



# Board of Forestry Meeting

**October 21, 2025**  
**Rosenwald Community Center**  
**Waynesboro, VA 22980**

## Convene Meeting, Call to Order:

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairperson Carolyn Mulligan at the Rosenwald Community Center in Waynesboro, Virginia. The chairperson reminded the Board of the anti-trust policy legal requirements.

## Roll Call:

### *Board of Forestry Members Present*

Ervin Bielmyer, Andrew Brown, Jamie Coleman, Mike Harold, Carolyn Mulligan, Bill Osl, Scott Shallenberger, Chad Shelton and Vance Wright

### *Members Absent*

Clark Diehl, Jennifer Gagnon, Terry Godwin and Heather Richards

## Adoption of Agenda:

Motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda as presented; all present were in favor.

## Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

### *Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) Present*

State Forester Rob Farrell, Chief of Operations Robbie Talbert, Chief of Administration Amanda Davis, Communications Director Greg Bilyeu, Policy and Legislative Analyst Nathan Thomson, Director of Forest Management Dean Cumbia, Utilization & Marketing Program Manager Sabina Dhungana, Western Regional Forester Brad Carico and Executive Assistant Mary Weaver.

### *Recognition of Guests and Visitors*

Other guests were Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matt Lohr; Glenn Worrell, Association of Consulting Foresters; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association (VLA); Nanette Jenkins, VLA; Rachel Henley, Virginia Farm Bureau (VAFB); Jay Phaup, Virginia Forestry Association (VFA); Susan Seward, Virginia Forest Products Association (VFPA); Delegate Ellen Campbell, 36<sup>th</sup> District; Bob Runion, representing Delegate Chris Runion, 35<sup>th</sup> District

## Hearing of Citizens:

Ron Jenkins with the Virginia Loggers Association spoke in reference to two special events happening in 2026.

- ◆ The Virginia Loggers Association (VLA) annual meeting, followed by the American Loggers Council (ALC), will meet in Williamsburg Virginia.
- ◆ The ALC has members representing all 50 states.

## Approval of Minutes:

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A request was made to change solar farms to solar facilities. A motion was made to approve minutes as corrected, seconded; all present were in favor.

## Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

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Secretary Matt Lohr briefed the Board on the events since the last Board meeting.

- ◆ It has been a tremendous opportunity and honor to serve as Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry. There are 87 days left until a new governor is sworn into office.
- ◆ The Governor and First Lady have been great stewards and champions of all things agriculture and forestry.
- ◆ Secretary Lohr presented a Proclamation of Forest Products Week from Governor Youngkin to Chairperson Carolyn Mulligan and Glenn Worrell with the Association of Consulting Foresters.
- ◆ Had an event with the Governor in Damascus to recognize the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Helene and recognize and thank all the people and agencies that have and are providing assistance and resources to recover from this tragic event.
  - Presented some certificates to DOF for their tremendous service from the time Hurricane Helene hit to the ongoing recovery efforts.
    - Regional Forester Brad Carico and his team were boots on the ground right after Helene hit.
    - Director of Forest Management Dean Cumbia and his team did a fantastic of calculating the value of damage to the timber.
      - We have received \$61 million to reimburse agricultural and forestry landowners for their losses from Hurricane Helene.
    - Chief of Operations Robbie Talbert and his team for their involvement in developing the block grant process.
    - State Forester Rob Farrell for his work in overseeing this work and coordinating with the other states that were impacted in the southern region.
- ◆ We had a Forest Industry reception last month at the Governor's mansion and afterwards the Utilization & Marketing Program Manager kicked off the first Wood Council meeting.
- ◆ Thanked Delegate Campbell Delegate Ellen Campbell of the 36<sup>th</sup> District and Bob Runion, representing Delegate Chris Runion of the 35<sup>th</sup> District, for coming and supporting the forestry industry.

## State Forester's Report:

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State Forester Farrell reviewed updates since the last Board meeting in July.

- ◆ State Forester Farrell thanked Secretary Lohr for the great level of interaction that the Virginia Department of Forestry has had with him during this administration.
- ◆ Four of the top seven projects on the Economic Development Report are forest industry-related.
- ◆ The incoming administration will be asking about the important issues in forestry for the Commonwealth.
  - Board members, let State Forester Farrell know what you feel the issues are for forestry and we will convey to the administration.
- ◆ There is no significant legislation for DOF this year.

- ◆ This is a unique government shutdown; currently bills are still being paid, reimbursements are being processed, and we are still able to fund all the positions under federal grants.
- ◆ Good Neighbor Authority received a huge amount of funding after Hurricane Helene to do work on the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest. All agencies are helping them with improvements to the National Forest.
  - DOF is figuring out how we benefit from Good Neighbor Authority and still help our friends on the national forest.
- ◆ Working with the Conservation Fund on a new state forest in the eastern part of the state.
- ◆ It is Forest Products Week and there are several events going on this week to celebrate that.
- ◆ Working on a Wall of Wood that will be on one wall in the board room.
  - There will be a plank of every tree species in Virginia.
  - They will be labeled with a QR code that will give you information about that tree.
  - Planks need to be six feet long, any thickness and any width.
  - It's intended to be an educational display to tell the story of forest products from the diversity of Virginia tree species.
  - Want to get a 2X6 pine board from every Virginia mill with their stamp to show the diversity of pine.
- ◆ The 2026 calendars are in. In celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Virginia, the calendar features Virginia oak trees 250 years and older.
  - The nursery planted acorns from some of these trees and DOF will be selling the seedlings.
- ◆ State Forester Farrell discussed when you should and should not get the silviculture exemption.
  - Would like to consider a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DOF, the locality and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on timber harvests that are pending industrial development.

