

Southwest Virginia Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conference

February 10, 2024 – Wytheville Meeting Center



Location	Time	Title	Presenter
General Session Main Ballroom	8:30	Registration & breakfast	
	9:00	Introductory remarks	Jennifer Gagnon
	9:15-10:15	Program Kick-off Vegetation and Habitat Management on National Forest System Lands	Beth Christensen
-----BREAK-----			
Concurrent Sessions 1 TBA	10:30-11:30	a. Forest Health Update b. Tips for Purchasing the Perfect Parcel c. Riparian-stream Connections Support Water Quality and Aquatic Biodiversity d. Forest Products	Carrie Fearer Justin Funk Sally Entrekin Urs Buehlmann
-----LUNCH-----			
General Session Main Ballroom	12:30 - 1:10	Plenary Session Wild-simulated Ginseng: An Option for Underutilized Forest Land	Jim Hamilton
Concurrent Sessions 2 TBA	1:15 - 2:15	a. Invasive Plants: Consequences, Identification and Management b. Money for Management c. Tree Identification d. Conservation Options for Landowners	Lindsay Caplan Panel Ellen Powell John Eustis
-----BREAK-----			
Concurrent Sessions 3 TBA	2:30 - 3:30	a. Avia Influenza - Could it be Falling From the Sky? b. Knowing When to Cut it Out c. Friendly Flames: Prescribed Fire as a Tool for Land Management	Chris Fletcher Joe Rossetti Julia DeFeo
General Session Main Ballroom	3:40	Capstone Coexistence Ecology of Appalachian Carnivores	Marcella Kelly
	4:30	Closing remarks, door prizes, evaluations	

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volunteers Eric Capps, Austin
Holloway, Sara Kothmann, and
Moriah Owen!!**

Session Descriptions

9:15 – 10:15 Program Kick-off

Vegetation and Habitat Management on National Forest System Lands. Beth Christensen. Beth will provide an overview of vegetation management practices occurring on National Forest System Lands and the interrelated ecological, economic, and social importance these practices play.

10:30 – 11:30 Concurrent Sessions

Forest Health Update. Dr. Carrie Fearer. Carrie will provide an update on current and looming threats in Virginia and associated management options.

Tips for Purchasing the Perfect Parcel. Justin Funk.

In this session, landowners will learn what to look for when buying land. They will also learn what tools are available for assessing the condition of the land and what steps they should take before making an offer. Landowners will leave equipped with a better understanding of how to fit their long-term forest management objectives into their land buying decision process.

Riparian-stream Connections Support Water Quality and Aquatic Biodiversity. Dr. Sally Entekin. Sally will describe the current state of riparian buffer ecology from a water quality and aquatic macroinvertebrates perspective and describe the pros and cons of managing forest buffers.

Forest Products. Dr. Urs Buehlmann.

Wood, one of the major materials serving humanity throughout history, still plays a large part of our lives – think about shelter, furniture, paper, packaging, and other applications that we take for granted. In this presentation, we will review some of these applications and look towards some new products emerging.

12:30 – 1:10 Plenary

Wild-simulated Ginseng: An Options for Underutilized Forest Land. Dr. Jim Hamilton. The presentation will briefly cover the history/culture of ginseng followed by how it can be established & managed on certain woodland properties/environments as a long-term non-timber forest product, and some management considerations. Other forest medicinal plants will also be covered briefly.

1:15 – 2:15 Concurrent Sessions

Invasive Plants: Consequences, Identification and Management. Lindsay Caplan. Lindsay will give a brief overview on the impacts of invasive plants in Virginia and how they are listed and classified. She will provide information on identifying some common and emerging species and management techniques and will demonstrate chemical control methods.

Money for Management. Panel. If you are looking for financial assistance to help you implement management practices on your land, there are ample sources of cost-share money available to you now. But when and how do you apply? How many programs can you sign up for? What are you required to do once you've received funding? This panel of cost-share experts will answer these questions and more.

Tree Identification. Ellen Powell.

We'll bring the outside in, to learn and practice skills for identifying trees through the seasons.

