published report in 2020 was based on 2,504 global fraud cases investigated between January 2018 and September 2019. All cases were reported by Certified Fraud Examiners. Certainly, an extensive list, but it by no means encompasses all theft and fraud cases. Let's examine a summary of the report to better understand the impact of fraud.

The overall median loss per case was \$125,000 and there were 895 cases reported in the U.S. The forest industry's median loss per case was \$100,000. Organizations with less than 100 employees suffered a higher median loss of \$200,000 per case, and the typical case lasted for 14 months before it was discovered. Corruption was the most common scheme in every global region sampled. Asset misappropriation schemes were the least costly at \$100,000 per case, but they represented 86 percent of all cases reported.

I think it's also important to keep in mind that the cases reported by the ACFE cover all industries, where inventory controls and four walls surround their inventory. Our industry has its assets scattered geographically, we don't have bar codes on every tree, and we don't really know what that tree is worth until it crosses a scale. Add to that our inventory is virtually indistinguishable once loaded on a log truck and stacked at the mill. I think you can see that the forest industry is unique and has a potential to be a soft target for thieves.

### **Fraud and Theft in the Timber Industry**

You may know the Forest Resources Association has a Forest Products Security Group. What you may not know is that group has been meeting at least yearly since 1989. It was originally formed by six companies (Mead, Champion, Georgia Pacific, International Paper, Weyerhaeuser, and Boise Cascade) with the goal of

comparing notes on industry cases to ascertain the best approaches to combat theft and fraud, share experiences to teach best practices, and network with like-minded professionals.

A few years ago, that group informally summarized some of the cases uncovered in the past 32 years. The documented cases cover all regions of the U.S. and add up to approximately \$58 million. And it is worth noting that only 20 percent of the cases were actual Theft of Wood. Most (75 percent) of the cases were creating or altering documents, and five percent of cases were both the actual theft of wood and altering documents. Let that sink in, please. It's common for us to assume timber security means actual wood theft, when the cases discovered in the industry tell a different story. Thieves are lazy and falsifying a document is much easier than toting wood.

The cases the group listed involved scale houses, fake vendor billing schemes, log scalers, embezzlement of company funds, kiting timber (cutting timber in one place and telling the scaler it came from a different place), stealing company timber, stealing landowner timber, and several cases where absentee landowners discovered clearcuts on their property that they did not authorize.

The good news is there are many and varied mitigation techniques any of us within the wood supply chain can take to strengthen our business control environment. The ACFE recommends using anti-fraud controls, anti-fraud policies and training employees to notice red flag activities within their work environment. The use of a hotline decreased the length of a fraud and can save on the total cost impact of a fraud.

The ACFE ([www.acfe.com](http://www.acfe.com)) has extensive papers detailing these policies, but some of the basics





include conducting independent audits of the financial statements, independent audits of the operational control environment, and training yourself and others in what a proper business control looks like. That, along with fraud awareness training, can go a long way to making you less a target.

For small businesses that don't have the luxury of staff and segregation of duties, your best defense is still education. Understand your business control environment and pay attention to any observed red flags. Yes, your administrator buys new cars every year maybe because she is wealthy, but maybe it's because she has figured out how to siphon cash out of your business. As President Reagan said, "Trust but verify!"

For forest landowners, take steps to post your boundaries, gate your roads (after discussing with your insurance agent), and inventory your timberland. Timber sales should be conducted with reputable people and when possible, as lump sum sales (provided you know your standing inventory). If agreeing to a per unit sale, deal with reputable

people you have references for, who track all loads leaving the sale and provide excellent settlement statements with prompt payments. And even if they do all that, feel free to monitor your sale with a game camera so you can compare the visual record against the settlement record. And if you have doubts, hire expert assistance. The Association of Consulting Foresters is a great place to find a forestry consultant near you. Have them provide references the same as anyone else you may hire!

I would also recommend all attend the next forest products security group meeting. It is a great place to continue your education! After all it's much cheaper to learn from someone else's experience than having to learn from your own! 🌲

*Aaron Gilland, CFE is President of Dendro Resource Management, Inc. DRM is a timber audit services company specializing in theft and fraud prevention. Contact him at [agilland@dendroresourcegmt.com](mailto:agilland@dendroresourcegmt.com) or (803) 438-6139 with questions. Or check out his website, [www.dendroresourcegmt.com](http://www.dendroresourcegmt.com).*



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## How to Enjoy Your Visit to a Logging Operation and Return Home Safely

by Scott Barrett



### THE LOGROLL

**M**aybe you are a landowner and your long-awaited timber harvesting operation is about to start. Or perhaps you are just really curious about what goes on with an active logging operation and have decided to visit. Or maybe you are going to be a part of a tour that is visiting an active logging operation. Regardless of the reason why you are on site, if you are not familiar with the activities on a harvesting site that uses a lot of heavy equipment, it can be intimidating. It is important to make sure you pay close attention to your surroundings and keep a few safety issues in mind so that you can return home safely at the end of the day. Also, don't forget to take the time while you are there to slow

down and enjoy watching the equipment and workers as they harvest and move trees and begin the process of turning trees into products. It really is impressive to watch!

**Before you arrive at a logging site, it's important to make sure you are prepared for a safe visit.**

You will want to dress appropriately for the weather and make sure that you have the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). For an active harvesting operation, you will need to have a hard hat. You will also want to wear a sturdy pair of boots with good ankle support. It is also important to wear high visibility clothing so that you can easily be seen by crew members working on site. A lightweight high visibility vest that you can put on over your regular outfit is a good choice for a visit to a logging operation. If it is a windy day, or if you

are on a logging operation that is using a chipper then you might want to also have pair of safety glasses to protect you from blowing dust. You won't typically be standing close to equipment

for very long while it is running, but if for some reason you are planning to spend time close to running equipment then you should bring hearing protection. The small foam ear plugs are inexpensive and easy to keep stored in a pocket in case you need them.

#### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Checklist

- Hard hat
- High visibility clothing
- Sturdy boots
- Hearing protection
- Safety glasses



## Don't forget to watch where you are walking.

- Watch for equipment moving near you.
- Stay out of the way of equipment; remain where you can be seen by the operators.
- Heads up for hazards.
- Beware of slips, trips, and falls.
- Keep your distance! Stay at least two tree lengths from active felling.

As you drive to the logging site, you will typically go to the “deck” or “landing” area. This is a centralized area where the loader is set up and trucks are loaded. Trees that have been harvested are “skidded” or dragged to this spot and then processed to prepare them for transport off site. This is one of the busiest spots on the whole logging operation so it is important to pay attention to your surroundings.

