



Board of Forestry Meeting

March 18, 2026

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Convene Meeting, Call to Order:

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. by Chairperson Carolyn Mulligan at the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) headquarters in Charlottesville, Virginia. The chairperson reminded the Board of the anti-trust policy legal requirements.

Roll Call:

Board of Forestry Members Present

Ervin Bielmyer, Andrew Brown, Jamie Coleman, Clark Diehl, Jennifer Gagnon, Mike Harold, Carolyn Mulligan, Bill Osl, Scott Shallenberger and Vance Wright

Members Absent

Terry Godwin, Heather Richards and Chad Shelton

Adoption of Agenda:

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

Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) Present

State Forester Terry Lasher, Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer, Chief of Operations Robbie Talbert, Chief of Administration Amanda Davis, Communications Director Greg Bilyeu, Chief of Emergency and Response John Miller, Chief Human Resources Officer John Habel, Policy and Legislative Analyst Nathan Thomson, Director of Forest Management Dean Cumbia, Hardwood Initiative Coordinator Joe Rossetti and Executive Assistant Mary Weaver.

Recognition of Guests and Visitors

Other guests were Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Katie Frazier; Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Benjamin Rowe; Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Caroline Buscaglia; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association (VLA); Nanette Jenkins, (VLA); Jay Phaup, Virginia Forestry Association (VFA); Lesle Mosley, Virginia Forest Product Association (VFPA); Emily Moore, Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VDEP); Kevin Miller, (VDEP); Ted Sniffin, (VDEP)

Hearing of Citizens:

None

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve minutes as presented, seconded; all present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

- ◆ Secretary Katie Frazier, shared with the Board a little of her professional background, including;
 - Experience in agricultural and forestry organizations.
 - Seven and a half years with Farm Credit of the Virginias as Chief Branding Officer.
 - Developed working relationship with Governor Abigail Spanberger during the Governor's time in Congress
 - Oversee Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF), Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and the Virginia Racing Commission.
- ◆ Deputy Secretary Rowe will be representing DOF, Assistant Secretary Buscaglia will be representing Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Science (VDACS) and Eliza Yeaker is the executive assistant.
- ◆ The Spanberger administration is in its early phase (approx. 56 days).
- ◆ DOF has been a priority: this is at least the Secretariat's third visit.
 - First visit focused on listening sessions with DOF leadership and staff.
 - Second visit involved hosting the Governor at DOF facilities; Governor is highly interested in forestry.
- ◆ Current focus has been the General Assembly session.
 - Reconvened session is scheduled for late April and a special session on the budget is still ahead.
 - Budget details for FY '27-'28 are pending; no information can be shared yet.
- ◆ Secretariat is actively working with legislative partners.
- ◆ Welcome trade delegations for foreign buyers for farm and forest products., Met with companies and entrepreneurs who are planning on bringing new business to Virginia.
- ◆ Secretariat has three key priorities:
 - Protecting Working Lands and Water
 - DOF's role is central, especially the Office of Working Lands.
 - Legislation moved to transfer the Forest Sustainability Fund into the Office of Working Lands (effective July 1, pending Governor's signature).
 - Full funding for Ag Best Management Practices (BMP) cost-share and water quality programs remains a top priority.
 - Working in alignment with the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources.
 - Market Access and Rural Economic Development
 - Need for stable markets and reliable buyers for forest products.
 - Goal is to expand domestic and international markets and retain value in rural communities.
 - Coordination with VEDP, Port of Virginia, VDACS, Virginia Forestry Associations (VFA), and DOF.
 - Executive Order 5 requires the Secretariat to submit a strategy for increasing agriculture and forestry exports (due April 17).
 - Developing a Farm and Forest Prosperity Plan (due December, updated every 4 years).
 - Wood Council will play a major role in strategy development.
 - First meeting April 8 at the Virginia Department of Forestry in Charlottesville.

- Partnerships are the way to get things done. Have a very close working relationship with many secretariats in this area.
 - Have pulled together VEDP Director El Koubi, State Forester Lasher, and VDACS Commissioner Green to have a conversation about what's working and what's not along with expectations moving forward as far as collaboration.
- Workforce for the Future
 - Labor challenges affect all sectors, including forestry.
 - Focus areas:
 - CTE and community college programs
 - Certifications and ongoing training
 - Strengthening partnerships with higher education (e.g., Virginia State, JMU)
 - Addressing on-farm labor issues, H2A labor, heat illness standards, and other labor-related legislation
 - Working closely with the Secretary of Labor and Governor's policy team.
- ◆ Governor Spanberger has directed agencies to eliminate silos and work collaboratively.
- ◆ Emphasis on partnership is essential for progress.
- ◆ Agencies and industry partners are encouraged to bring both problems and proposed solutions to Secretary Frazier.
- ◆ Secretary Frazier expressed appreciation for DOF employees and forestry partners and reiterated her open-door policy.

