

2014-16 Strategic Plan

Department of Forestry [411]

Mission

The mission of the Department of Forestry (DOF) is to protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians.

Vision

We envision a healthy, abundant forest resource providing economic and environmental benefits to the Commonwealth on a sustained basis. We see a resource whose scenic beauty enhances natural surroundings and whose forested resource supports clean air, clean water and a diverse population of wildlife. We further see a diverse forest resource as a part of natural ecosystems. We envision the economic benefits of the forest industry to be in balance with the environmental values of the resource and the public. We envision the Department as the most effective forestry agency in the nation and as a leader in managing, conserving and protecting the resource. We see an agency built on solid technology backed by strong ethics; one that is able to stay ahead of change and is quick to respond to citizens' needs, and one that is a leader in providing forest resource information. We see the Department responding to its employees' needs through leadership characterized by open communication to enable employees to form creative solutions to problems and who have the time and tools to provide exceptional forestry services to landowners, citizens and organizations. We see employees who are knowledgeable, motivated, pro-active and enabled to make decisions. Finally, we envision a workforce whose professional, unbiased, scientifically based recommendations impact positively upon an informed public and whose efforts result in complete overall customer satisfaction.

Values

Finance

Financial Overview

Forestry receives funding from general fund appropriations, special revenue funds, trust funds and federal grants. Special revenue funds consist of revenue generated through seedling sales, timber sales, fire suppression services, professional forestry services, and forest products taxes.

DOF shall provide services to every county of the Commonwealth. The agency must receive sufficient funding for fixed and variable operating expenses as well as competitive salaries and incentives to maintain qualified staff. Equipment rotation and personal protective equipment are also necessary to assure the employees' safety and effectiveness on wildfires and emergency events. Due to budget reductions, however, the agency has had to increase the replacement time of firefighting equipment from 20 years to 25 years. DOF must improve technology to deliver the information requirements of the forest landowners, forest products industry, planners and other organizations.

Over the years, our general fund support and special funds have not kept up with inflation yet we have realized a sharp increase in federal funding. However, more than 60% of our federal funding is for special projects. Many of these special projects are passed through to localities, non-profits and individuals as transfer payments while our federal funding that can be used for operational expenditures has been declining. Forestry expenses consist primarily of personnel (75%) and recurring operating costs (20%) leaving only 5% of our budget for discretionary spending.

The DOF has been challenged to make a 32% reduction in general fund support over the past four years while serving an increased number of customers due to parcelization of forestland. In fact, Virginia expects to see more development in the next 40 years than during the last 400 years. Additionally, the state's rapidly growing population is pushing development of homes into formerly forested areas, resulting in increased fire risks and greater challenges for protecting citizens and homes. As more Virginians move into woodland home communities, fighting wildfire becomes more complex. Our reduced workforce is highly trained in all aspects of forestry including managing the rapid spread of invasive weeds and newly introduced pests that threaten the health of Virginia's trees as well as the ever important role forests have in keeping our drinking water clean.

Funding our equipment is our biggest challenge due to the capital investment required for the size of our fleet. In order to perform DOF's mission dependably and consistently, DOF requires a dependable and consistent level of funding to maintain an adequate fire-ready fleet of emergency vehicles. DOF tries to follow a rotation schedule to replace emergency vehicles and equipment that wears out, becomes obsolete or needs to be replaced per recommendation for the useful life of the vehicle/equipment. Meeting the replacement schedule for firefighting equipment is the best way to minimize costs and better protect employees and the public. Meeting the replacement schedule reduces the frequency and degree of maintenance on older equipment, allows our mechanics to better plan for known workloads annually (avoids contractor expenses), and eliminates questionable equipment from use in emergency situations.

Another critical need is fiscal and other information system upgrades as well as our need to become more mobile by changing our technology so that employees may be less dependent upon traditional offices. This is especially important given the nature of our business. Our employees interact with our customers on their land on a routine basis. Vehicles would be equipped to provide full information, mapping and communications to give the employee full capability to provide technical services and public safety outcomes.

Biennial Budget

	2015 General Fund	2015 Nongeneral Fund	2016 General Fund	2016 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	15,895,367	12,841,896	16,446,507	12,848,747
Changes to Initial Appropriation	0	0	-20,000	0

(Changes to Initial Appropriation will be 0 when the plan is created. They will change when the plan is updated mid-biennium.)

Customers

Anticipated Changes to Customer Base

Current Customer List

Predefined Group	User Defined Group	Number Served Annually	Potential Number of Annual Customers	Projected Customer Trend
Employer/ Business Owner	Forest Industry & Associated Businesses - all	2,500	15,000	Increase
Employer/ Business Owner	Harvest Professionals	300	5,000	Increase
Farm/Forest Owner	Private forest landowners	4,000	300,000	Increase
Federal Agency	Other Federal Agencies	8	10	Stable
Higher Education Institutions	State Supported Educational Organizations	19	25	Increase
Higher Education Institutions	State Universities	26	60	Increase
Local or Regional Government Authorities	Local Governments - all	115	146	Stable
Local or Regional Government Authorities	Local Planning Districts	10	23	Increase
Non-Profit Agency (Boards/Foundation),	Non-Governmental Organizations - Virginia Forestry Association (VFA), Virginia Forest Products Assoc	26	60	Increase
Recreationalist	General Public	4,000	300,000	Increase
Resident	General Public - all	500,000	8,000,000	Increase
State Agency(s),	Other State Agencies	20	30	Stable
Volunteer	Volunteer Fire Departments	712	765	Increase

Partners

Name	Description
Local Land Trust Organizations	Joint educational and informational efforts aimed at improving and protecting community forests.
Local non-governmental organizations (non-profits)	Joint educational and informational efforts aimed at improving and protecting community forests.
Mid-Atlantic Chapter of International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)	Joint educational and informational efforts aimed at improving and protecting community forests.
National Arbor Day Foundation	Joint efforts to promote the care and management of community trees.
Federal Agencies: United States Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	Cooperative agreements, cost-share funding, and consolidated grants for fire, forest health monitoring, Chesapeake Bay and other watersheds, forest management, ecosystem services, wildfire, and forest health initiatives and programs.
Non-governmental Organizations	These groups represent a strong partner base in land conservation, urban and community forestry, ecosystem services, and forest management efforts.
North Carolina State University	DOF participates in the tree improvement cooperative work lead by N. C. State University.
Local Government	DOF pays the local government a percentage of the timber sale to the county in which a timber sale is conducted on the state forest.
Local Governments	Joint educational and informational efforts aimed at improving and protecting community forests. Project development and implementation.
Forest Industry	DOF cooperates with Mead Westvaco on tree improvement research.
Green Infrastructure Center Inc.	Leadership and technical assistance on green infrastructure projects.

Public School system	DOF makes presentations to young students about the importance of the forest and its protection. Schools provide time for DOF staff to attend the schools for the program presentations.
Regional Planning District Commissions	Joint efforts to identify and quantify the value of forest cover in communities.
Resource Conservation & Development Districts (RC&Ds)	Joint educational and informational efforts aimed at improving and protecting community forests. Project development and implementation.
Scenic Virginia	Development of program information for legislators at state and federal level.
Society of Municipal Arborists	Joint efforts to promote the care and management of community trees.
State Agencies	Partnerships are critical for implementing initiatives and obtaining funding.
Allegheny Energy	Joint efforts to manage trees along utility right of ways.
Alliance for Community Trees	Consultation on National U&CF issues, advocacy, policy
American Chestnut Foundation	DOF cooperates with the American Chestnut Foundation in the breeding and testing work to reestablish a resistant American Chestnut into Virginia's forests.
American Forests	Joint efforts to promote the care and management of community trees.
Appalachian Power	Joint efforts to manage trees along utility right of ways.
Community Colleges	Cooperative educational workshops and networking opportunities.
Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (DGIF)	DGIF and DOF participate in research and demonstration areas on the state forests and nurseries for the benefit of researchers and landowners.
Dominion Power	Joint efforts to manage trees along utility right of ways.
Universities	Cooperative/collaborative research and extension efforts with VT, VSU, Longwood, Old Dominion University (ODU), Dabney Lancaster, Institute for Advanced Learning & Research (IALR) in Danville, etc.
University of Virginia	Cooperative educational workshops and networking opportunities. Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute (VNRLI)
US Forest Service	Cooperative agreements and joint projects to enhance a state and federal program.
US National Park Service	Cooperative agreements and joint projects.
Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)	Joint educational and informational efforts aimed at improving and protecting community forests. Project development and implementation.
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)	Collaboration and cooperation on trails and greenway projects. Joint efforts on greenway and green infrastructure education.
Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)	Tree Planting projects.
Virginia Forest Industry	The forest products industry whose revenues are taxed, collected and set aside for the RT Act Fund is the primary partner. The forest industry recommended and accepted the self-imposed forest products tax to ensure future forest products in the Commonwealth. Because of the industry support, the Commonwealth only has to match the revenues used in reforestation efforts. This appropriation shall be deemed sufficient to meet the provisions of the Titles 10.1 and 58.1 of the Code of Virginia in the Appropriations Act.
Virginia Horticultural Foundation	Joint educational effort.
Virginia State University	Cooperative educational workshops, community outreach and networking opportunities.
Virginia Tech	DOF works with Virginia Tech in the nursery and State Forest programs to benefit research, students and landowners.
Virginia Urban Forest Council (Trees Virginia)	Program development, consultation and delivery. Joint educational and informational efforts aimed at improving and protecting community forests. Project development and implementation.
Voluntary Fire Departments	Voluntary fire departments assist DOF with suppression of wildfires. DOF provides training, equipment and grant funds to assist fire departments.

Agency Goals

- **Protect the citizens, their property, and the forest resource from wildfire.**

Summary and Alignment

The Commonwealth's forest lands will be protected from damages resulting from wildfires. Virginia will be a national leader in the effort, by ensuring the DOF has adequate suppression equipment and radio communications to effectively interoperate with local, state, and federal agencies, sufficiently trained personnel, an appropriate fire prevention program and trained staff in arson and law enforcement prepared for

the changing needs in wildfire protection and wildland/urban interface. This goal aligns directly with the agency's mission to protect the forest resources.