On your way in to the landing, look for loaded trucks that may be coming out. When you arrive at the landing make sure that you get your PPE on as soon as you get out of your vehicle, and make sure that you are seen by the crew, and they acknowledge you are there. The person operating the loader is often the one you will first communicate with when you arrive. Never walk up to the loader while it is being operated. Be patient, and remain at a safe distance while the operator finishes what they are working on. Wait for the operator to acknowledge you and until he sets the loader grapple on the ground before you approach or walk around the landing area.

After communicating with the crew on the landing, you may decide that you want to go out into the harvesting site to see some trees being felled. As you walk into the harvest

site, always watch out for equipment moving near you and stay at least two tree lengths away from any active felling operations. Keep your distance from active equipment and stay in a safe place where you can be seen by the crew are important for staying safe. As you walk through the harvest area, it is important to remember “heads up for hazards.” Many of the injuries that occur on logging operations come from falling objects, a broken limb falling out of a tree, for instance, so always look up and check out your surroundings as you walk through the harvest site. And don't forget to look down as well. A surprising number of logging accidents occur from slips, trips, and falls.

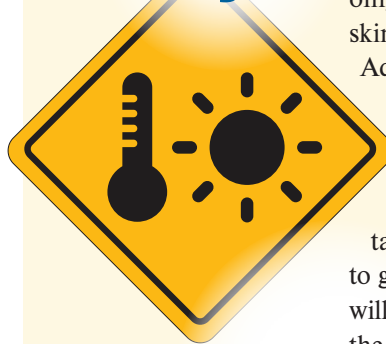
After you spend time walking around on a logging job, you'll see why that is. There are a lot of things you can trip over.

Don't be intimidated by the thoughts of going to a logging operation. If you have the opportunity, get out there and visit and enjoy it. The most important thing is to be sure you are taking steps to remain safe. Remember to bring your PPE and pay attention to what is going on around you so you can enjoy your visit and return home safely. 🌲

*Scott Barrett, Ph.D., is Associate Professor and Extension Specialist-Forest Operations at Virginia Tech, Department of Forest resources and Environmental Conservation. He is also the coordinator of the Virginia SHARP Logger program.*



## Warm Weather Safety



Hot summer months pose risks related to high temperatures and sun exposure. When your body's internal temperature rises, it tries to release excess heat by circulating more blood to the skin and by sweating. Sweating can be very effective, but only when the sweat is able to evaporate off the skin, as that is what actually provides the cooling. Additionally, sweating means you need to replace the fluids and salts being lost.

When looking at a weather forecast to predict conditions, use the heat index instead of just the temperature. The heat index takes both temperature and humidity into account to give a more accurate reflection of how conditions will affect the body. Once the heat index gets into the 90s and above, threats start getting severe and precautions need to be raised.



# Take These Precautions in Copperhead Country

by Michael Clifford

The Eastern Copperhead is the most widespread and common of Virginia's three venomous snakes. Copperheads are found in wooded habitats throughout the state, including rural, suburban, and even some urban areas. They are generally calm-natured animals that lie quietly, depending on their excellent camouflage to escape detection. Snakes will strike if accidentally stepped on or otherwise threatened, and bites can be serious if venom is actually injected, causing much pain and swelling. However, human fatalities are extremely rare.

Learn what a copperhead looks like. If you find one, leave it alone. Some bites occur when people try to kill or move the snake. Most snakes that you are likely to encounter will not be a copperhead, timber rattlesnake, or cottonmouth. All of Virginia's other native snakes are harmless.

You can see photos and read more about copperheads and all of Virginia's venomous and harmless species at: [http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/reptiles/snakes/snakes\\_of\\_virginia.htm](http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/reptiles/snakes/snakes_of_virginia.htm). 🌿

There are four common medical problems caused by heat exposure, including (in order of severity): heat rash, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Preventative measures can help you avoid heat related illness, including increasing the amount of fluids you drink, but avoiding alcohol, caffeine, and overly sugary drinks. If you are involved in heavy activity, experts recommend drinking two to four glasses of cool fluids each hour. Be sure there are cool places around and take frequent breaks in them. If you will be working in the sun, be sure to use a sunscreen rated at SPF15 or higher. Wear light, loose-fitting clothes, and you can also use a wide-brimmed hat to keep the sun off your head and. 🌿

*The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) has more information related to heat exposure at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatstress/>, or read "Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness," available from the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.html>.*

## SAFETY IN THE WOODS

***Follow these guidelines to significantly reduce the already low chance of being bitten by a copperhead or other venomous snake.***

### **Around the home or cabin:**

- Keep vegetation thinned and trimmed.
- Remove piles of brush and keep leaves well away from walkways and play areas.
- Be alert when working around stacks of firewood and lumber.
- Use heavy work gloves when handling firewood and building supplies.
- Wear shoes or boots when walking outside.
- Use a flashlight at night in warm weather. Shine before you step.
- Use a flashlight when working in a dark shed, garage or barn.
- Remove spilled bird seed that might attract rodents (a favorite copperhead prey).

### **When roaming the great outdoors:**

- Always stay alert!
- A hiking staff or trekking pole can be a useful safety tool.
- Wear hiking boots rather than sneakers.
- Walk on established trails as much as possible.
- Be careful when stepping over logs; first look on the far side.
- Be cautious in rocky terrain.
- Don't put your hands or feet in places where you can't see.
- Avoid thick vegetation that limits your vision.





## Avoid Hazards in the Woods

Peace and quiet, privacy, beautiful vistas, exercise. Living in the country and being outdoors sure have their benefits. However, there are also hazards in the woods. To maximize your family's enjoyment, here are some safety considerations.

### Firewise

Your woodlands can provide an idyllic setting for your home. However, woodlands in all parts of Virginia are susceptible to wildfires. Wildfires play a historically significant role in the succession of our woodlands. They reduce built-up debris and litter, return nutrients to the soil, and help prepare a suitable seedbed for regeneration. However, they do not mix well with residential areas. If you build a home in your woodlands, there are precautions you can take to reduce risk.

FireWise is a toolkit for landowners living near woodlands developed by the U.S. Forest Service. The FireWise program promotes wise landscape design as the means to decrease the chances of a wildfire destroying your home. Key concepts include removing flammable plants from near your home, creating a defensible space around your home (a well-maintained lawn that can serve as a firebreak as well as a safety zone for firefighting crews), and pruning yard trees appropriately. You can learn about FireWise Virginia from the Virginia Department of Forestry.