State Forester's Report:

- ◆ State Forester Lasher expressed appreciation and personal significance of returning to the DOF
 - Recapped his 24-year history in the agency, rising from a grant-funded role to Assistant State Forester.
 - Time with the Virginia Forestry Association provided deeper insight into industry challenges and dynamics.
 - Reiterated gratitude to the Governor and Secretariat for the opportunity to return as State Forester.
- ◆ Noted a major shift in the level of cooperation between the Secretariats of Agriculture and Forestry and Commerce and Trade.
 - Emphasized this collaboration as essential to addressing market barriers, resource challenges, and workforce issues.
 - Presence of VEDP participants highlighted Commerce and Trade's commitment to help find solutions on what is seen as barriers.
- ◆ Focus on Market Development and Resource Issues
 - Work underway on trade, export strategies, and Executive Order 5.
 - Commitment to developing the Prosperity Plan for forestry and agriculture, emphasizing that markets and management are inseparable.
 - Encouraged board members to bring both issues and proposed solutions.
- ◆ Purpose and Expectations for the Board
 - Board members represent different sectors of the forest industry and provide critical insight.
 - Meetings should prioritize identifying challenges ("pinch points") and opportunities rather than simply reporting agency accomplishments.
 - Wood Council and associations will play key roles in developing both problems and solutions.
- ◆ Secretary Frazier mentioned three administration priorities: workforce development, conservation of working lands, and market creation. There is a fourth internal priority: taking care of DOF staff.

- Planned internal assessment in the next quarter focused on retention, job satisfaction, and career pathways.
- Goal: cultivate internal leadership and expand opportunities for advancement.
- Additional updates to be provided at the summer meeting.
- ◆ Upcoming Engagements and Events
 - **Wood Council Meeting:** April 8 at DOF headquarters.
 - **Expo at Meadow Event Park (Doswell):** April 17–18.
 - Governor invited; potential for an industry roundtable if she attends.
 - Board members will be invited if the roundtable occurs.
 - **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Legislation:** Three bills since 2024 indicate growing interest.
 - DOF will assess implications for industry, focusing on residual use and understanding broader market impacts.
 - **International Mass Timber Conference, Portland, OR (March 30 – April 1):**
 - Planned meetings with 4–5 CEOs of mass timber companies.
 - Goal: encourage exploratory visits to Virginia and present information on resources, infrastructure, and potential recruitment incentives.
 - **Virginia Defense Forum (April 2):**
 - DOF participation due to Sentinel Landscapes work.
 - Overview of the Virginia Security Corridor:
 - Initiated 2018; approved 2023; approx. 3 million eligible acres.
 - Focus on conserving working lands and supporting DoD installations through easements and market stability.
 - DOF coordinators located in Potomac/Quantico region and Tidewater region.
 - **Environment Virginia Conference (Lexington, March 24-26):**
 - State Forester Terry Lasher will join a moderated state agency head panel, and Nathan Thomson (Policy Analyst), Amanda Scheps (Office of Working Lands Program Manager) and Lori Chamberlin (Forest Health Program Manager) will participate in breakout sessions (House Bill 206 (solar mitigation and forest health issues in Virginia).
 - Solar mitigation discussion will include strategies for managing mitigation funds and supporting conservation of working lands.
 - **Virginia Forestry Summit (Norfolk, April 29–May 1):**
- ◆ Encouraged board participation for networking, CEUs, and industry engagement.

