

Managing to Meet Challenges: Sources of Assistance



Virginia Forest Landowner Education
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Although there are some challenges associated with owning rural lands, there is also a great deal of assistance available to Virginia's landowners. And much of this assistance is provided free of charge by state and federal agencies. This portion of the class will introduce participants to natural resources agencies and what services they provide. Included in the class notebooks is a list of these agencies along with their contact information.

State Agencies

- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Department of Forestry
- Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries
- Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation
- Virginia Forestry Association



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First we'll talk about the state agencies in Virginia.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

- Provide education/training
- Local offices
- Statewide programs
 - Virginia Forest Landowner Education
 - Virginia Master Naturalist
 - SHARP Logger
- Website
- National Extension answers
 - <http://e-answers.adec.edu>



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Virginia Tech is the Land Grant University in Virginia. This means they are charged with a 3-part mission: education, research and engagement. Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) performs the majority of the engagement mission. Extension's mission is to disseminate the University's research to stakeholders and the general public in an understandable and applicable way. All counties in Virginia have a staffed VCE office. Some of the statewide programs landowners may be interested in include:

- The Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program (VFLEP) – provides scientifically-based education and hands-on experience to Virginia's forest landowners
- Master Naturalist – trains citizens of the Commonwealth to become citizen scientists
- SHARP Logger – trains Virginia's loggers to harvest timber in a sustainable manner

More information on VCE can be found on their website, which links to numerous natural resources publications, program information, and county office locations.

For forest landowners in particular, the VFLEP website has links to forestry websites, publications, and a calendar of natural resource educational events
www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

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This map shows VCE's four planning districts and contact information for the four Forestry & Natural Resources Extension agents who serve these districts. They are responsible for local forestry programming to landowners, natural resource professionals, government officials and youth.

Virginia Department of Forestry

www.dof.virginia.gov



- On-the ground assistance
 - Property evaluation
 - Management planning
 - Insect & disease identification
 - Site preparation and tree planting
 - Prescribed burning
- Cost-share program administration
- State Forests
- Seedling nurseries
- Conservation easements
- Wildfire education & control

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The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) is the state forestry agency and their headquarters are located in Charlottesville. Most counties have a local office as well and ALL counties have an area forester assigned to them.

Through their landowner assistance program, VDOF provides funding and support to VCE's VFLEP;

They also provide on-the ground assistance to landowners. The area forester will visit properties to help landowners evaluate their property (what are the possibilities), set goals and help with planning, look for health problems, and assist with planting projects. They can also help landowners who want to use prescribed fire as a management tool (they cannot, however, light the match – the landowner must do that).

In addition to these services, the VDOF also administers a number of cost share programs (which we will discuss in more detail later today), manages over 67,000 acres of State Forests, manages two seedling nurseries and sells the seedlings to the public, and grants conservation easements on working forests (again, we'll talk more about easements later today). And, finally, they are the first line of defense against wildfires. Recall from the fire presentation, the VDOF was established to fight fires and restore denuded lands so that Virginia could receive federal fire fighting money via the Weeks Act.

For contact information for the area foresters, as well as links to publications and more information about VDOF programs, visit their website. Local foresters can be found in the Blue Pages of your phone book.

Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries

www.dgif.virginia.gov

- Hunting/Fishing regulations/licenses
- Boating safety
- Wildlife management/planning
- Education/training
 - Wildlife information
 - Hunting/fishing programs
- Wildlife management areas
- Birding and Wildlife Trails
- Determination of threatened or endangered animals



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The Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) is responsible for issuing hunting and fishing licenses, boating safety, wildlife (game and non-game) management, and education. VDGIF biologists work with landowners through educational programs, and can assist landowners who are particularly interested in managing for wildlife with writing a management plan. They are also the state agency responsible for enforcing Virginia's threatened and endangered wildlife regulations. Visit their website for detailed information on the services they provide. Field offices are located across Virginia and contact information can also be found in the blue pages of your phone book.

Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

- Helps farmers locate markets for products
- Office of Farmland Preservation
- Agri-tourism
- Threatened & endangered plants and insects
- Regulatory services
- Field offices throughout Virginia

www.vdacs.virginia.gov



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VDACS is a strong supporter of the local food movement – helping farmers, producers of non-timber forest products, agri-tourism businesses and wineries market their products. Their responsibilities as they pertain to natural resources include enforcing Virginia’s threatened and endangered species regulations for plants and insects (along with the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation’s Natural Heritage Program), the gypsy moth Slow the Spread program, and the Farm Link Program. Farm Link matches up retiring farmers with aspiring farmers – helping to keep rural lands in agricultural uses. They also support the Office of Farmland Preservation which provides workshops on transferring farmland to future generations.

Field Offices are located throughout Virginia.

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

- Manage State Parks
- Conserve, protect, enhance lands
- Protect Chesapeake Bay watershed
- Promote stewardship & enjoyment of the outdoors
- Dam inspection
- Natural Heritage Program
 - Invasives
 - Rare/threatened/
endangered species



www.dcr.virginia.gov

www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/

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The Department of Conservation & Recreation (VDCR) manages Virginia's 35 State Parks; in addition, they are responsible for dam safety. The Office of Land Conservation is housed within DCR. This office helps educate landowners and the public about land conservation opportunities, and writes the stock language for conservation easements. VDCR's Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance program addresses the impacts that land use has on waters that flow into the Bay. In addition, VDCR assists the Soil and Water Conservation Districts with a number of soil and water conservation programs. Finally, VDCR houses the Virginia Natural Heritage Program. NHP is a comprehensive effort to save Virginia's native plant and animal life and the ecosystems on which they depend. This is being accomplished through inventory, provision on conservation information, protection and stewardship. NHP provides advice to VDACS on threatened & endangered species regulations and provides geographical information on the location of such species.