In addition, the Southern Group of State Foresters developed a free tool called SGSF Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal that landowners can use to assess their wildfire risk. This tool also links directly to information on how to reduce your property's wildfire risk.



### Chainsaws

Chainsaws can be extremely useful tools for everything from removing hazard trees to cutting firewood to heat your home. However, if used improperly, they can also be extremely dangerous. Make sure you've read the owner's manual, and always wear appropriate personal protective equipment. This includes chainsaw chaps, ear protection, hardhat, safety glasses with a side shield, and steel-toed shoes. It is inadvisable to cut down large standing trees unless you are experienced with tree-felling techniques, and you may want to hire a professional for the job.

The Virginia SHARP Logger Program offers online chainsaw safety training videos ([https://sharplogger.vt.edu/documents/Chainsaw\\_Safety2020/index.html](https://sharplogger.vt.edu/documents/Chainsaw_Safety2020/index.html)). The eXtension Foundation website also has a wealth of reliable chainsaw safety information, including instructional videos (<https://ag-safety.extension.org/chainsaw-safety/>).

### Ticks and Mosquitoes and Poison Ivy — Oh My!

These itchy, bitey things keep some folks inside instead of outside enjoying their property. While they can certainly cause discomfort, and in some cases even disease, there are simple things you can do to reduce your risk.

These itchy, bitey things keep some folks inside instead of outside enjoying their property. While they can certainly cause discomfort, and



**TICKS.** Ticks can be active year-round, and you should take special care in spring and early summer when the nymphs are very small.

- Avoid areas where ticks live—moist and humid environments, grassy areas, dead logs.
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing so you can easily spot ticks.
- Use repellants containing 20 to 30 percent DEET (or pretreat boots and clothing with permethrin or permethrin).
- Check your skin and clothes for ticks every time you go into the woods.
- Shower as soon as possible after being outdoors.
- Know how to properly remove a tick that is attached.
- Know the signs of tick-borne illnesses; early detection and medical treatment are important.

You can also take some actions that can reduce the number of ticks around your home. For example, remove leaf litter and clear tall grasses away from your yard, discourage deer by removing vegetation that attracts them, and control ticks on your pets.

**MOSQUITOES.** In addition to removing any sources of shallow standing water, you can take many of the same steps to reduce mosquito populations as you did to reduce ticks. Bats and purple martins feed on mosquitoes and can help control populations. Place bat houses in wooded areas and purple martin birdhouses in open areas.

**POISON IVY.** The best defense against poison ivy is to know how to identify and avoid it. You may recognize the saying “Leaves of three, let it be!” This is sage advice. Poison ivy has a trifoliate leaf, so three leaflets per leaf. Other species, such as blackberry, have trifoliate leaves as well, but are easy to discern from poison ivy. If contact is unavoidable, there are commercial products that can help block the oil from your skin. The clothing recommendations for avoiding tick bites also can protect you from poison ivy. Virginia Cooperative Extension’s publication, “Poison Ivy: Leaves of Three? Let It Be!” ([https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/en/426/426-109/426-109.html](https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/pubs_ext_vt_edu/en/426/426-109/426-109.html)) provides additional information on this plant.

If you do come into contact with poison ivy, there are commercial products which, when used immediately after exposure, can remove the toxic oils from your skin. These products can also be used to wash affected clothing. Simply washing with soap and warm water is not effective and may even make the problem worse by spreading the oil. In some serious exposure cases, medical treatment may be required. 🌿

—from *Welcome to the Woods! A Guide for New Forest Landowners*. Used with permission from the authors and contributors. The full publication (ANR-136P(CNRE-110P)) is available for download at <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/ANR/ANR-136/ANR-136.html>

## WHEN PEOPLE AND BLACK BEARS MEET.

Conflicts may arise when humans and black bears occupy the same area. When visiting or living in black bear country, it is always important to be aware of the potential of encountering a bear and to take every precaution to reduce conflicts. Although injury to humans by black bears is rare, it is always a possibility. Your behavior in bear country could affect your safety, the safety of others, and could even save the life of a bear.

Most conflict between people and bears arise as the result of food. Human foods, human garbage and even pet foods are attractants to black bears. Eliminating access to foods can reduce conflicts. Your actions may prevent an injury and the need to destroy a bear. When camping, take these precautions:

- Never camp in an area that has obvious evidence of bear activity such as digging, tracks, or scat.
- Keep your camp clean.
- Never leave human food, pet food or garbage available and unsecured.
- Do not cook in your tent or sleeping area.
- Store all foods, toiletries, and other scented items well away from sleeping areas and in locations that are unavailable to bears.

Bears should always be considered unpredictable and dangerous. More often than not, a wild bear will detect you first and flee from the area. However, black bears that have become accustomed to humans and their foods may not run away. In these cases, certain precautions are offered for consideration:

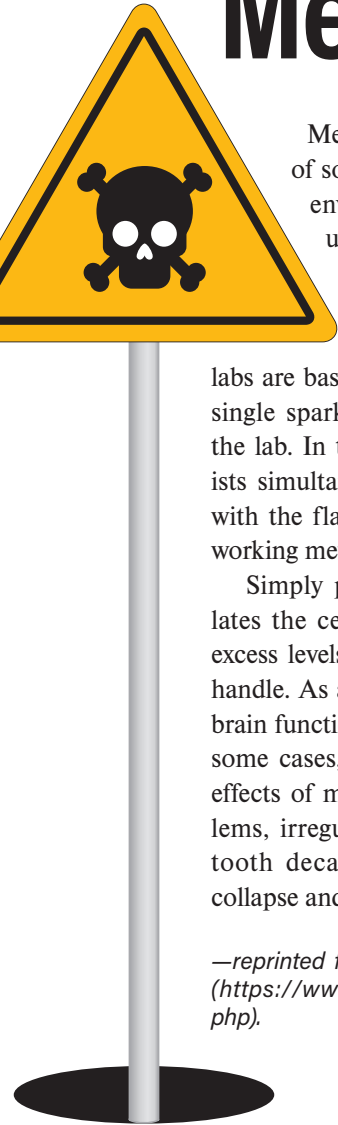
- Do not run. Remain calm, continue facing the bear and slowly back away.
- Keep children and pets close at hand.
- Make lots of noise. Yell, rattle pots and pans, whistle and break sticks.
- Travel in groups.
- Stand upright. Do not kneel or bend over. Wave arms, jackets or other materials.
- Never approach or corner a bear.
- Never offer food to a bear.
- Be aware of the presence of cubs and never come between a bear and its cubs.
- Fight back aggressively if a bear attacks you. 🌿

—reprinted from the US Forest Service website (<https://www.fs.fed.us/lei/bear-facts.php>). If you are involved in a conflict with a bear, regardless of how minor, report it to a Forest Service employee as soon as possible. Another's safety may depend on it.