Informational Items:

State Fire Prevention Code Update - Chief of Fire and Emergency Response John Miller

- ◆ The State Fire Prevention Code (SFPC), managed by the State Fire Marshal's Office, underwent changes in the 2021 code cycle, which took effect in 2024.
- Section 307.2 introduced a new requirement: permits from local code officials for outdoor burning related to:
 - wildlife habitat
 - insect and disease control
 - bonfires
 - rangeland
 - silviculture (this was originally included)

- This would have significantly disrupted prescribed burning operations in Virginia.
- ◆ Progress has been made:
 - Complete removal of the section was attempted but not achieved.
 - The word “silvicultural” was successfully removed from the permit requirement.
 - This change becomes effective July 1 of this year.
 - Although not an ideal outcome, it reduces the negative impact on forestry operations.
- ◆ For the 2024 code cycle (effective 2027), DOF will continue pushing to strike the entire problematic clause.
- ◆ Deputy Secretary of Public Safety has a wildland fire background; DOF will coordinate with him to support these efforts.
- ◆ Question was raised: why remove only “silvicultural” and not other similar uses (e.g., wildlife habitat)?
 - John explained the complex code cycle process, involving public hearings and stakeholder groups.
 - Resistance from a single fire marshal stakeholder influenced the outcome.
 - Removing “silvicultural” was the compromise that stakeholders were willing to accept.

Fire Season Update - Chief of Fire and Emergency Response John Miller

- ◆ Spring is Virginia’s busiest fire season (February–April).
- ◆ DOF historically handles approx.:
 - 500 fires in spring
 - 250–300 fires in fall
- ◆ Current Year (YTD):
 - 240 fires, nearly 3,000 acres burned
 - Slightly below average fire activity
- ◆ Weather Impacts:
 - High January activity, followed by snow/ice that temporarily slowed fires
 - Conditions remain dry despite occasional moisture
- ◆ Comparison with prior years:
 - 2025: 60 more fires by this time, similar acreage
 - 2024: ~50 fewer fires but 10,000 acres burned due to a major March 10 wind event causing structure loss in Page/Shenandoah
- ◆ Forecast:
 - March expected to be drier than normal
 - Conditions equalize through May
 - Summer predicted to be “average”
- ◆ Current dryness remains a concern.

A Smokey Bear wildfire-prevention video was filmed with:

- ◆ Secretary Frazier, Governor Spanberger, State Forester, Smokey Bear (played by Deputy Secretary Rowe)
- ◆ Video has reached over 30,000 views.
- ◆ Filmed at the Executive Mansion; well-received and widely shared.

Legislative and Policy Update – Policy and Legislative Analyst Nathan Thompson

DOF monitored and engaged with ~100 bills during the session (out of ~3,000 total).

Distributed DOF calendars to all 140 legislators and provided the State of the Forest Report to agriculture committees and budget conferees.

Ongoing effort to raise DOF visibility among the General Assembly.

- ◆ Key Legislative Areas:
 - Labor
 - Expansion of collective bargaining for public employees
 - Extension of paid sick leave to employees working 30+ hours
 - Energy (Data Centers and Solar)
 - Bills defining agrivoltaics
 - Interconnection grant funding
 - Parking lot solar initiatives
 - Virginia reentering RGGI
 - Bills overriding local bans on solar siting
 - New permissions for battery development on already permitted solar sites
 - Relevance to Forestry:
 - ~60% of industrial solar development in Virginia occurs on forestland
 - Solar impacts tie directly to DOF's Solar Mitigation Program
 - Solar Mitigation Program:
 - Office of Working Lands will serve as trustee for the in-lieu fee fund.
 - Developers contribute funds at a 1:1 or 2:1 ratio for forest/ag land impacted by PBR solar projects.
 - Funds will support working lands easements; developers may also implement their own mitigation.
- ◆ Additional Bills:
 - Invasive species, noxious weeds, and environmental justice.
 - Local authority tree canopy management caps.
- ◆ Forestland and Urban Tree Canopy Conservation Plan (HB 309):
 - Technical Advisory Committee meets for the third time March 19, 2026.
 - Plan due to the General Assembly in November.
 - Data from PlanIt Geo is under review.
 - Workgroup includes state agencies, nonprofits, industry, planners, and developers.
- ◆ Nathan will speak about solar mitigation at Environment Virginia.

Hurricane Helene Block Grant Program Update – State Forester Terry Lasher

- ◆ 304 applications have been submitted.
- ◆ Estimated 54,232 acres impacted.
- ◆ Estimated claims total \$6+ million.
- ◆ Program has been well received, focused primarily on Southwest Virginia.
- ◆ There will be a second funding round open soon (triggered at 50% fund allocation).
- ◆ Virginia remains the only state with the program fully operational.
- ◆ Acknowledgment of DOF and VDACS teams; Robbie Talbert leading for DOF along with Dean Cumbia, Joe Rossetti, and Justin Barnes.