Objectives

» Reduce the forest land burned by wild fires.

Description

Reduce the number of human caused forest fires. Provide ample incentives and information available to the public to wisely manage fire use and to eliminate its use when conditions are favorable for the spread of forest fires. Use prevention messages and tools effectively to educate the public about dangers of fire usage.

Objective Strategies

- Agency Forest Fire Readiness and Mobilization plan will be in place during the spring and fall fire seasons to maintain a state of high wildfire readiness.
- Complete 12 new Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) and carry out 12 wildfire hazard mitigation projects in high wildfire risk communities.
- Maintain equipment in the best possible condition to make timely, safe and effective responses to forest fires and emergencies.
- Maintain the physical fitness and training of employees at best possible level to ensure timely, safe and effective responses to forest fires and other emergencies.

Measures

- ◆ Percentage of wildfire responses that are 30 minutes or less.

» Provide available financial resources to rural volunteer fire departments for training and the acquisition of small equipment and wild land personal protective equipment.

Description

Provide available financial resources to rural volunteer fire departments for training and the acquisition of small equipment and wild land personal protective equipment.

Objective Strategies

- 20% of the Commonwealth's rural volunteer fire departments will receive DOF pass-through financial assistance on an annual basis based on needs and current wildfire response capabilities.
- Increase the use of available Federal Excess property to volunteer fire departments within identified high fire risk areas.
- Maintain and update annually the contact for each volunteer fire department within the county to the regional data base, and to maintain an effective working relationship.
- Promote continued development and expansion of both state and local wildfire suppression capacities. Provide localized wildland fire training in each VDOF region and at least one statewide training academy to improve the efficiency of wildland fire response.

Measures

- ◆ Percentage of eligible rural volunteer fire departments receiving available state and federal financial assistance

» Be prepared to act in the interest of the citizens of the Commonwealth and its infrastructure during emergency situations by actively planning and training both as an agency and as individuals.

Description

To ensure that resources are used efficiently and programs are managed effectively, and in a manner consistent with applicable state and federal requirements.

Objective Strategies

- Assist communities in developing urban forest emergency response plans and work with VDEM to encourage urban forest planning in local response plans.
- Communicate quarterly with the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness; the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), and other Commonwealth Preparedness Working Group agencies.
- Complete two annual exercises, with after -action reviews, to identify areas to implement possible improvements.
- Provide our employees with focused training that meets national standards in the areas of wildland fire suppression, emergency

response, and incident management.

- Update the Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan annually.

Measures

- ◆ Agency Preparedness Assessment Score provided by Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

• Protect, promote, and enhance forested watersheds, non-tidal wetlands and riparian areas.

Summary and Alignment

Provide technical services, best management practices information, and silvicultural activity enforcement on the Commonwealth's forest watersheds, non-tidal wetlands, and riparian areas to ensure the quality of drinking and recreational waters from these areas for future generations.

Objectives

» Protect and enhance water quality by decreasing sedimentation in streams from forest harvest activities and increasing compliance with Best Management Practices on forest harvest sites

Description

Protect and enhance water quality by decreasing sedimentation in streams from forest harvest activities and increasing compliance with Best Management Practices (BMPs) on forest harvest sites and reducing sedimentation which reaches streams through active forest harvesting and other related activities. Virginia policy makers chose a non-regulatory avenue to ensure water quality would not be negatively impacted through forest harvesting. In 1993, Virginia enacted the Silvicultural Water Quality legislation authorizing the State Forester to inspect logging activities, provide training to loggers, and the enforcement power for non-compliance. Active sedimentation flowing into Virginia streams from logging activities has decreased substantially since the state conscientiously acknowledged its formal voluntary approach to improving its water quality. In 2011, Virginia has achieved almost perfect outcome and this objective seeks to maintain that achievement and continued success in maintaining water quality impacted by logging activities.

Objective Strategies

- Engage water quality specialists to provide more consistency to regional staff for implementation and enforcement of the water quality law.
- Identify BMP implementation rates by individual BMP groups and utilize that information to target specific training programs for the SHARP Logger Program.
- Promote state-wide BMP implementation on timber harvesting operations.
- Utilize comprehensive Integrated Forest Resource Information System (IFRIS) to support the water quality law enforcement program that allows for harvest operation tracking from point of notification to inspections close-out. continue to promote and increase the use of the Water Quality Improvement Act funds to support the Logger BMP Cost-Share Program.
- Utilize Water Quality Penalty funds to support logger training across the Commonwealth.

Measures

- ◆ Cost to conduct a forest harvest water quality inspection
- ◆ Percentage of harvest sites with sediment not reaching streams.
- ◆ Statewide Best Management Practices implementation percentage

» Increase the amount of forestland protected and/or established in Virginia watersheds.

Description

Protect water quality through the establishment of riparian buffers, implementation of erosion and water control measures, afforestation and protection measures, urban tree canopy establishment projects, and maintaining riparian forest buffers along streamside management zones.

Objective Strategies

- DOF Foresters will work with local Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) to increase the number of riparian plantings.
- Execute the logger BMP program and regional grant program.
- Prepare professional management plans for landowners.

- Provide educational opportunities for landowners through meetings, published literature, and articles.
- Utilize the water quality improvement act funding to increase accomplishments of buffers in rural and urban areas.
- Work collaboratively with partners, agencies and groups to establish new buffers as outlined in the Riparian Forest Buffer Implementation Plan.

Measures

- ◆ Number of acres of forest land established and/or protected in Virginia watersheds

• **Improve the stewardship, health and diversity of the forest resource.**

Summary and Alignment

Provide information, advice and scientific-based recommendations to help landowners make informed decisions about their forest resources, which result in healthy, vigorous trees and forests on private land.

Objectives

» **Promote cost-share funding to plant pine trees and improve existing pine forests.**

Description

The purpose of this objective is to ensure maximum use of the available Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) incentive funding by private forest landowners for approved tree planting and improvement practices.

Objective Strategies

- Identify acres to be improved under the RT Act.
- Review and revise RT Act budgeting and allocation methods.
- Use forest inventory analysis (FIA) data to target efforts on specific areas where data may suggest concerns with the amount of pine resource available.
- Use the logging inspection process to identify eligible tracts and promote the replanting of sites using RT cost share.

Measures

- ◆ Number of acres funded by Reforestation of Timberlands Act financial incentives.
- ◆ Percentage of eligible Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) incentives received by landowners

» **Increase urban forest management in Virginia communities.**

Description

Urban and community forest management activities in Virginia communities will be increased. Forests play an important role in the environment and economy of urban communities. DOF will work with communities to help them understand the importance of forests and encourage them to adopt a variety of activities to protect and enhance healthy urban community forests.

Objective Strategies

- Categorize Virginia communities into the various program levels using United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service guidelines.
- Establish comprehensive street tree inventory for major municipalities in Virginia (through Forest Health Grant).
- Partner with Virginia State University to increase involvement in UC&F programs by traditionally underserved citizens. Recruit greater underserved population participation in urban forestry related opportunities, including the Virginia Urban Forest Council and the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute.
- Promote the benefits of urban and community forestry to community officials through workshops, conferences, publications, and other media.
- Target U&CF grants and technical assistance to communities interested in upgrading their community tree program to the next level.
- Through grant funding, professional development activities and professional certification programs of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), continue to promote development of the urban forestry profession in Virginia.
- Within constraints of available funds and staffing levels, implement activities outlined in the Virginia Department of Forestry Urban &

Community Forestry program area strategic plan.

Measures

- ◆ Number of communities assisted with forest and/or tree resource management

» Increase the number of forest management projects implemented on private land.

Description

Increase the amount of forestry management and conservation work implemented on private forest land to provide healthy forests in the future. Forestry practices include tree planting, thinnings, forest stand management, forest stand establishment, wildlife habitat practices, community and urban tree planting, erosion and water quality control, cultural practices and protection to improve the health, vigor, and performance of trees, and provide economic and environmental benefits.

Objective Strategies

- Develop educational materials and programs and use these to raise landowner awareness of the need for and methods available for forestland conversion.
- Focus efforts on afforestation of non-forested lands in all areas for multiple resource benefits.
- Implement wildlife habitat projects per plan guidelines and in consideration with the State Wildlife Action Plan.
- Regenerate and improve forests, with added emphasis in priority areas by implementing silvicultural practices as outlined in forest management plans. Focus project implementations on tracts covered by active stewardship or equivalent plans and promote certification through the Certified Stewardship process or other certification program.

Measures

- ◆ Number of acres of trees planted in Virginia
- ◆ Number of forest management projects implemented on private land

» Increase the amount of forest management assistance on private lands in the Commonwealth.

Description

Forest land is a critical solution to the economy of rural Virginia and environmental benefits for the Commonwealth. The majority of the forest land in Virginia is owned by private landowners (77%). The Department of Forestry (DOF) will strive to bring forest resource management planning to all landowners to ensure maximum benefits are achieved.

Objective Strategies

- Assist landowners in placing working forest conservation easements on forested properties, particularly for lands ranked as high in forest conservation value.
- Develop and promote voluntary mitigation strategies and plans that include forest management practices to help mitigate the loss of forestland as a result of land development and land conversion.
- Focus plan preparation in high priority areas.
- Identify and develop management plans for municipal, county and other public lands.
- Maintain the number of new forest stewardship plans.
- Prepare professional management plans for landowners.
- Update State Lands forest stewardship plans on 10% of tracts and initiate recommended projects.
- Utilize funding from federal, state and other sources when available to purchase conservation easements or fee simple interest in land, focusing on lands ranked as high in forest conservation value.
- Utilize geographic information system (GIS) analysis to rank all forested acres in the state by priority for forest conservation based on the multiple benefits provided by that forest and the threat of conversion of that forested area.
- Work with conservation partners, local governments and other authorities to identify land conservation strategies (i.e. green infrastructure) that could find wider application at the state or local level.

Measures

- ◆ Number of acres of all forest management plan types achieved on private and appropriate public forest land

- **Conserve the forestland base.**

- Summary and Alignment**

- Reduce the rate of conversion of forests with important conservation value by identifying those forest lands that provide the greatest combination of economic and environmental benefits. Provide technical assistance and information on the conservation methods available, and by accepting working forest conservation easements. When federal grants are available, DOF also becomes involved with fee simple acquisitions.