# Dangers of Meth Labs



Meth labs are found in remote areas of some of our national forests. As an environmental hazard, the byproducts of meth labs contaminate their surroundings with harmful fumes and highly explosive chemical compounds. Abandoned meth labs are basically time bombs, waiting for the single spark that can ignite the contents of the lab. In the hands of the untrained chemists simultaneously using meth and working with the flammable chemical components, a working meth lab is just as unsafe.

Simply put, meth kills. The drug stimulates the central nervous system, producing excess levels of neurotoxins the brain cannot handle. As a health concern, meth eliminates brain functions and leads to psychosis and, in some cases, deadly strokes. Other long-term effects of meth use include respiratory problems, irregular heartbeat, extreme anorexia, tooth decay and loss, and cardiovascular collapse and death.

—reprinted from the US Forest Service website (<https://www.fs.fed.us/lei/dangers-meth-labs.php>).

## How to recognize a Methamphetamine lab.

- Unusual, strong odors like cat urine, ether, ammonia, acetone or other chemicals.
- Coffee filters containing a white pasty substance, a dark red paste, or small amounts of shiny white crystals.
- Glass cookware or stove pans containing a powdery residue.
- Shacks or cabins with windows blacked out.
- Open windows vented with fans during the winter.
- Excessive trash including large amounts of items such as anti-freeze containers, lantern fuel cans, engine starting fluid cans, HEET cans, lithium batteries and empty battery packages, wrappers, red chemically stained coffee filters, drain cleaner and duct tape.
- Unusual amounts of clear glass containers.

## If you suspect a meth lab, leave at once and report it.

- Do not open any coolers.
- Do not touch any items.
- Handling methamphetamine waste residue can burn your skin and eyes, and breathing in the gases can send you to the hospital.
- Handling these chemicals with unprotected skin, or getting the dust in your eyes can cause serious damage.

## Getting rid of a meth lab is dangerous and expensive.

Meth cooks dump battery acid, solvents and other toxic materials into rivers or the ground. Much of the waste is highly flammable and explosive.

- One pound of meth produces six pounds of toxic waste.
- Even months after meth labs have been closed, chemical residue still remains.
- The chemicals used in the manufacturing process can be corrosive, explosive, flammable, toxic, and possibly radioactive.
- Solvent chemicals may be dumped into the ground, sewers, or septic systems. This contaminates the surface water, ground water, and wells.
- Traces of chemicals can pervade the walls, drapes, carpets, and furniture of a laboratory site. 🌿

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Carolyn Copenheaver, associate professor, works with students on wildflower identification during a field course PHOTO BY KRIS TIMNEY.

# Taking Action Against Harassment in the Field

By Jenny Kincaid Boone

**Carolyn Copenheaver, an associate professor who teaches forest ecology, is leading a charge to address sexual misconduct and harassment in her courses, which all involve field labs.**

For Virginia Tech students who study forestry, the outdoors is the classroom.

Piling into university vans and heading out into the woods to study trees, wildflowers, and more is what they do, often several times a week. It's an essential component of lab instruction for many Virginia Tech faculty in the College of Natural Resources and Environment, including Carolyn Copenheaver, an associate professor who teaches forest ecology.

But because these outdoor labs don't take place in a traditional classroom, students often let their guards down.

A few years ago, Copenheaver was approached by female students sharing their experiences of harassment in the field.

That's when she realized that something had to change.

Fast forward a few years, and Copenheaver now is leading a charge to address sexual misconduct and harassment in her courses, which all involve field labs. In the process, she has become an outspoken resource for helping other faculty to maneuver this delicate topic.

Last October, Copenheaver, along with three other colleagues, published the results of numerous focus group

discussions with faculty at universities across the country. The discussions centered on how to address and prevent sexual harassment in higher education agriculture and natural resources programs with outdoor lab spaces.

The findings, which outline a list of best practices for faculty, were published in the *North American College and Teachers of Agriculture journal*. The work was funded by a USDA Higher Education Challenge Grant, and Copenheaver said she hopes to apply for another grant to continue this work.

She also has spoken with several professional groups about the work.

For many years, even during her own time in college, Copenheaver said she normalized some of the behavior and language that she heard in her forestry classes. She chalked up the language to the fact that the majority of students in those courses are male and some of the words were spoken as jokes. For example, in some of her classes for forestry majors at Virginia Tech, there may be only one female student among an all-male roster.

Copenheaver herself was one of few females in her master's and doctoral programs, and she now recalls being



a victim of sexual harassment. She heard certain language so often that she assumed it was what women had to endure in her field.

"I didn't even know that's what it was," she said.

### Focus on Change

Her work over the last few years has opened her eyes to changes that she needs to make to ensure that her students feel secure.

"They [students] know how to behave in a classroom; they've been doing it since kindergarten," Copenheaver said. "But we're driving to the woods, and people's informal behavior comes out. It's my job to police their language, because that's still part of the class, and I still have to create a safe space for all of my students."

The focus groups outlined a list of best practices for faculty to address sexual harassment upfront with their students. This includes stating rules in syllabi, bringing up the topic and expectations several times with the class, and establishing a laboratory code of conduct.

Others who worked with Copenheaver for the project include Adam Coates, an assistant professor of forest fire ecology and management at Virginia Tech; Adam Downing, a Virginia Cooperative Extension agent for agriculture, natural resources, and forestry in the Northern District; and Saskia van de Gevel, department chair and professor of geography and planning at Appalachian State University.

After talking with faculty from at least 10 universities, Downing said it was clear that many found it difficult to talk about sexual harassment in front of their students.

"There are words in this realm that people don't want to say out loud," he said. "We need to be able to do that to have meaningful conversations. I think just looking for opportunities to have these conversations, not just

checking the boxes that 'I got my Title IX training done,' would have some good outcomes."

After hearing from her students, Copenheaver sought help about what she could do and change from Anthony Scott, chief of inclusion and belonging in the Division of Student Affairs at Virginia Tech.

Scott said that it is essential that faculty address these issues in front of their students and see this as an important teaching opportunity.

"We are supposed to be preparing these students to go out in the world and make a difference," he said. "We can no longer continue to suggest through our silence that issues of equity and diversity and inclusion and belonging, that these issues aren't just as important as figuring out a mathematical formula."