## Informational Items:

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### *Hurricane Helene Block Grant*

Chief of Operations Robbie Talbert reviewed the progress on the Hurricane Helene Block Grant applications.

- ◆ Virginia received \$61 million to help farmers and landowners recover from the damage sustained by Hurricane Helene.
- ◆ Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services (VDACS) holds and administers the grant.
- ◆ DOF is involved with reviewing forestry and timber claim applications.
- ◆ Application period opened September 22 and DOF currently has 88 applications submitted for timber loss.
  - We have run damage reports on 27 applications through our GIS module; 531 acres have been assessed as being damaged, with approximately \$250,000 in claims.
  - 24 applications have been given to consultants for further evaluation.
  - Eleven out of 27 localities have sent in applications so far.
- ◆ The application period ends on November 6.

### *Virginia Wood Council*

Utilization and Marketing Program Manager Sabina Dhungana

- ◆ We had the first Virginia Wood Council meeting on September 16, hosted in Richmond.
- ◆ We have 15 members representing different types of forest product industry.

- ◆ One group will not be able to solve all the problems because the interests will be different, and the solutions will be different. We will consider subdividing the group so we can branch out and bring in more people from outside to help towards certain issues.
- ◆ Plan to meet quarterly in person to discuss ideas and implement projects.
- ◆ Some issues discussed were mass timber need and demand, more markets, recruitment of the industry to the state and workforce.
- ◆ Next meeting will be December 9<sup>th</sup>.

### ***DOF Website Service Provider Listing***

State Forester Rob Farrell talked about the business directory that is on our DOF website.

- ◆ A few years ago when the DOF website was revamped, a business directory was created that would list service providers' information.
- ◆ Service providers and contractors were asked to create an account and enter their own information and what counties they provide services for.
  - One list for everyone across the state.
- ◆ The challenge is not everybody puts their information on the website and keeps it current.
  - There aren't nearly as many businesses on the list as there are out there, and if the information is incomplete, we're not serving the landowner.
  - Possible solutions could be:
    - Do a lot of outreach to get contractors on the directory and reach out annually to keep updated.
    - Do away with the directory.
    - Go back to where every office has their own list.
    - Would the associations be willing to link with DOF to provide this service?
  - Associations would be willing to promote using the DOF business directory.
  - The Board and Associations would like to see DOF continue with the business directory on the website.

### ***DOF Field Staff Turnover/Tenure***

State Forester Rob Farrell discussed DOF field staff turnover.

- ◆ We now have 12 districts across the state with a district forester for each that supervises a team of approximately ten foresters and/or technicians.
  - State Forester Farrell has been out to visit each district and hear how things are going and what their needs and concerns are.
  - Everything DOF does is impacted and limited by the number of new employees we have.
    - Almost half the agency has less than five years of service.
      - Eighty-three have 0-2 years of service and forty have 3-5 years of service.
  - The agency is limited in what can be accomplished, as our focus needs to be on training the number of new employees.
    - We have an annual Forest Management Academy and a five-year training matrix to assist with getting the newer employees up to speed.

### ***Reforestation of Timberlands General Assembly Match***

Director of Forest Management Dean Cumbia discussed the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) funding.

- ◆ The RT program is 53 years old, a cooperative program funded by the Forest Products Tax as well as General Assembly matching funds.
  - It has sustained the forests of Virginia, particularly the pine forest.
- ◆ The Forest Products Tax (FPT) funds approximately half the program. It's paid quarterly by primary wood processors.
- ◆ The General Assembly Fund matches the anticipated FPT half.
  - The match is required by the Virginia Code but is superseded by the budget bill.
- ◆ With the new biennial budget coming up and Forest Products Tax not quite meeting the General Assembly match, we want to try to equalize this match as much as possible.
  - DOF would like to recommend a 2% decrease in the General Assembly Fund Match.
  - It is believed that this small adjustment will not impact landowners significantly.

## Action Items:

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### *Appointment of Nomination Committee Members*

- ◆ Chairperson Mulligan appointed Andrew Brown and Scott Shallenberger to the Nomination Committee to nominate a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson from existing board members by February 15 for selection at the March Board meeting.

## Committee/Liaison Reports

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- ◆ None

## Unfinished Business:

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- ◆ None

## New Business:

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- ◆ Ervin Bielmyer shared with the Board that he is doing a hardwood release. He is taking a 40-year-old pine stand that was thinned 13 years ago and opening it up by spacing the pine trees about 30 – 40 feet apart to let the white oak and other hardwoods grow.
- ◆ Bill Osl asked if the Board could send a letter or resolution to Secretary Lohr thanking him for his services.
- ◆ A motion was made to create and send a letter/resolution to Secretary Lohr thanking him for his services, seconded; all present were in favor.
- ◆ The Virginia Loggers Association (VLA), Virginia Forestry Association (VFA) and the Virginia Forest Products Association (VFPA) have scheduled a Legislative Day on the Hill for January 14.

## Schedule of Next Meeting:

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The next Board of Forestry meeting will be held in March at the James Garner Building in Charlottesville. A Doodle poll will be sent to identify a date.

## Adjournment:

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Chairperson Mulligan called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made and seconded to adjourn the October 21, 2025, meeting at 12:19 p.m. All present were in favor. A tour of the Augusta Nursery was given for anyone that was interested.

Minutes recorded by Executive Assistant Mary Weaver.