- Objectives**

- » **Manage the State Forest on a sustained basis for research, demonstration, education, and multiple use benefits while staying within the allowable forest harvest levels.**

- Description*

- State Forests will be managed on a sustained basis for research, demonstration, education, and multiple use benefits while staying within the allowable forest harvest level of the available crop. This annual harvest level will ensure a sustainable supply of forest products from the State Forests into the future.

- Objective Strategies*

- Define the best locations for public use on State Forests that complement forest management objectives and timber sales.
 - Develop a comprehensive ten year work plan that will meet the goals of the State Forest System goals and objectives.
 - Develop a survey to assess the best public uses of State Forest lands and the reasons the public visit the State Forests.

- Measures*

- ◆ Percentage of annual allowable harvest harvested

- » **Increase the number of acres of working lands protected from conversion to development.**

- Description*

- Use voluntary conservation measures such as donated conservation easements, state acquisition, or other long-term use restrictions to protect forests from being converted to development. This effort will utilize geographical information system (GIS) analysis to rank all forest lands in the state based on their contribution to water quality protection, providing terrestrial and aquatic habitat, and forest productivity as well as their relative threat from conversion.

- Objective Strategies*

- Assist landowners in placing working forest conservation easements on forested properties, particularly for lands ranked as high in forest conservation value.
 - Utilize funding from Forest Legacy and Virginia Land Conservation Fund when available to purchase conservation easements or fee simple interest in land.

- Measures*

- ◆ Number of acres protected from conversion to development.

- **Promote forest industry and diversified markets for forest landowners including ecosystem service markets.**

- Summary and Alignment**

- The forest industry is the largest manufacturing sector in Virginia and provides economic benefits to communities and citizens in every county and city in the state. The majority of the forestland in Virginia is owned by private citizens. If forest landowners are to continue to own and manage forests in a healthy, sustainable way they will need to receive benefits or forests may be converted into other uses. By fostering a strong forest products industry and providing diversified markets and benefits, this goal aligns with the Agency's Mission to protect and develop healthy sustainable forest resources. Markets for ecosystem services, such as water quality, air quality, and carbon sequestration, provide a financial opportunity for forest landowners. These markets are very important by providing additional tools and incentives to curb the loss of Virginia's forestland.

- Objectives**

- » **Manage the nurseries to provide the best quality seedling types demanded by the customers.**

- Description*

Nurseries will be managed to provide the best quality seedling types demanded by the customers at cost.

Objective Strategies

- Implement an annual work plan to assure all seed is selected and managed appropriately and timely.
- Nursery staff shall work closely with research, tree improvement, regions and others to collect, process and store seed.
- Obtain future seedling sales projection and obtain best seed to produce seedlings.
- When possible, grow and sell nursery stock for diminished species restoration.

Measures

- ◆ Percentage of customers surveyed who rate the quality of Department of Forestry's seedlings as satisfactory

» **Promote development of new and emerging forest markets.**

Description

The markets that forests support are critical to the economy of Virginia. Expansion of new and emerging forest markets are critical in insuring a viable forest industry exists in the Commonwealth. Emerging markets for ecosystem services and benefits derived from forests are becoming increasingly important to meet the environmental demands on air and water quality. Private landowners own the majority of forestland in Virginia. Sustaining and developing robust forest markets provides opportunities for private landowners and provide justification for maintaining their forestland ownership.

Objective Strategies

- Assist forest industry in identifying concerns and opportunities and develop associated strategies for implementation.
- Develop grant opportunities to secure funding for project level initiatives that promote forest markets.
- Develop tools for quantifying ecosystem services that can be used in land use planning, mitigating land conversion activities, and market participation.
- Identify and promote opportunities for forestland owners, industry and public to participate in the use of bio-energy.
- Maintain up-to-date economic and industry data on the importance of forests and forest industry.
- Promote forest markets through presentations and participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, and trade shows.
- Promote opportunities for private landowners to participate more in certified forest markets.
- Work with partners to identify and distribute information on new and changing forest markets.

Measures

- ◆ Number of new and/or expanding forest related businesses or markets

• **Collect, maintain and disseminate forest resource inventory information and applied research.**

Summary and Alignment

DOF will deliver spatial and statistical forest resource data, coordinated with accurate, timely field-based forest resource information, dedicated to remote sensing, and Web-based information and marketing outreach to assure the public's awareness of the value and importance of Virginia's forests and to improve the health and quality of life for Virginia citizens. This goal aligns directly with the agency mission to protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians.

Objectives

» **Provide an inventory of forest natural resources in Virginia on a continual basis.**

Description

Timely and accurate data is absolutely critical in providing the very best information regarding the current state of the Virginia's forests. Department of Forestry (DOF) leadership needs to know what is being cut and grown in Virginia.

Objective Strategies

- Maintaining and equipping a five-year cycle with our Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) team to collect and enter the forest data for each panel for United States Forest Service (USFS) analysis.

• **Manage agency resources to effectively and efficiently accomplish the strategic initiatives.**

Summary and Alignment

Ensure DOF has sufficient employees with the right skills and knowledge to be a world-class forestry organization capable of meeting the challenges and needs in Virginia; who are equipped with technology and tools, and possess excellent communication skills to provide the highest quality forest management assessments and recommendations and ensure a better informed private landowner. Provide for the most effective and efficient management of DOF State Forest and nursery production resources.

Objectives

Major Products and Services

Forestry is an economic engine that provides employment for 103,000 Virginians and represents an annual impact of \$17 Billion to the state's economy – and when combined with Agriculture, it's the largest industry in the Commonwealth. Protecting and enhancing the 15.8 million acres of forestland and serving the 374,000 landowners who control 62 percent of the forestland are 233 dedicated professionals – 155 of whom are first responders – at the Virginia Department of Forestry.

In Fiscal Year 2014 through fire prevention and fire suppression efforts, DOF protected over 2,000 homes and other structures with a total value of \$160 million. This is accomplished with a fleet of 10 specially equipped wildland brush trucks, 89 dozer/transport units and 160 fire pickup trucks located across the Commonwealth.

We grow and sell 27 million tree seedlings each year so that harvested tracts are replanted to become the forests of tomorrow. The Agency ensures that millions of dollars of state and federal cost-share funds get into the hands of landowners who are actively managing their properties. We provide opportunities for private sector entities, such as forestry consultants, planters, spray contractors, etc., who work with landowners to ensure more beneficial work gets done each year. Educational efforts ensure landowners know how to properly grow and care for their trees, and that they are able to successfully pass their property to the next generation. And urban and community forestry reduces costs for homeowners and governments alike by preventing pollution and runoff, which results in less treatment of drinking water, and moderating temperatures so air conditioners run less.

The Virginia Department of Forestry monitored 5,578 timber harvests to ensure voluntary best management practices are working for the benefit of all. The inspections conducted by DOF water quality specialists demonstrate a very high compliance rate among the loggers. New and refocused assistance programs are emphasizing the critical role forests play in the health of the Bay and all those who rely on or use this treasured place. By providing valuable, unbiased, third-party, scientifically based technical assessments and recommendations, DOF directly impacts the success of Virginia landowners who strive to sustainably manage their forest resources for the greatest possible economic gain.

In addition to emergency response, forest management, and water quality, DOF has a number of other products and services that contribute to the Agency's successful efforts to protect and serve all Virginians. From the 24 State Forests, which, at no cost to the taxpayer, provide abundant recreational opportunities, demonstrate the benefits of good forest management and financially support the communities in which they exist by returning up to 25 percent of the proceeds from timber sales, to our land conservation efforts, which ensure working forestland remains working forestland, to our work in the forest health realm where we identify harmful insects and diseases as well as invasive species to prevent forest loss and economic harm.

Performance Highlights

National Leader in Wildfire Suppression: DOF is a recognized national leader in its delivery of wildfire suppression, incident management and personnel development training for emergency responders. The Interagency Wildfire Academy is one of the four largest in the nation and has provided training to more than 350 students representing more than 11,000 hours of total training annually.

Nationally-recognized Firewise Program: The main goal of Firewise is to educate homeowners in the wildland/urban interface on how to design, construct, landscape and maintain their homes and property to avoid destruction during a wildfire. DOF has been a leader nationally in the promotion and expansion of the Firewise Program.

Award-winning Succession Planning Workshops: VDOF, in collaboration with Virginia Cooperative Extension and other public and private partners, delivered the fifth offering of *Focusing on Land Transfer to Generation "NEXT"*. The in-depth short course provides families the information needed to ensure a smooth intergenerational transfer of their property and ensure continued management of their forest resources, keeping critical forestlands intact. As a result of the workshops, 51,972 acres of land is expected to remain forested and "family owned".

Clean Drinking Water: The DOF water quality program has been touted as the leading water quality program in the South. DOF is the leader in the statewide logging inspection audit program in the South and is supporting a Southeastern Regional attempt to provide consistent auditing of logging jobs across state boundaries.

High-quality Seedlings: Two DOF forest tree seedling nurseries produce approximately 27 million hardwood and softwood tree seedlings for reforestation and general conservation. Seedlings are available for sale to private landowners and industry owners to help with their reforestation needs and providing future forest products' raw materials.

Improved Quality of Life for Urban Communities: DOF developed an important program to determine a community's Urban Tree Canopy (UTC), the layer of leaves, branches and stems of trees that cover the ground when viewed from above. UTC provides many benefits to communities including improving water quality, conserving energy, lowering city temperatures, reducing air pollution, enhancing property values, providing wildlife habitat, facilitating social and educational opportunities, and providing aesthetic benefits.

Longleaf Pine Being Restored in Virginia: DOF is highly engaged in restoring native longleaf pine to the landscape of southeast Virginia, which had been nearly exterminated over time. Significant accomplishments including: harvesting cones from the last remaining longleaf stand, producing seedlings, establishing a new seed orchard, addition of the new 266 acre South Quay State Forest, and collaborative work with others. Through this, longleaf pine has grown from only a few hundred trees to more than 4,000 acres.