### Raising Awareness

In the fall semester, Copenheaver initiated conversations about sexual harassment with her students and included explicit expectations in her syllabi. She will continue doing this going forward.

Copenheaver's research into these topics is unique to many agriculture and natural resources programs, said Wendy Fink, who is executive director of the academic programs section, and assistant vice president of food, agriculture, and natural resources at the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. Copenheaver presented her work for a subcommittee of the APLU this past summer.

"I think her research is very much needed in the fields of agriculture and natural resources," Fink said. "Raising awareness on how to prevent sexual harassment or assault, including through bystander training and creating a culture that encourages reporting, remains critical to creating safer working and learning environments for everyone."

Natalie Hedrick, a junior who is majoring in forestry at Virginia Tech, said she appreciates that Copenheaver is talking with her classes about how to treat one another appropriately.

"I think it's a conversation that needs to happen in every major within colleges," she said. "It's better to say it 1,000 times than one. The repetition is key with people our age. Especially when we go out into the field, language does change."

Hedrick said she enjoys having professors like Copenheaver in CNRE, who are female and can relate with her. In 2018, Copenheaver received the Society of American Foresters award for outstanding forestry education, the first woman ever to do so. She also received the Virginia Tech Alumni Award for Teaching Excellence in 2020.

Hedrick said Copenheaver helps her students feel that they are a part of a community.

"You don't feel uncomfortable asking questions," Hedrick said.

This is the kind of environment that Copenheaver wants to continue to foster—one in which students are not afraid to come to her with any questions or concerns.

"If we're not comfortable with it, if you have a student who is a victim, they will sense that you are uncomfortable, and they will never come to you," she said. "My goal is to be clear in my communication about what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in my classroom space. And my classroom space extends beyond the four walls where we have lectures. If I'm there, you're in my class." 🌿

*Those in the Virginia Tech community who need assistance or support may contact: Women's Center at Virginia Tech at 540-231-7806; the Office for Equity and Accessibility at 540-231-2010; or the university's Title IX Coordinator at 540-231-1824.*

*Reprinted with permission from Virginia Tech.*



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### Spring is in the Air

**A**hh... Spring in Virginia. Redbuds are blooming, daffodils are poking up, turkeys are gobbling. Monday it's 30 degrees, Wednesday it's 70, and Thursday afternoon it's snowing with 30 mile-an-hour winds. But spring in Virginia is also one of the most important times of the year for foresters in general and forestry consultants in particular, because spring means tree planting season—when we put on our briar pants, break out our shovels, and practice saying, “Ocho a diez!” and “No flojo!”

Timing is critical to tree planting. It's the culmination of years of work: from harvesting timber to preparing the site, from ordering trees to making sure they get shipped in the proper quantities, with the proper storage and handling, all the way to when that hoedad or dibble breaks the soil and the roots go in the ground.

As a wise forester told me many years ago, “We have one chance to get this right!” Mistakes made at this critical time have repercussions for decades and can cost tens of thousands of dollars in lost time and effort.

Every year we plant millions of trees to ensure we replace what we harvest, so that our clients can continue their stewardship of the land and their children and grandchildren can enjoy the forest and reap the rewards of that legacy of effort. Next time spring rolls around go out to the woods, sit on a stump, and think about all the hard work that began, decades ago, with a simple seedling being carefully planted in the ground. 🌱

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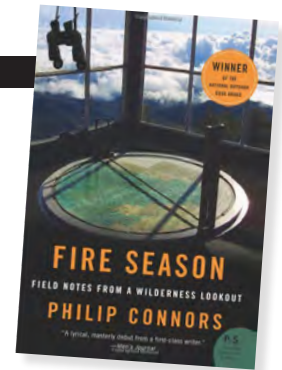
### BOOK REVIEW

# Fire Season

## Field Notes from a Wilderness Lookout

by Philip Connors

Reviewed by Anne Beals, Magazine Editorial Committee



After graduating with a major in journalism from the University of Montana, Philip Connors got an entry-level job with the *Wall Street Journal* in New York City. He should have known better. He was more a poet philosopher than a copy editor. When he figured this out, he found himself in the Gila Wilderness/National Park in Southwest New Mexico, watching for fires and writing about it. In the Black River District on Apache Peak, he perched in a 55 ft. tower for several hours a day, several months a year, and lived in a cabin at its foot. His dog came with him, and his wife stayed in their house in the nearest town.

Divided into months-long chapters, this book is an eloquent paean to the natural world. We learn in detail about the geography of the region, the characters that populate it, its flora and fauna, and accompany him on his daily quests to become part of it. Even though he obviously enjoys the hermit life, he constantly doubts his ability to do the job well but sticks with it for years. His sense of responsibility for the health and well-being of the ecosystem is impressive. We learn of his life in random flashbacks and enjoy the occasional visits of his wife, friends, through hikers, the random bear.

No matter what the weather, it's a major player in his drama. Cool, damp, hot, dry, rain, heavy winds – all are important to the protection of the forest. Waiting out a long rainless stretch or sitting in a tower surrounded by crackling lightning can be equally intense. Occasionally, there is fire. Started by lightning or careless campers, fire sends everything into overdrive.

This is a beautifully written book. The author reveals himself unstintingly and honestly, and he has much to teach about patience, perseverance, and the historic treatment of forest fire. Highly recommended. 🌲



## Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation Update

# Forestry Education A Staple for Virginia's 4-H Educational Centers

by Jason Fisher, District Extension Agent Forestry and Natural Resources

**F**orestry curriculum and field activities have been a favorite of Virginia's 4-H Educational Centers for over 50 years. In Virginia there are six 4-H Educational Centers, and each one has a suite of natural resources education delivered each year by trained staff through specialty camps and summer 4-H camps. (Visit <https://ext.vt.edu/4h-youth/camping/centers.html>). Each year, the Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation supports these centers with funds used specifically to pay for the summer staff member in charge of teaching forestry/environmental education during 4-H camp. Additionally, a summer intern is given an opportunity to gain valuable field experience, build their resumé, and potentially earn college credit towards their degree. The primary goal of the 4-H Camping program is to provide positive youth development through activities taking place in the outdoors.

One example is Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center (HLEC) located in the Appomattox/Buckingham State Forest. HLEC lends itself as an effective classroom for forestry education. Each year the 4-H Center is host to



eight 4-H youth summer camps and three specialty camps, including the Virginia Department of Forestry's week-long Camp Woods and Wildlife (formerly state Holiday Lake Forestry Camp). The main educational objective at HLEC is to inform the 2,000+ summer camp youth

that our forests are sustainable. It has been my experience as a past instructor for a "Goods from the Woods" class that many participants are surprised to learn about the quantity and variety of forest products they use every day.