Virginia Outdoors Foundation

- Preserves cultural and heritage lands
- Helps landowners develop conservation easements



www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org/

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The Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) Land Trust is a quasi-state agency which holds the majority of conservation easements in Virginia. Their mission is to promote the preservation of open-space lands and to encourage private gifts of money, land or other property to preserve the scenic, natural, historic, scientific, open-space and recreational opportunities of Virginia.

More than 75 percent of the current acreage protected by VOF under conservation easements has been protected between 2000 and 2009 (attributed in part to Governor Tim Kaine and his pledge to conserve 400,000 acres). VOF now protects 580,000 acres, an area three times larger than Shenandoah National Park.

Virginia Forestry Association



- Represent forestry interests to government
- *Virginia Forests* magazine
- VFA Annual Convention
- Support the Sustainable Forestry Initiative
- Sponsor teacher and youth educational activities
- Co-Sponsor the Virginia Tree Farm Program.
- Support Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation
- Co-Sponsor Log A Load for Kids

www.vaforestry.org

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The Virginia Forestry Association is a private, state-wide organization for landowners and natural resource professionals. VFA provides educational opportunities and promotes forestry interests in Richmond. They also publish the quarterly magazine *Virginia Forests*.

Federal Agencies

- USDA Forest Service
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Services
- Soil & Water Conservation Districts



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Landowner assistance is also available from a number of federal agencies.

USDA Forest Service

www.fs.fed.us/



- Education/training
- Manage National Forests and National Recreation Areas (Washington/Jefferson National Forest)
- Research
- Support state forestry programs

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In Virginia, the USDA Forest Service manages the George Washington/Jefferson National Forests (1.8 million acres in VA, WV and KY) for forest health wildlife and recreation. They also conduct research which is disseminated on-line through Tree Search, provide maps and brochures for National Forests, and manage the Forest inventory and Analysis program, a continuous forest census. Much of their research is helpful to private landowners. But the biggest contribution they make to private lands is through their State and Private Forestry (S&PF) Program. Through S&PF, the Forest Service provides conservation education, forest health protection, and financial & technical assistance.

One component of S&PF is the Forest Stewardship Program, which helps fund VFLEP. This program educates forest landowners and develops management plans for them. Another component, the Forest Legacy Program, helps support conservation easements on private lands; the final component, the Forestland Enhancement Program, provides cost share assistance and technical assistance to help landowners implement sustainable forestry practices.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

- Create, maintain and improve wildlife habitat
- Administer cost-share programs
- Provide on-the ground assistance to landowners
- Protect air quality
- Promote active sustainable agriculture
- Protect soils and water
- Host the Web Soil Survey – <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>



www.nrcs.usda.gov

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The Natural Resources Conservation Service is committed to conserving natural resources on private lands. They do this by providing numerous types of technical and financial assistance to private landowners.

NRCS is the sponsor for a number of common cost share programs in Virginia, including EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program), WRP (Wetland Reserve Program), and WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program). You will learn more about cost share programs in the section of this class on Income Opportunities.

Another useful resource provided by NRCS to landowners and natural resource professionals is the “Web Soil Survey”. This powerful resource uses GIS mapping technology to map properties and identify soils within the boundaries. Additional information is provided about each soil type pertaining to the soils best uses, productivity levels, and other characteristics. This service is provided free of charge. www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov

Offices are located throughout Virginia. Soil and Water Conservation Districts are generally housed with the NRCS offices.

Soil & Water Conservation Districts

- Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Assistance
- Implement Erosion & Sedimentation Ordinances
- Implement county ordinances for the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and Virginia's Agricultural Stewardship Act
- Technical expertise
- Educational programs

www.vaswcd.org



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There are 47 SWCDs in Virginia – every county in Virginia, except Arlington, is in one of these districts.

Some of the key programs the SWCD's are responsible for include:

- Implementation of Virginia's Agricultural BMP Cost-Share assistance program. This program provides over \$1 million annually to address significant agricultural water quality programs in high priority watersheds.
- Implementation of local Erosion & Sedimentation ordinances – these help control sedimentation from urban construction and development
- Implement County ordinances – Agricultural stewardship act: work with farmers and VDACS to resolve, in a timely and commonsense manner, water quality concerning nutrients, sediment and toxins from agricultural activities.
- Technical Expertise - design and installation of farm conservation practices implemented voluntarily by Virginia farmers
- Educational programs

Private

- Association of Consulting Foresters
 - www.acf-foresters.org
- Society of American Foresters
 - www.safnet.org
- Consulting Forester List
 - www.dof.virginia.gov



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In addition to public agencies, there are services available to landowners through the private sector as well. The Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF) and Society of American Foresters (SAF) provide certification of forestry professionals, ensuring they implement forestry practices based on strong codes of ethics. Landowners hiring a forester should check to make sure the forester is a member of either or both of these organizations. Certified Foresters (CF's) are certified by SAF and must undergo regular continuing education to maintain their certification.

Consulting foresters are either paid an hourly fee for their services, or, if a timber harvest is conducted, they pay accept a percentage of the sale as payment.

The VDOF maintains a list of consulting foresters in Virginia. Since there is no licensing in Virginia, anyone can call themselves a forester. So landowners should check for membership in ACF or SAF and should ALWAYS check references.



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There is a comprehensive list of all these groups along with their contact information in your packets. Please feel free to share this information with any potential clients you have. We hope this portion of the class has given you the idea that landowners are not on their own once they purchase a piece of land – there are many natural resource professionals who can help!