Expanding Program Assistance for Private Forest Landowners due to Cooperation with Several Agencies and Organizations: The Virginia Reforestation of Timberlands program is rebounding due to emphasis from partners and an increasing trend in the Forest Products Tax revenue and Federal assistance for forestry and DOF involvement with USDA programs under the 2014 Farm Bill is increasing. Last year, DOF and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries began working together on forestry practices that improve quail habitat through work on private lands. In addition, DOF has partnered with several private organizations that have provided funding for tree planting, forest improvement and land conservation.

Innovative InFOREST: DOF and partner efforts to create a web-based application to provide the metrics for valuing the ecosystem services provided by forestland has culminated in the release of InFOREST. The newest version of InFOREST now provides the user with the ability to estimate carbon sequestration, air quality, nutrient and sediment loading, and the biodiversity provided by forest cover.

National Ranking: Virginia is one of four states, the others being California, New Jersey and Massachusetts, that are leading the nation in trying innovative approaches to reduce the rate of upland forestland conversion to non-forest use – an issue identified by the US Forest Service as a principal concern in the Southeast.

100th Conservation Easement Recorded: The DOF Working Forest Conservation Easement Program eclipsed two significant milestones as the program's 100th easement was recorded, and eclipsing the 30,000-acre threshold in easement acreage. The DOF now holds easements in 45 counties and the City of Suffolk. The average DOF easement is just over 300 acres, of which 90% is forested.

Staffing

Authorized Maximum Employment Level (MEL)	287
Salaried Employees	233
Wage Employees	347
Contracted Employees	0

Key Risk Factors

Forest Resource Sustainability: As the economy continues to recover, the demand for timber will continue to increase. But, in addition to the traditional markets for wood products, new and expanding markets including bio-energy, ecosystem services and other specialty and non-forest products will add a new dimension to that demand. Even with genetically enhanced growth of up to 60 percent in loblolly pine, will this be sufficient to meet the growing demand? While our forest inventory analysis is a good tool, it too needs to be enhanced to provide better data and more precise forecasts that industry will require in the coming days. Without such improvements, we risk losing businesses up and down the forestry supply chain, and it will be increasingly difficult to attract new businesses and the economic benefits they generate.

Changes in Land Ownership: Much of Virginia's forestland is in the hands of people who are either of retirement age or soon will be. A wave of intergenerational transfer of ownership has just begun and more, larger waves are on their way. DOF has had great success helping a few hundred forest landowners plan for this, but tens of thousands of landowners are left to either figure it out on their own or do nothing. We have 374,000 family forest owners who control the majority of Virginia's forestland and 75% of the timber supply. 70% of this forestland is owned by the aging population and only 3% have some sort of succession plan in place for their forestland, placing a huge acreage of our forestland at risk from conversion and fragmentation in the next two decades. This situation almost guarantees that millions of acres of private forestland are at risk of being lost by the families who lovingly cared for the land for generations. In addition, more and more large tracts of forestland are being divided into smaller and smaller parcels, which increase the challenges associated with proper forest management.

Invasive Pests and Species: Invasive plants, such as tree of heaven and kudzu, are crowding out or killing a number of native species of trees. These invasive species are not desirable, in most cases, for use as forest products, so as they continue to expand and displace species that are in demand, the economic impact of forestry will suffer. In addition to the threats posed by invasive plants, invasive pests are negatively impacting hundreds of thousands of trees. The hemlock wooly adelgid is killing a large proportion of the hemlock trees in its range in Virginia. The emerald ash borer has already killed hundreds of acres of ash trees and has the potential to kill every single one of them. Gypsy moth, the European wood wasp and Southern pine beetle are just a few of the many other serious threats facing Virginia's forests. The loss/eradication of several important tree species in Virginia would be catastrophic to forest landowners and to forest industry.

Management Discussion

General Information About Ongoing Status of Agency

DOF has not allowed the budget challenges to cripple its operations. We still work with forest landowners and forest product producers to ensure the forest resource is healthy and sufficient to meet demand. We work with landowners in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to plant forested buffers adjacent to the waterways that feed into the Bay. We identify communities at risk of wildland fire and work with them to create Firewise communities. In seven short years, our Land Conservation Division has secured 100 conservation easements on more than 30,000 acres of valuable forestland. Together we can ensure our working forests stay that way in perpetuity. We created the award-winning program Generation Next to teach forest landowner how to successfully pass ownership to a new generation of forest landowners. We pioneered the successful cost-share program that makes pine forests less susceptible to Southern pine beetle through thinning operations on small tracts. We monitor the spread of invasive pests and advise landowners how to protect their valuable trees. And we take great care and perform as much preventative maintenance as possible to keep the fire plows/dozers mission ready.

More than anything, DOF must have a trained cadre of public safety professionals ready to answer the call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Whether the call goes out to suppress a wildfire or to assist in the removal of trees following a hurricane or ice storm, DOF's 155 emergency responders stand ready to help.

In addition to the expanding traditional forest products industry, new demands are being placed on our utilization and marketing effort. Emerging markets for biomass energy, animal bedding, specialty and non-timber products and agro-forestry require that we become more adaptive, creative and flexible in our advice to landowners as they contemplate replanting after a harvest.

Information Technology

DOF is committed to using technology in the most effective/efficient manner possible. The most efficient way to bring the office needs to our employees is with fewer offices but more office space under the same roof to support a mobile work force. Personnel need a place to meet, plan their work, organize activities, train, house equipment and serve the public. Wireless technology is an important element, which is a challenge in rural areas such as the mountainous western region.

Most of DOF's strategic planning is focused on keeping up with technological changes and external requirements through maintenance efforts. Existing information technology (IT) investments that require additional funding over the next six years are county office technology upgrades, Integrated Forest Resource Information System (IFRIS) maintenance and operations, information security program, InFOREST maintenance and operations, and the maintenance and renegotiation of the Kinsail/Accela System (Reforestation of Timberlands, Accounts Receivable, Nursery Management and Online Store).

Changes to the DOF business environment as well as changes required by partner agencies and end-of-life technology (software, phones, operating system) affect the Agency's IT environment. Windows Server 2003 end-of-life (April 2015) is being handled by several efforts to move existing systems to a more modern operating system including: DOF Intranet, IFRIS Upgrade Project, DOF SQL Test data move and decommission, and the Kinsail project along with the IMS server decommission. End-of-life technology affects everyone. An external mandate is the IFRIS Reporting (SSRS) Transition from VITA Shared Service, which VDOF began paying for the server housing the once-shared SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS) in December 2014. DOF has several internal business changes that require changes to the IFRIS system including enhancements to the DOF Water Quality module, development of Land Conservation Easement Monitoring and Forest Certification reporting, enhancements for Fixed Assets and Fleet Management, and Harvest Notification Web Application Upgrade. In addition to IFRIS changes, VDOF must upgrade the Incident Qualification System (IQS) and desktop GIS software as new versions are released. Over the next six years remediating end-of-life technology and meeting changing business mandates will continue to be the majority of DOF IT work through enhancement projects.

Planned IT investments over the next six years include the IFRIS Technology Upgrade project (underway), procuring a Forest Protection Dispatch service, in-house development of a Grants Management database to replace a manual/spreadsheet system, incremental upgrades to the infrastructure of VDOF county offices as funding becomes available, and development or integration of an Environment Review tracking system for Forest Conservation. In this biennium, the Forest Protection Dispatch service will be implemented and maintained using grant funds.

Integration of the dispatch data with IFRIS will be a future project. Also in the biennium, the Grants Management database will be developed, and VDOF is piloting the storage of GIS data in the Cloud to evaluate the technology.

Estimate of Technology Funding Needs

Workforce Development

DOF's Maximum Employment Level (MEL) is 287 but out of financial necessity, only 233 classified Full Time Employees (FTE) are currently filled. The operations of the agency are also supplemented by seasonal and long-term part-time employees. Almost 80% of DOF's employees are considered part of the mobile workforce. Over half of DOF's workforce are also responders who respond to active forest fires.

The biggest obstacles in workforce development that DOF faces is in technology to support a mobile workforce, succession planning to prepare for the large amount of employees who can retire, and compensation to attract qualified applicants. Since going mobile, DOF has encountered obstacles that hinder the efficiency of operations. Many solutions exist for these obstacles; however, budget and compliance constraints have gotten in the way of implementing these solutions. Updated technology and systems that are supported by mobile platforms are necessary. Connectivity upgrades and additional virtual tools are also needed to fully support our employees in the field.

47% of DOF's workforce is eligible to retire with either unreduced or reduced retirement benefits. Within five years, this number increases to over 54%. Within these figures are the majority of the senior management team and a large chunk of mid-management employees. Succession

planning is a must to sustain successful programs, operations, and responder events that support the agency's mission. DOF has been creative in seeking external partners for training and is fortunate to have the VA Natural Resources Leadership Institute as a resource, yet budget constraints have limited our ability to make these resources available to more than a few employees each year. DOF is also fortunate to have a federal grant cover training expenditures for wildland firefighters each year.

Overall, DOF has maintained an average attrition rate of 6.6% for the last three years, much less than the statewide average. We suspect that this rate will increase as we encounter more and more employees eligible for retirement. DOF conducts a thorough exit interview on all of our separating employees. The biggest reason stated for leaving is compensation. DOF's compensation for employees in the Natural Resource Manager and Specialist positions are not competitive compared to the private and federal sector as well as neighboring states. The forester positions require a four-year degree with specific accreditation, yet we are starting these positions in the low \$30Ks and forest technicians (do not need the four-year degree) in the upper \$20Ks. Currently, a compensation study is being conducted for these positions to see if there is support for increased compensation.

Physical Plant

DOF owns approximately 137 buildings including offices, mechanic shops, warehouse and storage buildings, greenhouses, quarters (sleeping rooms), and assorted sheds for fire bulldozer and transport storage, fuel and paint, tree seedlings, cone drying, etc. In addition, DOF has access and land easements for 20 fire towers (some up to 75 years old) and owns approximately 68,000 acres of State Forests and another 1,800 acres of land in forestry centers/tree nurseries, tree improvement plots, tree seed orchards, small donated lots for office buildings, and the property around the Charlottesville Headquarters. Most of the office buildings were constructed in the 1950s and '60s using cinder block. Most systems in the buildings are deteriorating: pipes are rotten, slabs have cracked, doors and windows are no longer plumb, electrical wiring is frayed, rooms are small, dark and musty, etc. Also DOF has several modular office buildings across the state approved by the Division of Engineering & Buildings under temporary building permits, many of which have been in place for 20+ years.