When asked to describe details of Camp Woods and Wildlife, Coordinator Ellen Powell stated, "For more than 70 years, Virginia Department of Forestry has hosted Camp Woods & Wildlife, providing field-based, experiential learning to Virginia teens. VFEF supports this camp financially every year. In its early days, this camp was open only to boys, in particular rural boys, who took part in FFA clubs and agriculture classes. Today's campers include boys and girls ages 13 to 16 from all parts of Virginia. Core classes at camp include forest ecology, sustainable forest and wildlife management, tree identification, forest health, mapping, and more. Campers receive exposure to what it's



**Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center in 2021**

(pictured left to right)

Local 4-H club members plant hardwood seedlings for Earth Day service work.

Neil Brooks, Forester with J.L. Gardener Hardwoods, and Jason Fisher, District Extension Forester secure seedlings with stakes and tree tubes for protection.





Greenville/Emporia County 4-H Agent Hannah Parker (left) with her teen club planting seedlings obtained from the Growing Kids and Trees project at an Earth Day event alongside the Meherrin River.

like to work outdoors, both from their classes and from the week-long interaction with counselors who are also natural resource professionals. Many campers have gone on to college and pursued careers in forestry and related fields.”

In the eastern part of Virginia, Jamestown and Airfield 4-H Centers also receive support for a Forestry and Natural Resources intern, reaching thousands of kids each summer and informing young minds about sustainable forestry and products used daily from our forests. In Central Virginia, Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center’s Meador Nature Education Center is host site to Outdoor Adventure and forestry programming each summer for over 2,000 campers. The Skelton Center hosted local 4-H club members in 2021 with The Growing Kids and Trees (GKT) Project. VFEF has graciously partnered with GKT since its inception in 2008, and along with Huber Engineered Woods and local electric co-ops, funds the purchase and distribution of over 100,000 hardwood seedlings to innumerable youth. The past two years, due to COVID-19 restrictions, several seedling orders and programs could not be conducted in normal fashion. Most seedlings were delivered in person, and, thankfully, delivery efforts from a few groups continued through centralized pickup locations and free meal pickups at local private and public schools. One family


noted in an email that the “seedling project was a blessing to our homeschool club families as it gave them a reprieve outdoors in the midst of the stressful pandemic.” I created a short planting demonstration video and tree resource sheet that was distributed and utilized by 32 educators as part of their project component with approximately 700 youth in 2021. Research has shown that planting a tree gives youth a sense of ownership while instilling good stewardship of our forests.

The Southwest and Northern Virginia 4-H Educational Centers provided an environmental education experience to all summer camp participants, serving youth from across some 30 counties and cities. Camp was deemed extra special this particular year because it delivered a much-needed outdoor experience, and the forestry curriculum was a favorite for the campers.

The Junior 4-H Camp curriculum helps youth learn about water quality, plant and tree identification, environmental stewardship and conservation, weather, how we use and interact with elements of nature like trees, and regional ecosystems. The instructor engaged youth in these topics outside of class time as well, teaching Leave No Trace principles and understanding the impact of camping activities on forests. The opportunity to educate youth on forest stewardship and responsible environmental practices is an aim of the Junior 4-H Camp program as well as local 4-H club work.

Vibrant youth education programs are essential for promoting sustainable management and conservation of Virginia’s forest resources. Your support of the Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation enables development and delivery of youth education programs that reach thousands of youth each year. Thank you VFEF for continuing to provide support for these impactful endeavors!

To financially assist the mission of the Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation, please contact the Virginia Forestry Association office by phone (804) 278-8733 or visit [www.vfef.net](http://www.vfef.net).



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# TREE FARM INSPECTORS

## Meet Your Regional Chairs

by Ed Zimmer, Virginia Tree Farm Foundation Board of Directors



**V**irginia's Tree Farm Program has been blessed with a fantastic cadre of inspectors over the years. I can remember in my early days on the Tree Farm Committee, around 1992 or so, being in awe of the dedicated industry and Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) folks who earned their Bronze, Silver, and Gold Hardhat awards for signing up dozens of new Tree Farmers while still conducting hundreds of reinspections every year. The legendary Frank Sherwood comes most to mind. Frank may have had more than one Gold Hardhat and is probably the most prolific Tree Farm recruiter and Inspector the Virginia program has ever seen. He also served as a Regional Chair for the committee, planned Tree Farmer dinners, and served as an ambassador for the program at every opportunity.

Today, that spirit of the Tree Farm program and commitment to its mission lives on in the many inspectors that conduct the program's grassroots work—signing up new Tree Farmers and conducting the inspections that ensure the integrity of the certification program. Nowhere is that dedication and spirit exhibited better than in the work of our six Regional Chairs. These individuals recruit and train new inspectors, ensure all required and optional annual reinspections get accomplished, and manage the audit process when it is Virginia's turn—on top of the normal inspector work of recruiting new Tree Farmers and conducting their own reinspections.

We are pleased to introduce four of our regional chairs here, and we are currently recruiting for chairs in Region 5 (Central Mountains and Upper Southern Piedmont) and Region 3 (Northern Central Virginia). If you are interested in this fulfilling role, please reach out to Ed Zimmer ([ed.zimmer@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:ed.zimmer@dof.virginia.gov)).

### Region 1 - Robbie Lewis

At around age nine, Robbie Lewis began a lifelong interest in the outdoors when his grandfather began taking him rabbit hunting over packs of beagles. Many of the large farms in lower Northampton County were owned by farmers who were family friends, so Robbie got to hunt and see quite a bit of the beautiful Eastern Shore fields, woods, and marshes. As Robbie got



older, his outdoor pursuits expanded to include duck and squirrel hunting on family land, and saltwater fishing on the bayside and seaside of the Shore. At age 15, he attended Forestry Camp, held by VDOF in Appomattox. This is when it all came together in Robbie's mind ... this was the field to work in! A short time later he attended Virginia Tech to earn a forestry degree. Work experience since then has included quality and process control in a large pine sawmill on the Eastern Shore of Maryland; a lumber inspector in eastern Virginia and North Carolina; a procurement forester buying pine timber for a saw mill in Accomack County; a nursery supervisor for a large nursery in Northampton County, and a forester and senior area forester on the Shore, in Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach with VDOF. Training and other duties with VDOF have included numerous wildfire suppression and investigation courses, Tree Farm inspections, Honor Guard duty, and coastal resiliency work. Sometime during all this, Robbie married a local girl (Carrie) that he grew up with. They have a daughter (Skye), and son (Ian). Favorite past times are still hunting and fishing, crab steams, oyster roasts, and duck decoy carving.