Throwing Shade VA Update – Communications Director Greg Bilyeu

- ◆ Program promotes native tree planting via discounts at participating nurseries.
- ◆ Growth from five nurseries initially to 31 statewide, including Southwest, Eastern Shore, and Tidewater.
- ◆ Over 8,000 native trees sold last year.

- ◆ Helps DOF track planting, plan future urban forestry efforts, and support statewide goals.
- ◆ Strong media attention.

Legacy Oaks and Calendar – Communications Director Greg Bilyeu

- ◆ Calendar highlights significant “Legacy Oaks” statewide.
- ◆ DOF coordinated with localities and private landowners for photography and permissions.
- ◆ Acorns collected from many heritage trees; seedlings now grown at DOF nurseries and available for sale.
- ◆ Part of the agency’s heritage and anniversary storytelling effort.

Budget Overview – Chief of Administration Amanda Davis

- ◆ With new leadership, DOF prioritized assessing the agency’s financial health, structure, and alignment with other agencies.
- ◆ A key objective is understanding how DOF’s budget processes compare to peer agencies and ensuring the agency is financially strong.
- ◆ Emphasis placed on collaboration with VDACS, with which DOF already has a strong working relationship that continues to deepen.
- ◆ DOF initiated a “cross-pollination” effort with VDACS to understand similarities and differences in budgeting approaches.
 - Goal is to build networks and shared knowledge for improved budgeting, consistency, and support across agencies within the Secretariat.
- ◆ DOF budget and finance staff will join the state agency audit workgroup to strengthen compliance and coordination.
- ◆ DOF and VDACS agreed to launch a new statewide work group for budget-related staff across state agencies.
 - To standardize approaches, share best practices and discuss budget models, templates, procurement, and other administrative processes
 - Expected to grow into a broader administrative support network.
- ◆ DOF identified internal need for training in budget development and budget monitoring for program managers.
 - Planned content includes:
 - Basics of budget structure
 - Monitoring expenditures
 - Identifying irregularities
 - Understanding and reducing end-of-year journal entries
 - When and how to request cost code adjustments
 - DOF will develop this course and intends to:
 - Pilot it in May with DOF staff.
 - Share it with VDACS for feedback.
 - Potentially offer it statewide through the planned budget work group.
 - Goal is to build early awareness in program managers to prevent last-minute fiscal corrections and improve financial stewardship.

Good Neighbor Authority Disaster Recovery Grant – State Forester Lasher

- ◆ DOF is negotiating with the U.S. Forest Service on a \$47 million Disaster Recovery Good Neighbor Authority grant.
- ◆ Originated under previous administration; now nearing finalization.

- ◆ Grant will support work on:
 - Federal lands
 - State lands
 - Private lands adjacent to national forests and national parks
- ◆ Intended to address management needs and concerns on and around state forests.
- ◆ Additional details expected at the next meeting.

Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)– Executive Vice President Ted Sniffin

- ◆ Mr. Ted Sniffin has two and a half years with VEDP and over 30 years in private industry. He is experienced with VEDP from both business and government perspectives.
- ◆ VEDP Mission:
 - Recruit companies to Virginia
 - Support expansion of existing Virginia businesses
 - Grow exports through trade programs
- ◆ Team Roles:
 - Lead Generation (industry-specific): Kevin Miller oversees forestry and wood products.
 - Business Investment and Incentives: Emily Moore leads project execution.
 - Regional Talent Solutions and Business Outreach: Local relationship managers supporting employers.
 - Export and Trade Team: Helps companies access international markets.
- ◆ Since 2020 VEDP has engaged with more than 73 forest products companies across Virginia's wood products industry through investment projects, workforce support, export development and ongoing company engagement.
 - Supported 10 new wood products announcements. Those are company recruitment that have brought to Virginia \$362 million in capital investment and 800 jobs.
- ◆ Regional Talent Solutions team has completed 40+ outreach efforts with forest product firms since FY24.
- ◆ The Virginia Jobs Investment Program (VJIP) helps companies recruit and train employees.
 - Since 2023 VJIP has:
 - Supports 13 wood products expansions representing 746 new jobs, \$336 million in capital investment and \$528,000 in workforce training incentives.
- ◆ Since 2022 our Export Support team has assisted nine wood products companies through trade missions.
 - Current participants in the Virginia Leaders in Export Trade program include:
 - American Wood Fibers
 - Northland Forest Products
 - Turman Group recently graduated from the program
- ◆ VEDP will be at the Mass Timber Conference and Virginia Forest Products Expo for recruitment activities.
- ◆ Lead generation campaigns for the next fiscal year are being finalized and will be presented in June.
- ◆ VEDP leadership has directed a deeper commitment to support forestry and wood products; team will attend the April 8 Wood Council meeting to reinforce this commitment.
- ◆ Question was asked for examples of workforce support.
 - VEDP assists companies with recruitment, developing training materials and delivering customized workforce training.