Capital investments and maintenance reserve funds allow DOF the flexibility to mold our activities to reflect public priorities as we strive to protect and develop healthy forest resources. Demands on our forest resources grow with increasing population, and DOF must meet the needs to educate the public on both the economic and ecological benefits of forest management.

Supporting Documents

Title	File Type
-------	-----------

Reforestation Incentives to Private Forest Land Owners [50102]

Description of this Program / Service Area

This service area consists of administering the Reforestation of Timberlands Act (RT) and implementation of the cost-share program pursuant to 10.1-1170 through 10.1-1176 in the Code of Virginia. This service area is available as a result of a self-imposed forest products tax by the forest products industry. The agreement is between the General Assembly and the forest products industry in Virginia and was designed to meet the shortfall of pine resource forecasted by forestry leaders. At the time of the RT Act enabling legislation, it was widely recognized that more pine timber resources were being harvested than being reforested. It is the RT Act which caused the reverse in the decline of the pine resource by providing financial incentives to the private landowners to invest in pine reforestation across Virginia.

The Department of Forestry (DOF), upon request of a landowner, examines timberland and makes recommendations concerning reforestation. DOF may make available to landowners, with or without charge, use of specialized state-owned equipment and tree seedlings, materials, and services of professional personnel for the purpose of preparing land for reforestation and reforesting land devoted to growing timber, in accordance with administrative regulations.

Upon the completion of each separate reforestation project in accordance with the recommendations and approval of the State Forester, DOF determines the total cost of the project including money paid or payable to a contractor for services performed on the project, for labor, and for other costs incurred by the landowner, including a standard rental rate value for use of state-owned equipment and the cost of tree seedlings, materials, and specialized state personnel used on the project. The State Forester, from funds appropriated for the purposes of this article, may pay to the landowner an amount not to exceed 75 percent of the total cost of the project.

Mission Alignment

This service area aligns directly with DOF's mission to protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. DOF encourages greater reforestation in the Commonwealth through the authority to offer financial incentives to forest landowners to invest in trees for the long term. In addition, this area aligns directly with the long-term objectives for Virginia to protect, conserve and wisely develop our natural, historical, and cultural resources.

Products and Services

Description of Major Products and Services

Provide forest management planning and scientific recommendations for reforestation to ensure appropriate tree species on the different sites and the proper silvicultural management of each.

Provide technical information and assistance to landowners to help landowners initiate reforestation establishment and improvement projects.

Assess forest resources of private landowners and provide specific recommendations to achieve desired reforestation and forest management results.

Facilitate the work of tree planting and tree improvement contractors who perform work for private landowners to ensure the work is completed in accordance with acceptable forestry guidelines.

Provide source for tree seedlings and plant materials to accommodate the specific forestry goal on private forest land.

Administer cost share assistance and guidance through state programs to private forest landowners.

Conduct assessments and checks to assure quality assurance on silvicultural projects of private forest landowners.

Follow-up with recommendations to improve silvicultural projects on private forest land.

Provide forestry information and education products and services regarding silvicultural operations to private forest landowners, and increase their awareness of available help and resources available to assist them.

Train internal staff and partners on appropriate silvicultural practices for private forest lands.

Track Reforestation of Timberlands planting and improvements on Virginia's private forest lands, and share accomplishment results annually.

Provide specialized forest establishment equipment for rental and use for reforestation work on private forest lands.

Support state nurseries by offering seedlings for planting through the RT Program.

Anticipated Changes

When funds are decreased, the program will serve fewer private forest landowners with reforestation and forest improvement. Landowners may

delay forestry projects or cancel the projects until funding is available.

Increases in funds have a positive effect on forestry and private forest landowner willingness to invest money into forestry long-term practices. The incentive from cost-share reimbursement helps reduce the initial costs and increase the financial return to the landowner, who must wait up to 20 years before the possibility of the first thinning and, coincidentally, the first potential revenue from the investment.

Factors Impacting

Funding is the principal factor impacting products and services in this service area. Funding is provided from two sources. First, the forest products industry agreed with the General Assembly of Virginia to provide a law requiring a self-imposed timber products tax. The amount collected from the industry is by law to be matched by the general fund in a like amount and the total must be used to provide the establishment and improvement of the pine resource. This helps assure a pine resource will be available in the future. The collection of the forest products tax and the subsequent matching from the general fund can impact this service area.

The RT program is administered by employees of DOF. Full staffing is an important factor which can impact this service area.

Financial Overview

DOF is responsible and charged by the Code of Virginia to administer the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Act and funds. The RT program was designed by agreement between state government and forest industry to create a self-imposed forest products tax on raw forest products as they are harvested and matched by a like amount of funding from the Commonwealth of Virginia through the general fund. The purpose of the funds collected from the RT program is to assist forest landowners with financial incentives to establish and maintain pine resources on their land. The RT program provides for partial reimbursement of the landowner's expenses, and DOF is the lead state agency in implementing procedures, program oversight and accounting of the funds.

Reforestation Incentives to Private Forest Landowners receives funding from general fund appropriations (33%), and special revenue funds (67%). The special revenues in this service area are primarily from forest products taxes and expenses are primarily for incentive payments to small timber owners for reforestation.

Biennial Budget

	2015 General Fund	2015 Nongeneral Fund	2016 General Fund	2016 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	791,499	1,606,932	1,121,210	1,606,932
Changes to Initial Appropriation	156,071	0	156,071	0

Supporting Documents

Title **File Type**

Forest Conservation, Wildfire & Watershed Services [50103]**Description of this Program / Service Area**

This service area truly provides for managing, conserving, and protecting Virginia's forest resources. This is the Department of Forestry's (DOF) largest service area and consists of the Divisions of Forestland Conservation, Forest Management, Resource Protection, and Resource Information. These Divisions provide a vast array of services and benefits to many stakeholders including landowners, industry, all levels of government, non-governmental organizations and the general public. The DOF covers the entire Commonwealth with its employees, resources, and equipment placement.

Summary and Important Products and services include:

1. Provide equipment and personnel to suppress and prevent wildfire and to respond to other State declared emergencies.
2. Enforcement of wildfire, silvicultural water quality, and forest seed tree laws.
3. Promoting best management silvicultural practices (BMPs) and preharvest planning to loggers and landowners to protect water quality.
4. Provide forest management advice and services to forest landowners for improvement of forest stands ensuring the sustainability of the forest resources.
5. Collect, summarize, analyze, and report forest inventory data on the status and condition of forest land in Virginia.
6. Provide resource information, maps, aerial photographs and Geographical Information Systems (GIS).
7. Monitor and report findings on the forest health of forest stands across Virginia to prevent or control insect and disease harmful to forests.
8. Provide certified burning manager training to individuals involved in the controlled application of fire to reduce forest fuels, site prepare cutover lands for reforestation, and to improve wildlife habitat. Support the continued expansion of Virginia's Prescribed Burning Council.
9. Provide timely and accurate forest resource information to help forest industry maintain vibrant forest-related businesses in Virginia.
10. Promote market opportunities for landowners in existing and emerging markets for wood products and ecosystem services.
11. Provide financial incentives through administering a variety of State and Federal cost-share programs and the riparian buffer tax credit to encourage implementation of forestry practices.
12. Develop, monitor, and enforce conservation easements on working forestlands.
13. Administer the Forest Legacy Program to fund land acquisition and easements.
14. Interact with local government to promote conserving the forest land base and the ecosystem service benefits that forests provide.
15. Provide outreach on forest benefits, programs, management, and protection.
16. Conduct applied forest research to develop and implement new techniques that enhance the value, health, and sustainability of Virginia's forests, and communicate results in reports, presentations, and field demonstrations.
17. Administer grant programs to reduce wildfire hazard in Virginia's wildland/urban interface communities and increase the rural water supply available for fire suppression needs through the installation of dry hydrants.
18. Mitigate the impact of lost forestland converted to development.

Forestland Conservation Division

A DOF employee was awarded the USDA Forest Legacy Program's Conservation Excellence Award, for exceptional leadership in managing a state program. Over a 14 year span and under the employee's leadership, Virginia has been awarded over \$13.5 M that has resulted in the conservation of 6,300 acres of state forest property, 2,000 acres of state-owned natural area preserves, and over 6,000 acres of conservation easements providing public benefits on privately-owned land. This award, received by only five Legacy program managers nationwide since the Legacy Program's inception, is a great honor for the agency and its Division of Forestland Conservation.

During the FY2015 Forest Legacy grant round, the project that Virginia submitted for national competition ranked 16th in the nation out of 50+ projects submitted. This 1,200 acre project along the Rappahannock River just west of Fredericksburg protects the city's water supply and adds to a 2,000 acre riparian easement jointly held by TNC, VOF, and the City of Fredericksburg. The Agency is hopeful that the final FY2015 Forest Legacy budget will meet the President's proposed funding so the acquisition of an easement over this property can be accomplished.

The Forestland Conservation Division is currently working on over \$1.75 M worth of projects. The successful funding efforts have been through the competitive grant process. This funding is for innovative projects to improve the conservation and value of working forests through new markets, including environmental services, forest certification, bio-energy development, urban and community wood utilization and specialty forest products.

DOF and partner efforts to create a web based application to provide the metrics for valuing the ecosystem services provided by forestland has culminated in the release of InFOREST. Partners include sister state agencies, environmental organizations, U.S. Forest Service, and a major power utility. The newest version of InFOREST now provides the user with the ability to estimate carbon sequestration, air quality, nutrient and sediment loading, and the biodiversity provided by forest cover.

Virginia is one of four states, the others being California, New Jersey and Massachusetts, that are leading the nation in trying innovative approaches to reduce the rate of upland forestland conversion to non-forest use – an issue identified by the US Forest Service as a principal concern in the Southeast. Annually, DOF responds to approximately 175 environmental impact review requests for proposed municipal infrastructure development projects from DEQ, VDOT, Federal agencies and the private sector and provided design, construction, BMP and mitigation recommendations aimed at reducing forest loss in the Commonwealth. DOF is also working with NGOs, PDCs, localities and other partners to identify high value forestlands for future conservation action.

