

From Fallow Fields to Forests

By: Rhonda Prillaman, Virginia Department of Forestry

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture, has launched its Open Lands Tree Planting Initiative in the commonwealth. The purposes of the initiative are to prevent the loss of forestland; promote healthier forests by addressing species concerns and increasing diversity; promote sustainable use of forest resources; and improve water quality.

VDOF Mapping and Outreach Specialists will conduct land-use analysis and field reconnaissance to identify lands suitable for tree planting. The focus areas will be open lands that may be under-utilized or considered marginal; too steep to effectively manage; overgrown with brush and briars; or eroded. Landowner outreach efforts will include contact via phone or letter, sharing information at organized community events, and conducting group presentations and landowner workshops.

If you are a landowner interested in planting trees but are concerned about the expense, consider this: There are generous financial incentives available through various conservation programs that could significantly reduce out-of-pocket expenses by up to 75 percent. For more information about the Open Lands Tree Planting Initiative or available cost-share options, please call Rhonda Prillaman, Virginia Department of Forestry, at (540) 745-2616. You may also “like” us on Facebook: “From Fallow Fields to Forests: A Tree Planting Initiative.” Either way, we are eager to discuss planting options with you to find what best fits your objectives; not only those that may provide economic benefits but also natural benefits to you, your family and your community.

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The Open Lands Tree Planting Initiative can help landowners pay to reforest open areas. Photo by: Rhonda Prillaman, VDOF.