- Regional representatives (RITSBO team) maintain close relationships with local employers to understand needs and challenges.
- ◆ VEDP's incentives focus on growth, not distressed businesses.
 - Secretariat acknowledges a retention gap; may be addressed through:
 - SBA or financial restructuring resources
 - Wood Council conversations
 - Farm and Forest Prosperity Plan development
- ◆ VEDP provides;
 - Market research
 - Trade missions and trade show assistance
 - Grant programs
 - Introductions to foreign buyers
- ◆ VDACS and VEDP collaborate closely on international trade development.
 - DOF participates through utilization and marketing program staff.
 - Secretariat and Governor's Office also engage in diplomatic outreach to foreign governments.
 - Recent engagements: UK, Taiwan, Belgium, Japan, and others
 - Goal: strengthen international market access for Virginia products

Action Items:

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) 2026 Update and RT 2027 Rate Proposal – Director of Forest Management Dean Cumbia

- ◆ Due to increasing complexity in herbicide application types (ground, helicopter, tractor-based, drone), the program currently has 12 practice categories, including eight related to herbicide work. This complexity caused confusion for landowners and administrative challenges for staff.
- ◆ The RT committee's recommendation is to consolidate six existing herbicide categories into three unified categories.
 - Release (Post-Plant Competition Control) – proposed 2027 rate of \$30.00
 - Site Preparation – Primarily Hardwood Control – proposed 2027 rate of \$50.00
 - Site Preparation – Pine and Hardwood Control – proposed 2027 rate of \$70.00
- ◆ Budget Impact: Approx. 2% difference, considered minimal.
- ◆ Rationale: Simplifies administration, reduces unnecessary contract changes, and supports silviculturally appropriate decisions rather than rate-driven choices.

Board members discussed the following topics:

- ◆ Ground vs. Aerial Application
 - Ground-based treatments often produce more complete and uniform coverage.
 - Consolidation reduces incentives for selecting a method based solely on reimbursement.
 - Drones: Helpful but have limitations (line-of-sight, snags). Effective only where helicopters are suitable.
- ◆ Market and Industry Concerns
 - Several members expressed serious concerns about:
 - Significant decline in hardwood sawmill capacity in Virginia and the Appalachian region.
 - Collapse in hardwood export markets (from ~\$16B to ~\$2.7B over ~15 years).
 - Competition from substitute products (laminated flooring, composite cabinetry, manufactured furniture).
 - Rising labor costs, regulations, and international competition.

- Decreasing pulpwood and commercial thinning markets.
- Risk that hardwoods may grow faster than markets can absorb due to mill closures.
- ◆ Forest Resource and Land Use Trends
 - Ongoing fragmentation and parcelization due to development, solar farms, and demographic shifts.
 - Some landowners expect land to be suitable for data centers or residential development, reducing interest in forestry.
 - Virginia continues long-term net growth above removals, but production declines contribute to that trend.
- ◆ Forest Products Tax Revenue
 - Current receipts at ~56% of projection with four months remaining.
 - Revenue fluctuates monthly; staff monitoring continues.
 - Nurseries remain largely self-supporting from seedling sales; RT funds tree improvement work.
- ◆ ***A motion was made to accept the RT rates recommended by the RT Committee; seconded. All present were in favor.***
 - Combine six herbicide categories into three.
 - Release (All pines except White Pines) – Ground Herbicide and Release – Helicopter or Ground into *Release at @30.00 per acre.*
 - Site Preparation – Ground Herbicide (Hardwood or Sod/Herbaceous and Site Preparation – Ground Herbicide (Pine and Hardwood Control) into *Site Preparation-Herbicide-Hardwood Control at \$50.00 per acre.*
 - Site preparation – Helicopter Herbicide (Hardwood Control) – Site Preparation – Helicopter Herbicide (Pine and Hardwood Control) into *Site Preparation-Herbicide-Pine and Hardwood Control at \$70.00 per acre.*