The DOF Working Forest Conservation Easement Program eclipsed two significant milestones as the program's 100th easement was recorded, and eclipsing the 30,000-acre threshold in easement acreage. The DOF now holds easements in 44 counties and the City of Suffolk. We are meeting our goal of protecting large blocks of working forest more intact and functional pieces. The average DOF easement is just over 300

acres, or which 90% is forested. Three-quarters of the forestland has been rated as being of 'high forest conservation value'. DOF easements permanently protect over 150 miles of watercourses.

Using available Forest Legacy funds, the DOF acquired the 266-acre Bear Deal tract in the City of Suffolk. Entirely surrounded by DCR's 1555-acre South Quay Sand hills Natural Area Preserve (NAP), Bear Deal is a critical property to ensure the management of the last natural stand of longleaf pine in Virginia. The property contains several longleaf pine seed trees that produce seed for DOF's longleaf pine restoration program.

Mission Alignment

This service area directly aligns with the DOF's mission to protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. This service area directly supports eight strategic goals of DOF:

1. Protect the citizens, their property, and the forest resource from wildfire.
2. Protect, promote, and enhance forested watersheds, non-tidal wetlands, and riparian areas.
3. Improve the stewardship, health and diversity of forest resources.
4. Conserve the forestland base.
5. Promote forest industry and diversified markets for forest landowners including ecosystem service markets.
6. Collect, maintain, and disseminate forest resource information.
7. Manage agency resources to effectively and efficiently accomplish the strategic objectives.

This service area directly supports the following long-term objectives for Virginia:

1. Protect, conserve, and wisely develop our natural, historical, and cultural resources.
2. Protect the public's safety and security, ensuring a fair and effective system of justice and providing a prepared response to emergencies and disasters of all kinds.
3. Be a national leader in the preservation and enhancement of our economy.

Products and Services

Description of Major Products and Services

Provide experienced all-risk incident management teams for the Commonwealth to provide assistance to Virginia Department of Emergency Management when disasters or emergencies occur.

Delivery of wildfire prevention information/advertisement campaigns through radio, television, newspaper and multi-lingual media sources to make the public aware of forest fire open air fire law, dangerous forest conditions and safe use of the forest.

Provides cost-share assistance to private forest landowners for management practices to reduce the risks of southern pine beetle infestation including pre-commercial thinning and restoration of longleaf pine on acceptable sites.

Provide landowner assistance necessary to increase the establishment of riparian forest buffer plantings in the Commonwealth's Chesapeake Bay and southern river watersheds.

Provide woodland home community wildfire hazard assessment and mitigation recommendations.

Provide oversight of Virginia Dry Hydrant program, which currently installs 65 dry hydrants annually for local/community fire suppression needs.

Acquire and provide federal excess personal property for loan to fire departments across the Commonwealth to increase suppression capabilities.

Provide trained Forest Engineers and Water Quality Specialists with specialized knowledge of forest hydrology, watersheds, civil engineering, and best management practices.

Offer prescribed burning training and certification to burning managers and provide leadership as part of the Virginia Prescribe Fire Council.

Participate in the development of ecosystem service markets for services provided by forests such as water and air quality.

Exploring, developing, and providing incentives to conserve forest land and maintain working forests.

Provide specialized forest firefighting equipment, such as bulldozers equipped for forest conditions and the trucks capable of transporting the bulldozers and other equipment.

Forest landowners request and receive inspections, information and recommendations on forestry management for their property. DOF foresters and technicians are available to provide these inspections, reports and assistance to the 300,000 potential forest landowners.

Forest landowners request federal and state cost-share assistance for forestry practices on their property. DOF foresters and technicians provide the required inspections and approval of the landowner practices before the final cost-share award is made to the landowner. DOF is often involved in the oversight and coordination of the project to ensure the practice is implemented according to the approved plan. DOF staff makes

the final inspection of the completed practice and approves the cost-share payment or assist landowners to correct deficiencies.

Coordination of regional tree planting contract and makes available forest seedlings for sale to forest landowners. This service ensures the forest landowner receives tree planting service from reputable vendors at the lowest price. DOF supplies the tree seedlings from its nurseries ensuring the highest quality, genetically superior seedling available for Virginia sites.

Foresters and technicians inspect all harvest operations to ensure consistent enforcement of the Virginia Seed Tree Law. This law applies to certain species of pine trees and was created to ensure these valuable Virginia species are maintained in Virginia forests into the future.

The Forest Inventory Assessment team collects forest resource information from 20% of the forest inventory plots across Virginia each year. This rate of information collection allows DOF to complete an assessment every five years. The information includes estimated tree volume, species composition, age distribution, and size of Virginia's forest land base. The improved technology in satellite imagery allows DOF to document land pattern trends and changes in "real time" for policy and decision makers.

Using the latest Geographic Information System (GIS) tools, Integrated Forest Resource Information System (IFRIS) and Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) units, DOF employees make sophisticated maps for their reports and add the latest layers of information available on the tract.

Provide comprehensive insect and disease investigation and monitoring across Virginia. DOF is mandated to report infestations and recommend prevention or control measures to protect valuable species of forest trees. In the past, DOF has monitored species such as gypsy moth, pine bark beetle, oak wilt, chestnut blight, emerald ash borer, and many other insects and diseases.

Conduct applied forest research to provide continuously improving recommendations for forest practices in Virginia. The results are communicated to the public in written reports and workshops used by DOF staff in their recommendations to landowners, forest industry, and the general public to improve their forest land.

Offer specialized training to firefighters across the Commonwealth to maintain firefighter's knowledge and skills at the highest level and to ensure that firefighters operate safely to protect themselves and other people.

Forest Producers are now eligible for cost-share to protect water quality on timber harvest operations. The DOF Water Quality personnel are directly responsible for assisting operators on the type and cost of practices to be implemented to protect water quality at stream crossings. The DOF Water Quality personnel inspect and approve all cost-share projects for water quality protection.

Enhance and develop market opportunities for Virginia's forest products. This includes both traditional forest products and specialty, niche products.

Provide and develop information related to forestry industry.

Develop, hold, monitor, and enforce conservation easements provided either through donation or partial purchase.

Administer the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program in Virginia for land acquisition and conservation easements. This involves ranking submissions, submitting projects, and utilizing available Forest Legacy funding.

Provide outreach through conferences, seminars, presentations, pamphlets, etc. to all stakeholders to increase awareness of ecosystem services. This includes developing and providing the tools to quantify ecosystem services for market and land use planning efforts.

Serve in a support and advisory role with various climate change initiatives.

Provide technical guidance and perform project ranking for the forestry category of the Virginia Land Conservation Fund grant program.

Provide outreach and guidance to local governments and land owners regarding the threat of forest land conversion and the tools available to slow conversion. Review local Comprehensive Plans and provide guidance regarding forest land conservation.

DOF realized the need for a professional forestry response to communities after the urban forest destruction caused by Hurricane Isabel to Richmond and Tidewater in 2003. The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program, in cooperation with U&CF programs in other states, have trained a number of its employees and other professional arborists/urban foresters in urban storm response as members of "urban forest strike teams (UFSTs). The storm response takes the form of post-storm evaluation of residual trees in accordance with FEMA standards. DOF has utilized its employees to respond to storm events in several states beginning in 2008. It will continue to participate as members of the 13 state southern region UFSTs and respond to storm events when requested. DOF is also in the process of coordinating this function with activities of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and will integrate with VDEM on a formal basis once the needed protocols are established. DOF will continue to offer UFST training to its employees and other Virginia partners as new trainings occur.

Anticipated Changes

DOF expects to see increases for its services in all aspects of this service area. Forest industry is selling off more forest land to Timberland Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs), Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), and private individuals. This shift away from a vertically integrated forest industry will have significant impacts on forestland conversion rates, forest fragmentation and parcelization, and the number of

forest landowners. This means more forest landowners owning smaller parcels of land and therefore more requests for forest management assistance.

As logging continues to occur across more, and smaller ownerships, an increase in harvest inspections and the demand for assistance with preharvest planning and enforcement of the water quality laws and procedures could occur.

Recent changes to the Logging Notification requirements will require more logger training and assistance in adjusting to the new requirements.

Recent developments at the State and Federal level to improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay will create increasing interest in riparian buffer plantings, applications for the riparian buffer tax credits, and afforestation. Afforestation is the practice of planting new forests on lands that are currently open.

Efforts in voluntary mitigation to offset forests lost to development, employing forest conservation specialists, and increased awareness of the DOF's conservation easement program, is resulting in a significant increased demand on staff resources to develop, monitor and enforce donated easements. The Forest Legacy program also contributes significantly to the easement workload. Demand currently exceeds capacity and there are areas where DOF presence is minimal. Increased outreach by DOF could further increase demand. Continued success in accepting conservation easements will result in increased need for easement monitoring and enforcement. Adequate funding to meet these increasing needs over time will be necessary.

As forestland becomes increasingly fragmented and IFRIS reporting is enhanced, the DOF expects an increased interest and demand for information regarding non-native species control or eradication. Efforts are already occurring to create market opportunities for some non-native species such as ailanthus.

DOF expects increased demand for more native species tree establishment and restoration. Restoration of species such as shortleaf pine, longleaf pine, and American chestnut continue to be an area of emphasis for the agency.

DOF expects strong increased demand for timely forest resource information for planning and land-use decision making. The agency continues to be active in partnering with county governments, planning district commissions, river basin commissions, and non-governmental organizations in efforts to keep working forests on the landscape and reduce the rate of forestland conversion.

Participation in climate change discussion and planning efforts has significantly increased recently. The DOF is being recognized as an important source of information for data on forest carbon sequestration rates, climate change planning and developing carbon offset protocols.

Factors Impacting

Many factors impact the largest service area for DOF. This service area has the greatest number of DOF employees engaged in its success. Employees properly trained and motivated to the delivery of the products and services are essential to its success. Reductions in staff due to resignations, retirements, and budget cuts can impact products and services. These factors may necessitate the need for personnel to cover multiple counties. Additional funding is necessary to recruit, train, and retain qualified employees.