### Region 2 - Lisa Deaton

Lisa Deaton has worked as an Area Forester for VDOF based in Gloucester since 2015. She spent her first 15 years with the Department serving as the Virginia Project Learning Tree State Coordinator and coordinating forest education activities at the New Kent Forestry Center. Lisa holds a B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife from Virginia





Tech and has also worked for the U.S. Forest Service, Chesapeake Corporation, and Union Camp Corporation. Her husband, Stuart, is a logger, and they have 28-year old twins. The Deatons are active forest landowners. Lisa is currently a member of the Society of American Foresters, the Virginia Forestry Association, and the Mathews Volunteer Fire Department.

#### Region 4 - Amy Bigger

After graduating from North Carolina State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry, Amy began her career working as a Land Management Forester for Chesapeake Corporation around Keysville, Va. Five years into her career, she transitioned to work in wood procurement for Chesapeake, helping to buy the millions of tons of raw materials the West Point mill needed to run the paper mill. After 30 years and several name changes brought on by mergers and acquisitions, Amy returned to what



she always enjoyed most: helping to manage the forests of Virginia, now serving private landowners through her position as a VDOF area forester.

#### Region 6 - Greg Estoll

Greg Estoll knew he was interested in forestry from at least high school age. Like many, the pull of an outside job was part of the drive. Greg went to forestry school at The University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn. and furthered his education at the University of Idaho. He and his family bounced around the West working in Montana, Colorado, and New Mexico for private industry, a short stint in a mill, then in state government measuring FIA plots, and as a large private landowner before ending up in Virginia where they have lived for the last 15 years. For VDOF, Greg provided forest management assistance to landowners in most of the counties near Tazewell. 🌲



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# RESOURCE REVIEW

## **Matthew Wells Named Director of Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced Matthew Wells as the next director of the Virginia Dept. of Conservation and Recreation earlier this year. The DCR is Virginia's lead natural resource conservation agency, overseeing the commonwealth's natural habitat, parks, clean water, dams, and access to the outdoors.

Wells has two decades of experience in positions related to politics, policy and advocacy. Most recently, he was Senior Regional Manager for State Government Relations for WestRock, a global leader in sustainable fiber-based packaging solutions. In this role, he

oversaw the company's legislative interests in environmental stewardship and sustainability, forestry, economic development and other issues across multiple states.

Before joining WestRock in 2016, Wells held senior analyst and special advisory positions with Virginia's departments of Motor Vehicles and Alcoholic Beverage Control. He is currently chair of Virginiaforever, a coalition that brings the business and environmental communities together to advocate for shared natural resources funding priorities. He also serves on the board of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and provides policy leadership for a wide array of groups and trade associations.

## **Ash Treatment Cost-Share Program Announced**

Virginia Dept. of Forestry (VDOF) is offering a 50 percent cost-share program for landowners and organizations to offset the treatment of specimen ash trees via trunk injection. The emerald ash borer (EAB), one of the most destructive forest pests to ever invade North America, attacks ash trees and has already caused millions of dollars in damages as hundreds of millions of ash trees have perished.

Organizations throughout the state are eligible to apply, however, only landowners located in the VDOF Eastern Region will be eligible for cost-share assistance. Limiting assistance for landowners to the Eastern Region will help VDOF focus efforts and funding on preserving the healthiest ash populations remaining throughout the state.

Applications are being accepted until June 17, 2022. A completed application must be submitted by this date to be considered for cost-share assistance. You can find the application and more information on the VDOF website ([dof.virginia.gov](http://dof.virginia.gov)), search Emerald Ash Borer Treatment Program. Please contact the VDOF Forest Health Program at (434) 220-9034 or [foresthealth@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:foresthealth@dof.virginia.gov) with any questions.

## **Study Shows How Trees Reduce Stormwater Runoff**

The Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) joined with state forestry agencies in six states—Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama—to study how urban trees can be used to reduce

*—continued on page 25.*

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## Resource Review

—continued from page 23.

harmful stormwater runoff. USDA Forest Service's Southern Region provided funds to the GIC and the states to assist cities participating in the study. The Virginia Dept. of Forestry is the Virginia partner on the project.

Eleven cities and one county were selected to participate. They include localities of large, medium and small densities and are found in the mountains, the piedmont and the coastal plain. In Virginia, the study mapped the urban canopy for Lynchburg, Harrisonburg and Norfolk.

Excessive stormwater runoff accounts for more than half of the pollution in America's surface waters and causes increased flooding and property damages as well as public safety hazards. National studies indicate that land conserved for stormwater retention and flood prevention "show an eight-to-one dollar savings ratio versus man-made flood-control structures" (McDonald 2015). Cities need to better integrate trees into their stormwater management programs.

The results demonstrate how any city can use this approach to map their canopy and model the role trees play in intercepting and cleaning the runoff. There is also a policy assessment tool to determine if city policies are making the city more impervious and also how they can improve urban forest management. The case books, summary report and tools can be found on GIC's website at [http://www.gicinc.org/trees\\_stormwater.htm](http://www.gicinc.org/trees_stormwater.htm).

### Charlotte State Forest Opens for Recreational Use

Charlotte State Forest (SF), 5,005 acres located in Charlotte County, opened to the public for recreational use in April, including hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, mountain biking, trail running, horseback riding, and wildlife watching.



The Buckingham FFA team (l. to r.: Emma Staton, Noah Jones, Jordan Dorrier, Tyler Padgett) competed in the State Forestry Contest held in April at Dabney Lancaster Community College. FFA member's knowledge is tested on tree identification, equipment identification, estimating volume of trees, and reading topographic maps. Two members, Jordan and Emma, placed in the top ten.

navigable waterway bordered by a large wetlands area with abundant wildlife, and suitable for fishing, hunting, canoeing, and wildlife viewing.

Virginia Dept. of Forestry manages Charlotte SF for sustainable timber production, demonstration of scientific forest management, applied forest research, diverse wildlife habitat, watershed protection, biological diversity, and passive outdoor recreation. Charlotte SF, like all Virginia's state forests, is certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and American Tree Farm System (ATFS) standards ensuring that forestry is practiced in an environmentally responsible and socially beneficial manner.