2:30 – 3:30 Concurrent Sessions

Avian Influenza – Could it be Falling from the Sky? Dr. Chris Fletcher. In this presentation you will learn about the history of Avian Influenza, how it spreads, signs and symptoms of bird flu, and how you might be at risk, even if you don't have poultry on your land. We will dive into biosecurity and what actions you need to take if you suspect avian influenza. Also, we will discuss the impacts on the local and world economies, and safeguard measures that you personally can take for your land, livestock, and family. Find out what the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is doing to protect Virginia's agricultural commodities and helping to keep residents safe.

Knowing When to Cut it Out. Joe Rossetti. Most landowners in Virginia own hardwood forests. Learn how to make the most of the existing forest while planning for the future forest. Joe will cover considerations for harvesting timber, including promoting forest regeneration planning.

Friendly Flames: Prescribed Fire as a Tool for Land Management. Julia DeFeo. Prescribed burning is an increasingly popular management tactic in Virginia that is useful for promoting diverse wildlife habitat, reducing hazardous fuel structure, improving water quality, and more. In this presentation, we will learn about the history of fire in Virginia, how fire regimes can be manipulated to achieve specific goals, and how to determine if prescribed burning is a good fit for your land.

Conservation Options for Landowners. John Eustis.

Virginia landowners are fortunate to have a number of tools available to help them conserve their land for future generations. This session will delve into these tools, how they work, and how you can use them.

3:40 – 4:30 Capstone

Coexistence Ecology of Appalachian Carnivores. Dr. Marcella Kelly.

This talk will cover my lab's many years of research on bears, bobcats, and coyotes, of the Central Appalachian Mountains, and discuss impacts of this carnivore community on white-tailed deer and potentially even on forest structure.

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Speaker Bios

Dr. Urs Buehlman

Urs works in manufacturing systems engineering and business competitiveness. He practices and promotes Lean to improve business results and assists industry in Virginia and beyond. He holds a PhD and an MBA from Virginia Tech, an industrial engineering degree from Bern University of Applied Science and a cabinet making degree from a community college.

Brandon Blevins

Brandon serves as the Conservation Specialist and No-Till Equipment Manager for Clinch Valley Soil & Water Conservation District. A native to Russell County and Department of Geology graduate from Radford University, he has worked in the private engineering/surveying/permitting industry primarily in the coalfields of Southwest Virginia. He has been an Environmental Scientist studying everything from geology to wetlands and the “wee-beasties” that live in Virginia’s freshwater streams. He is proud to call Southwest Virginia home as well as his office. He loves working with and helping the people and places of this beloved region and being a trusted part of the community.

Lindsay Caplan

Lindsay is the Invasive Species Specialist for the Virginia Department of Forestry, where she coordinates invasive plant management and works to educate the public on invasive plant identification and management techniques. She received a BS in Wildlife Science from Oregon State University and worked in wildlife management and education before joining Virginia Department of Forestry in 2023.

Beth Christensen

Beth has been the district ranger for the Eastern Divide Ranger District of the George Washington-Jefferson National for the last 3.5 years. Beth has worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 19 years across six national forests and nine ranger districts. Prior to being a district ranger Beth was a wildlife biologist for the Forest Service. She earned a BS from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana majoring in ecology and wildlife biology and an MS in conservation ecology from California State University, Sacramento.

Julia DeFeo

Julia is a PhD student studying fire ecology and management at Virginia Tech in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation. For her dissertation research, Julia is developing advanced models for fuel structure and fire effects in the Appalachian region.

Dr. Sally Entrekin

Sally is a Professor in the Entomology Department at Virginia Tech. She publishes on macroinvertebrate-environmental interactions, freshwater quantity and quality, and ecosystem ecology. Her research group focuses on macroinvertebrate community ecology and ecosystem function. They use the coupled integration of macroinvertebrate communities and ecosystem dynamics at the land-water interface to understand how people impact freshwater quality, quantity, and community structure and function. Their current projects span across disciplines

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that engage students and the public in water quality and quantity issues typically from development for urban centers, agriculture, and resource extraction in streams and wetlands. Sally also serves as the Secretary for the Society for Freshwater Science and is the co-associate editor for the journal *Freshwater Science, Bridges*, that integrates science and decision-making. At Virginia Tech, Sally also teaches Aquatic Entomology and Freshwater Biomonitoring. Website: <https://www.sentrekin.com/>.