Finding dedicated funding to consistently replace equipment through purchase or lease will be a key in being able to provide a fleet of vehicles and dozers that are ready to meet the emergency response duties of the Agency. This is especially true in budget reduction years.

Forest land lost to other non-forest uses also continues at a rapid pace (approximately 27,000 acres per year are being converted to non-forest use per year). Parcelization, the division of forest land into smaller and smaller ownerships, occurs along with conversion. Both these trends will likely result in a decrease for traditional forestry services and an increase in demands from small woodlot landowners.

The loss of the forest land base, significantly reduces the flow of ecosystem services and benefits derived from our environmental infrastructure. This creates a twofold problem. First, we must better manage the remaining acres of forestland in an attempt to partially offset these losses. Second, society will incur greater costs for engineered solutions in our efforts to provide clean air and clean water to the citizens of the Commonwealth. Forestland is a critical solution to the economy of rural Virginia and the overall economic and environmental health of the Commonwealth. Ecosystem services outreach requests and interest in developing market-based conservation initiatives continues to grow. In the future market-based conservation will become an important mechanism to finance conservation and financially reward landowners for managing their properties in ways that ecosystem services are enhanced.

Funding for cost-share programs is an important factor which impacts the outcomes of this service area. Private landowners count on cost-share reimbursement for forestry practices. Funding for the cost-share programs should be consistent with the level of need and inflation adjusted to advance products and services in this service area. Funding for land conservation in Virginia consists mainly of tax benefits for landowners who donate land or easements. Continued interest in conservation will be significantly determined by changes in tax policy at the county, State, and federal level.

Because land use decisions are determined primarily by local governments, impacting forest conversion on a large scale will require outreach to and influencing the local planning process. Quality training is necessary to insure that a workforce of knowledgeable employees have the latest technical information and are able to effectively communicate appropriate forest resource assessment information and management recommendations. The DOF's ability to transfer information significantly impacts the recognition of the importance of the forest resource and the implementation of forest management practices and the incorporation of forest related considerations in land use planning.

In addition to utilizing the agency-owned plane, it may be necessary to contract for aircraft services to perform agency duties for insect and disease monitoring as required under Chapter 11, Article 11, §10.1-1177 - 1181. Also, with increased reporting of insect and disease activities through Integrated Forest Resource Information System (IFRIS) enhancements, it is expected that staff time available to respond to these reported pest issues will be impacted.

Financial Overview

Forestry Conservation, Wildfire and Watershed Services receives funding from general fund appropriations (65%), special revenue funds (15%), and federal grants (20%). The majority of the funding in this service area is needed to fund salaries, which continue to increase; thus reducing our discretionary spending. In addition, the majority of our federal funding in this service area is from competitively-funded special projects dedicated for specific projects, thus further reducing our discretionary spending.

Biennial Budget

	2015 General Fund	2015 Nongeneral Fund	2016 General Fund	2016 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	15,103,868	7,339,986	15,325,297	7,346,837
Changes to Initial Appropriation	-156,071	0	-176,071	0

Supporting Documents

Title **File Type**

Tree Restoration and Improvement, Nurseries & State-Owned Forest Lands [50104]

Description of this Program / Service Area

This service area consists of Department of Forestry (DOF) tree seedling production nurseries, tree improvement center, State Forests, and State Lands forest management program.

Nurseries:

DOF produces tree seedlings in its own nurseries to provide a source of forest trees to plant future forest crops. DOF operates two nurseries producing approximately 30 million loblolly pine seedlings, other pine species, and a variety of hardwood seedlings for reforestation in Virginia. These seedlings are purchased primarily by the private forest landowner, but the forest industry also purchases DOF seedlings for their needs. The seedlings are selected for Virginia's climate and sites for maximum growth. Species, such as loblolly pine, are a result of genetic improvement work and provide the seed source of current loblolly plantings. Additionally, DOF has made genetic gains in white and shortleaf pine. The nurseries support their operations through the generation of revenues from seedling sales. No tax-supported general fund revenues support the nursery program. The sale of forest tree seedlings must support the operational and capital expenses for the nursery program.

The tree improvement center places its emphasis on genetic improvement of forest nursery seedlings. Through control pollination and best seed source selection, DOF continues to provide superior seedlings from the nurseries for private forest landowner reforestation needs. The improvement center also manages seed orchards, a collection of the better tree seed sources, for loblolly, white pine, shortleaf and longleaf pine nursery production. The conservative estimated gain in wood volume and value to the forest landowner is 60% above the best of trees not selected for genetic growth. This means many advantages to the landowner who receives better quality trees, which grow more wood in a faster time period. The advances in genetic tree improvement will greatly help meet the challenges of the smaller Virginia land base available to grow forest crops on economic rotations and tract sizes. DOF has established 150 acres of third cycle loblolly pine seed orchards, and fourth cycle selections have been identified for establishment. It will take at least 10 years before all 150 acres of seed orchard will produce seed for nursery production. DOF is establishing improved generation white and shortleaf seed orchards and a native Virginia longleaf pine seed orchard. In addition, the agency is establishing a resistant American Chestnut seed production area on the Matthews State Forest. This will complement the ongoing breeding work at Lesesne State Forest.

State Forests:

DOF manages 24 State Forests encompassing 68,626 acres within the Commonwealth. The purpose of the State Forest system is to provide a working forest based on the core principles of a well-managed forest. DOF's Virginia State Forest System uses the following six core principles of a well-managed forest:

1. Contributes to the conservation of biological diversity of the forest and the landscape in which it resides.
2. Maintains or improves the productive capacity of the forest.
3. Maintains the health and vigor of the forest and its landscape/watershed.
4. Contributes to carbon cycles by implementing management that enhances carbon budgets and cycles.
5. Considers socio-economic benefits.
6. Protects soil productivity and water quality.

State forests are used by DOF to grow trees in a productive manner for a variety of forest products, recreational opportunities, water quality protection, wildlife habitat, non-forest products, and educational opportunities for landowners and students. DOF manages all state forest lands and facilities on the state forests from revenues generated primarily from the sale of forest timber products and permit revenues. These revenues pay salaries, purchase equipment, pay for maintenance and repairs, and all operating expenses. The public uses the State Forests for hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, and general outdoor passive uses. The State Forest system is a completely self-generating, non-general funded operation. All forest management activities are carried out only after a complete resource inventory and scientific recommendations have been conducted. While DOF must secure all funding for operations from timber sales, the agency must also open the State Forests to the public who use the forests for many reasons. This creates a delicate balancing act between the needs of the forests and people. The public, academia, forest industry, landowners and others benefit from the State Forest system. These include forest research, demonstration models, stream and riparian demonstration, wildlife research and habitat development, and natural areas. The Cumberland State Forest is the site of the State Forest headquarters.

State Lands:

The State Lands Program also falls into this service area plan. DOF is required by the Code of Virginia to assist other state agencies, with the exception of the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, with the management of their forest lands. DOF staff assesses the condition and quality of the State's forest resources on lands of other state agencies and recommend management practices that fit the agency needs and benefit the forest. Expenses incurred in the State Lands Program are funded via timber sales from the state agency land.

Mission Alignment

This service area directly supports the agency mission of providing a sustained forest resource for Virginians. The nursery and tree improvement program provide better quality seedlings in the quantities estimated as needed annually by the private forest landowners, industry and organizations for forest regeneration.

The State Forests serve as role models for landowners, students of forestry, and other organizations for the proper way to manage a forest. The self-supporting state forests provide opportunity to demonstrate the values of Virginia's forests. Most of these forests were denuded by clearing and abandoned farming operations in late 1800s and early 1900s. Now, the state forests attest to sustainable nature of managed forests. Currently, the State Forest provides many miles of trails on the State Forests devoted to recreational use by the public. Budgetary constraints will govern expansions to the existing trail system, requiring the State Forests to prioritize where and when expansions occur.

DOF also practices sound management on other state agency forest land to help the agency meet its objectives and provide for healthy forests.

Products and Services

Description of Major Products and Services

Forest tree seedlings are produced in the nurseries and sold to forest landowners, the forest industry and the general public. Seedlings are used in reforestation, conservation, erosion control, wildlife habitat, and riparian buffer plantings. Many seedlings are the result of genetic improvement work. All seedlings produced are appropriate for Virginia's climate and soils.

State Forest System must pay for their operations through the sale of timber, forest products and user fees. The largest component of their budget is made up from timber sales conducted on the State Forests. Timber is offered by competitive sealed bidding to the highest bidder and sold periodically from stands of mature trees or from thinnings. These products help the local economy and provide some revenue to the local governments.

DOF provides forest management plans and technical assistance to other state agencies to help them manage their forest land in accordance with the Code of Virginia. DOF must work in cooperation with the Division of Engineering & Buildings to accomplish plans and conduct timber sales.

The State Forest System offers many forest recreation uses, such as hunting, trapping, fishing, mountain bike riding, hiking, horseback riding and bird watching. These uses are available on an annual basis. Permits are available to persons who wish to use the State Forests, such as hunters, trappers, fishermen, bikers, and horseback riders for a fee. As a group, these recreational uses produce approximately 10% of the State Forest System's budget.

Research and academic pursuits are benefits of the State Forest and nurseries. DOF partners in research with higher education and participates in research studies with many groups. The information is shared with other researchers, academic institutions, industry, and the public.

Anticipated Changes

DOF anticipates increased requests for most tree species, especially loblolly pine. This increase is the result of new and repurposed fiber resource user facilities; increased planting densities for biomass potential; and federal assistance programs supporting shortleaf pine and loblolly pine restoration projects.

The agency expects the public to use the State Forest more often and in larger numbers. DOF will have to create plans that allow the continuation of forestry operations and greater use of the State Forests. A recreational use survey of the state forests is being conducted by Virginia Tech to assist in the development of expanded and improved public use opportunities.

DOF expects to increase the number of forest management projects on non-DOF owned state lands.

Factors Impacting

Demand for nursery forest seedlings impact the nursery program. Demand is usually correlated with timber harvests, particularly pine, and special tree-planting incentive programs, such as the riparian buffer planting efforts in all of the Commonwealth's watersheds.