For specific questions about forest use or access, visitors can contact the local forest manager, Kirby Woolfolk, at (434) 995-8096 or [Kirby.woolfolk@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:Kirby.woolfolk@dof.virginia.gov). 🌲

## Virginia Forests Service Directory

## WINTER 2022



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# Close Encounters in the Woods

by Matt Dowdy, Magazine Editorial Committee



As foresters, we meet people for the first time in remote locations, sometimes after only exchanging e-mails or a single phone call. My wife had no idea where I was working or when I'd be home. If something happened, would they be able to locate me from my cell phone?

About 10 years ago, I was contacted by a landowner for a meeting to discuss a timber sale in Louisa County. We set up a date and time, and I was given the address of the landowner for our meeting. It was at the beginning of a long, private lane. I arrived as scheduled and knocked on the door. No one was home. After several minutes of waiting, a neighbor opened her door to inquire what I was doing. I told her about my meeting to look at some timber. She replied, "Oh you're the forester. You need to talk to my brother. I'll call him." She called her brother and then directed me over a mile down the old road. "Last house on the road, can't miss it," she told me.

As I arrived at the end of the road, I saw a very large and intimidating man sitting on a five-gallon bucket with nearly a dozen Rottweilers surrounding him. I took a deep breath and got out of the truck to talk to him about the timber. He made a few random statements about the timber and then asked me if I had seen all the police cars at the end of the road a few months back. He proceeded to tell me a story about how one of the family members had been arrested for killing someone in Richmond and was driving around with the dead body in his trunk for three days. He continued, "The man had walked across my field three times, and the State Police had searched the woods behind my house." He said he thought the man had hidden a gun or something in an old well on the property but that the police had not found anything.

I listened intently to the man's story for over an hour as I slowly tried to back up towards my truck without creating any sudden movements or causing alarm. The man didn't appear to be in any hurry to

discuss his timber. I mumbled something about the time getting late and having another appointment to get to as I opened my truck door and climbed inside.

As I drove away, many thoughts started to flood through my mind. First of all, this timber sale was not worth it!

I wondered what would have happened if something had turned sour in our meeting. I had taken a real estate class years earlier and was reminded of a story of a Roanoke Real Estate Agent who was murdered while showing a house.

As foresters, we meet people for the first time in remote locations, sometimes after only exchanging e-mails or a single phone call. My wife had no idea where I was working or when I'd be home. If something happened, would they be able to locate me from my cell phone?

Since this event, I have tried to be a bit more cautious. I generally let my wife know where I'm working and who I'm meeting, along with a general expectation of when I'll return home. We also maintain contact throughout the day by text messages.

Being a forester is a rewarding career, but not without its hazards. There are other dangers in addition to sometimes meeting strange people in remote locations for the first time.

I have been fortunate to have only walked up on marijuana patches after the crops have been harvested. I have never found a meth lab, but have seen lectures warning of the telltale signs. An abundance of coolers or garbage bags or other chemicals dumped should be avoided and not investigated due to the possibility of exposure to toxic chemicals.

I've had multiple encounters with copperheads, but knock on wood, none that has resulted in a snake bite. I take

care in the hot summer months to avoid heat-related illness. Stay hydrated and avoid the hottest parts of the day. Twice in my career I've actually stopped sweating and gotten goose bumps from the heat. Both times this occurred while burning clear-cuts in Eastern North Carolina.

Inspecting logging jobs is another task that requires caution. I often advise landowners to follow the same rules that I adhere to. Never visit a logging job unexpectedly without the crew leader knowing that you are there. Pull up to the loading area and wait for the loader operator to acknowledge you. He can let the tree cutter know that you are on site. Never walk up to the front of the cutter. Always walk up at a safe distance from the back of the cutter and, again, wait for them to acknowledge you. In addition to the risk of being hit by a harvested tree falling, loose teeth from the saw head or other flying debris could become mini-missiles. When walking through the woods, be aware of your surroundings and look up for dead snags and loose broken branches that could potentially fall on you.

A couple summers ago, I was inspecting a logging job in Goochland County. The timber was far off the road and surrounded by a swamp on one side. I was in the middle of almost 1,000 acres of forest with no homes in sight. I was walking up the old woods



road and found a fresh track in the dirt. At first glance, it appeared to be a bear track. I did a double take. The track appeared to have five toes and was long, like a human footprint, not round like a bear track. I took a picture and walked back to the logging job. I asked the loader operator, "You been walking around barefoot back here?"

"Nope," he replied, and I showed him the picture of the track. "Does that look like a bear track?" The man, a lifelong bear hunter, again replied,

"Nope." I thought, "Great ... now I have to be on the lookout for Bigfoot too!" 🌿

*Matt Dowdy is a consulting forester and member of VFA's Magazine Editorial Committee. He is a regular contributor to Tailgate Talk, a column designed to share stories and experiences from within the forestry community.*

*If you are interested in sharing a story, send your submission to [vfa@vaforestry.org](mailto:vfa@vaforestry.org). Opinions expressed in the column are solely the author's and do not necessarily reflect the policies or position of Virginia Forestry Association.*




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## ***PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, continued from page 5.***

cacy for Virginia forestry and forest product's community so that VFA becomes a preeminent leader in the discussion of forestry and the environment in Virginia. I am glad to report that VFA came running right out of the gate on that objective. On April 11, Governor Youngkin signed HB180/SB184 creating a Forest Sustainability Fund to incentivize counties to adopt forestland taxation across the Commonwealth. There is still a lot of work to do before it becomes operational, but this is a huge first step forward. This VFA-led policy initiative will help keep forestland in tact and not developed or converted to other uses. Along the same lines, VFA supported HB1319 (Hardwood Tax Credit), which passed, creating an income tax credit for expenses incurred by implementing hardwood management practices. This still needs final action by the General Assembly to be enacted, but hopefully this will be accomplished by the time you read this. These are exciting

wins for forestry in the Commonwealth, but more work is needed.

Today's issues and future challenges need continual work and staying power to be successful. Consider your involvement in the forestry issues of the day. Be an active voice to promote good forestry in your daily workplace. Volunteer some of your time in VFA to advocate for forestry. Donate to the VFA Advocacy Fund or the VAForestPAC which support long-term forestry interests. Most of all, do not take for granted the freedoms and opportunities we currently enjoy to practice working forestry. Make sure to step up to the plate and do your part to make that the opportunity we enjoy today to practice working forestry, the vision and legacy, is one that we pass down to our children, grandchildren, and each successive generation. 🌿

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