John Eustis

John is a long-time resident of the New River region. He moved to Blacksburg with his family in 1976 and has spent the majority of his time living in the area since then. He graduated from Virginia Tech with a BS in Sociology and an MS in Urban and Regional Planning with a concentration in environmental planning. He also spent a year living in Sweden where he completed course work for an MS in Water Resources Management and Livelihood Security.

After holding managerial positions in the hospitality and outdoor retail industries, his planning degree helped John focus his career on environmental and conservation issues. He worked for a watershed council in Oregon before returning to the New River region in 2007 to work for the New River Land Trust.

John is an avid outdoors enthusiast. He enjoys cycling, snowboarding, hiking, camping, trail running, rock climbing, and swimming in the local rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. He shares his love of these activities with his wife, Laura Beth, who is a biomedical research scientist, and their daughter Graelyn.

Pursuing these activities contributed to his abiding reverence for the natural environment and rural landscape of the region. John finds it gratifying to work with the New River Land Trust and hopes the work conserving the farmland, forest land, open and natural spaces, historic places and enhancing public access to the outdoor helps to preserve the region's unique character for today's and tomorrow's generations.

Dr. Carrie Fearer

Carrie received her MS and PhD in forest pathology from The Ohio State University where her research focused on beech leaf disease. From there, she was a postdoctoral researcher at Purdue University working on walnut witches'-broom disease and at the University of New Hampshire where she studied the effects of forest diseases on carbon sequestration rates. She is currently an assistant professor of forest health at Virginia Tech.

Justin Funk

Justin has worked for the Virginia Department of Forestry for 18 years. He served as an area forester in the Central Region of Virginia early in his career and managed the state tree nurseries for 7 years. The last 6 years have been spent in Southwest Virginia, back as an area forester. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his wife and kids, hunting, playing guitar, and music.

Dr. Chris Fletcher

Chris is the Regional Veterinary Supervisor for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He graduated with his DVM from Saint George's University in 2007 and returned home to Abingdon, Virginia where he spent the last 16 years as a private large animal practitioner. Just recently he has taken on his new role in the public sector with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to further help producers in the state of Virginia. Dr. Fletcher and his wife own and operate a registered Katahdin sheep flock and have a small cow/calf operation in Abingdon, VA.

Dr. Jim Hamilton

Jim is an NC State County Extension Director based in Boone. He has a background in forestry and has been working with private forest landowners in the western mountains of North Carolina for almost 20 years. Over the last 10+ years, he has provided workshops and demonstrations on the planting and management of ginseng as an alternative forest farming crop. He's been so inspired by the plant and its culture and history in Appalachia that he even penned a fiction novel set under the backdrop of the ginseng trade.

Dr. Marcella Kelly

Marcella received her PhD from the University of California at Davis and started her career at Virginia Tech in 2001 in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation. She researches elusive, difficult to track species, usually mid- to large carnivores. She combines technological advances like camera traps, genetic sampling, and GPS collars to gain valuable new information on such species for the purpose of better management of our wildlife resources.

Ellen Powell

Ellen has been the Conservation Education Coordinator for the Virginia Department of Forestry since 2005. Prior to joining the Department, she was a Virginia Cooperative Extension agent, working in both the 4-H and Environmental Horticulture program areas. Ellen has a BS in fisheries and wildlife sciences from North Carolina State University and an MS in forest resources from The University of Georgia.

Joe Rossetti

Joe has spent his 18-year career in forestry in the woods of West Virginia and Virginia. Joe started with VDOF as an FIA forester in the Eastern Region, then the Area Forester for Prince George and Surry counties, then northern Virginia counties centered around Fauquier. While Senior Area Forester, Joe also managed the Conway Robinson and Whitney State Forests. Now the first Hardwood Initiative Coordinator for the agency, he still lives in Culpeper County with his family, chickens, garden, and 0.5 acres of forest.

Chris Sullivan

Chris is a 1994 Virginia Tech School of Forestry graduate and began his career intensively managing Champion Paper Company lands in Eastern North Carolina and then Southside Virginia. Since 2002, Chris has led the Virginia Department of Forestry's efforts in Southwest Virginia and currently serves as Deputy Regional Forester for the Western Region.