The availability of laborers to carry out the work in the nursery is an important factor impacting products. Two nurseries now carry the entire seedling production for Virginia.

The State Forests are impacted by weather, severe storms, insects, diseases and markets. In addition, growing recreational demands will affect finances and personnel resources for the State Forests. Another factor impacting the State Forest is the amount of allowable acreage or tree volume the State Forest is allowed to remove annually to meet the State Forest Plan and its budget.

Financial Overview

Funds received for the nurseries are derived through the sale of forest tree seedlings produced and sold by the nurseries. All operating expenses and capital expenses must be covered by the seedling sales. No general tax funds are provided for the operation of the nursery.

Funds to operate the State Forests must be derived from the sale of timber, forest products and user fees. The majority of the funding is made up from the sale of timber. The user fees currently available to the State Forest System are generated from hunting, trapping, fishing, mountain bike and horseback riding, which amounts to approximately \$100,000 annually. All funds are used to cover operating and capital expenses. In all cases of timber sales, DOF gives a percentage of the gross proceeds from the timber sales to the local government.

Biennial Budget

	2015 General Fund	2015 Nongeneral Fund	2016 General Fund	2016 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	0	3,219,978	0	3,219,978
Changes to Initial Appropriation	0	0	0	0

Supporting Documents

Title **File Type**

Financial Assistance for Forest Land Management [50105]

Description of this Program / Service Area

This service area consists of providing technical and financial assistance to help improve the livability of cities and communities through managing urban forest resources to promote a healthy ecosystem. The Department of Forestry (DOF) provides leadership to the Commonwealth's urban and city areas to accomplish this goal, liaisons with the U. S. Forest Service and works closely with communities to ensure success. This service area also consists of providing training and financial assistance to Virginia Volunteer Fire Departments (VFDs) who serve a key role as primary cooperators for the agencies wildfire suppression role.

This service area consists of:

Urban & Community Forestry:

- Providing technical assistance to cities, towns and non-profit organizations.
- Making federal grants available to cities, towns, 501-c-3 non-profit organizations, other state agencies and educational institutions.
- Coordinating the Tree City USA Program in cooperation with the National Arbor Day Foundation and the National Association of State Foresters
- Conducting or coordinating urban/community forestry workshops, conferences, seminars, field days, etc., in cooperation with other state agencies and various organizations.
- Providing appropriate training on urban forestry technology, issues and programs to DOF employees.

Assistance to Virginia Volunteer Fire Departments:

- Providing training in wildfire suppression and advanced incident management to VFDs across the Commonwealth.
- Providing federal grants to VFDs to aid them in obtaining specialized wildfire equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Mission Alignment

The Urban and Community Forestry (U & CF) Program is aligned with DOF's mission in the following ways:

- U & CF encourages the conservation and management of forest land in urbanizing areas.
- U & CF encourages the protection of unique and fragile habitats in urbanizing areas.
- U & CF encourages the enhancement of forested watersheds and protection and enhancement of riparian areas.
- Urban and community forests contribute to economic development in cities and towns.
- Urban and community forests "... protect its atmosphere, lands and water from impairment or destruction (and provide) for the public benefit, enjoyment and general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth..." Article XI, Virginia Constitution.
- Urban and community forests encourages and supports the green infrastructure approach to land conservation.
- Urban and community forests encourages and supports the development of greenway projects in communities.
- Urban and community forests supports and helps to implement environmental leadership training through the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute.
- U & CF encourages professionalism in the practice of urban forestry/arbiculture by supporting and promoting the ISA Certified Arborist Program.
- U & CF encourages development of the urban forestry profession and practitioners by support of the urban forestry program within Virginia Tech's College of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation (FREC).
- U & CF provides assistance to "underserved communities" through partnership projects with Virginia Tech's Community Design Assistance Center and Virginia State University.
- The U & CF program promotes and supports forest-based recreation and eco-tourism, as well as community development as a component of Appalachian Forest Recreation (see Virginia Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources document, page 102)

The Forest Resource Protection - Assistance to Rural Volunteer Fire Departments Program is aligned with DOF's mission:

- VFDs are a primary cooperator with the VDOF for the protection of the forest resources of the Commonwealth from wildfire.
- Wildfire prevention and suppression is crucial for protecting and maintaining Virginia's vast forest resources.

Products and Services

Description of Major Products and Services

Provide technical urban/community forestry information and assistance to local governments and community groups who need this information and help to develop and maintain community forests.

Provide assistance to educational institutions through federal grants. DOF works with state universities and colleges to determine where grant funds can be used to help further the development and maintenance of community forests.

DOF assesses and conveys federal grants to qualified segments of the customer base to further the development and maintenance of urban and community forests.

DOF provides conferences, seminars and workshops relating to urban and community forestry to interested parties in urban and community forestry. DOF, to the extent possible within its budget constraints, makes these events accessible to underserved audiences through scholarships.

DOF promotes and administers the Tree City USA Program in Virginia.

DOF develops and funds publications, which provide technical information, contact information and resource assistance.

DOF co-sponsored and helped organize and orchestrate four of the Governor's Conferences on Greenways and Trails in Virginia completed in 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2005. Through its Urban and Community Forestry Program, DOF is continuing its decade long partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the National Park Service to support local greenway and trails efforts. DOF does this through joint projects with Virginia Tech's Community Design Assistance Center to do conceptual planning. DOF also accomplishes this by co-sponsoring workshops and conferences on greenways and trails with DCR and others. Through its Urban and Community Grant Program, DOF also supports local government and/or non-profit organizations with limited funding for staff working on greenways and trail projects.

DOF has funded or supported with staff the following projects: Luray - Hawksbill Greenway(phases 1, 2, 3 & 4), Marion Riverwalk, projects in the Roanoke Valley Greenways system, Blacksburg and Christiansburg connectors to the Huckleberry Trail, Shenandoah River Blueway, Winchester Green Circle, Town of Broadway, Town of Pennington Gap, Wytheville Greenway, Lower Appomattox Greenway/Blueway, Brushy Blue Trail Master Plan, and the Virginia Capitol Trail, the proposed front Royal Greenway, the Dante RV Trail, the Great Eastern Trail, the Tobacco Heritage Trail (in Brunswick and Mecklenburg Counties), and others.

DOF has been instrumental in advancing the green infrastructure concept of land conservation planning to Virginia. DOF hosted the first Virginia training on green infrastructure concepts to a statewide audience in 2005. It has since supported a major green infrastructure planning effort in the New River Valley and the Charlottesville area and has funded several local conferences and workshops to advance this concept. DOF is working with the Planning School at the University of Virginia to see that green infrastructure concepts are introduced to students in this planning program. Through its Urban and Community Grant Program and other sources of federal funds, DOF is supporting green infrastructure work being done by the non-profit Green Infrastructure Center. DOF will continue to use a portion of its Urban and Community Forestry funds to support green infrastructure initiatives to the extent possible with this limited funding.

The Forestry Workgroup and the Chesapeake Executive Council of the Chesapeake Bay Program has recognized the retention and expansion of urban tree canopy (UTC) as a strategy in its "Expanded Riparian Forest Buffer Goals" Directive 03-01 states that "By 2010, (the Chesapeake Bay Program through DOF) will work with at least five (5) local jurisdictions and communities....to complete an assessment of urban forests, adopt a local goal to increase urban tree canopy cover and encourage measures to attain the established goals in order to enhance and extend forest buffer functions in urban areas". DOF, through its Urban and Community Forestry Program, is supporting urban forest assessments in 15 communities within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and will continue to support these efforts through very limited funding from the Chesapeake Bay Program, state Water Quality Improvement Funds and other grant funds. Some communities have already established UTC goals and DOF will monitor communities doing assessments and encourage goal setting measures by them in order that Virginia meets the UTC targets set forth within Directive 03-01 of the five (5) state Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

DOF is utilizing a portion of the Water Quality Improvement Act (WQIA) funds distributed by DCR to support on-the-ground urban and community forestry activity to improve community water quality. These funds are used to support grants to local governments or organizations to establish riparian areas, restore wetlands, install bio-retention projects (i.e. rain gardens), etc. The Urban and Community Forestry program will continue to support this activity as long as WQIA funds are available.

Through its partnership with Virginia Tech's Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC), DOF provides conceptual planning in communities for streetscapes, parks, green space, greenways/trails, and other open space. These conceptual plans can be leveraged into funding from various state and federal agencies.

Through its partnership with the University of Virginia's Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN), DOF helps deliver extensive leadership training for natural resource professionals through the Virginia Natural Resources leadership Institute.

Through its partnership with the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (MAC-ISA), DOF helps individuals achieve and maintain professional ISA Certified Arborist status through hosting exam preparation training and organizing training events (workshops, conferences, etc.) that offer continuing education units (CEUs).

DOF provides urban tree canopy assessments (UTCs) to communities interested in developing public policy to improve water quality and manage storm water as part of the five-state Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Through FY 2011, DOF has assisted 27 communities in assessing urban tree canopy. DOF is supported in this effort with funding from the United States Forest Service (USFS) Chesapeake Bay Program.

Anticipated Changes

DOF recognizes a strong interest from communities and volunteer fire departments in the service area. Historically, DOF receives more requests for federal grant funding than appropriated funds. If funds are increased, DOF anticipates greater interest and more applications from communities for the federal funding.

Factors Impacting

Funding is the primary factor impacting this service area. The service area represents the act of primarily offering federal grants to communities and volunteer fire departments interested in the protection, development and improvement of their community forests.

Financial Overview

This service area provides financial assistance to non-profits. DOF administers federal pass-through grant programs to communities and non-profits to develop and maintain urban and community forests as well as volunteer fire departments to train wildland fire fighters and purchase fire fighting equipment. DOF provides technical information and advice and oversees the federal grants to ensure funds are used appropriately. Financial assistance for forest land management is entirely from federal sources.

Biennial Budget

	2015 General Fund	2015 Nongeneral Fund	2016 General Fund	2016 Nongeneral Fund
Initial Appropriation for the Biennium	0	675,000	0	675,000
Changes to Initial Appropriation	0	0	0	0

Supporting Documents

Title **File Type**