Hardwood Cost-Share Rate Change – Hardwood Initiative Coordinator Joe Rossetti

- ◆ The Hardwood Initiative includes eight strategies, with the Hardwood Cost-Share Program being one component.
 - The General Assembly began funding the program in FY22, providing \$350,000 annually from the General Fund.
 - No dedicated revenue source (unlike the Forest Products Tax); funding continues at the discretion of the General Assembly.
 - FY26 House and Senate budget versions both include continued funding.
- ◆ This cost-share contains nine practices (not all currently active; some have been removed or added since launch).
 - The cost-share functions as a percentage of cost up to a not-to-exceed per acre value.
 - Unlike RT, landowners often reach the percentage limit before the dollar cap.
- ◆ Strong growth since inception; slow adoption during first 3–4 years (as anticipated).
 - FY26 is the first year all available funds are fully committed, including an additional \$100,000 from the Forest Health Program for invasive control. Total commitments reached \$450,000.
- ◆ The Hardwood Steering Committee (which includes Board members) met to review and recommend FY26 rates. Unlike RT, the Board **does not vote** on hardwood rates.
 - Prescribed Burning and Fire lines – Increase rate to \$80 per acre.
 - Significant rate increase to support contractor-based burning.
 - Prior rates were tied to DOF service rates and were insufficient for private contractors.
 - Increase reflects average contractor costs, based on statewide informal survey.
 - Stand Marking – increase rate to \$90 per acre.
 - Increased to align with actual costs (average ~\$101/acre by consulting foresters).
 - 90% of average cost.

Board members discussed the following:

- ◆ Prescribed Burning
 - Most difficult practice to secure contractors for.
 - Key barriers cited:
 - Insurance costs (primary issue).
 - Limited burn windows.
 - Specialized equipment and staffing needs.
 - Suggestions included:
 - Exploring liability reform (following models in other states).
 - Investigating association-based group insurance options (e.g., NCFA model).
 - Recognizing small tract sizes and fragmentation increase burn complexity.
- ◆ Invasive Plant Control (Project 7)
 - Highest utilization and highest cost-share rate.
 - Treatments typically performed using:
 - Basal bark
 - Hack and Squirt Targeted foliar
 - Expensive due to:
 - High labor requirements
 - Need for plant-specific treatment, not broadcast spraying
 - Difficult terrain in many locations
 - Cost-share now supports multiple treatments on the same stand within a year when needed.
- ◆ EQIP Comparison
 - EQIP covers similar practices but is:
 - Much slower (approval can take a year or more).
 - More complex administratively.
 - Competitive among applicants.
 - Hardwood Cost-Share remains simpler:
 - One page application
 - Typical approval within 2 weeks to 1 month
 - No competition among landowners

Growing and Protecting Forests (GAP) Program Update - Hardwood Initiative Coordinator Joe Rossetti

- ◆ The GAP program is funded through a U.S. Forest Service award.
 - This program complements:
 - RT (pine establishment)
 - Southern Pine Beetle Program (pre-commercial thinning, longleaf)
 - Hardwood Cost-Share (hardwood management)
- ◆ It provides assistance for:
 - Pine management beyond establishment phase
 - Diminished species establishment
 - Shortleaf pine
 - Table mountain pine
 - Pitch pine
 - Hardwood management, when Hardwood Cost-Share cannot be applied.

- Local government-owned lands
- ◆ Practices mirror those in the Hardwood Cost-Share Program for consistency.
 - Cost-share = 70% of cost, up to per acre maximums.
 - FY26 adjustments include:
 - Higher rates for prescribed burning and marking.
 - Increased establishment rates for diminished species due to higher seedling costs.
 - New maintenance practice (tubes, fencing, replanting, competition control) to ensure planting success.

Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

- ◆ The nominations committee, consisting of Scott Shallenberger and Andrew Brown, nominated Carolyn Mulligan for chairperson and Michael Harold for vice-chairperson.
- ◆ ***There being no other nominations, a motion was made to appoint Carolyn Mulligan for chairperson and Michael Harold for vice-chairperson. The motion was seconded. All present were in favor.***

Committee/Liaison Reports

- ◆ None

Unfinished Business:

- ◆ None

New Business:

2025 Board of Forestry Appointees

- ◆ Carolyn Mulligan, Chad Shelton and Jennifer Gagnon were reappointed for another four-year term ending 06/30/2029.
- ◆ Vance Wright was appointed for his first four-year term ending 06/30/2029.

2026 Board of Forestry Appointees

- ◆ Clark Diehl and Ervin Bielmyer's first four-year term expires on 06/30/2026 and are eligible for reappointment.
 - If they are interested in reappointment they will need to fill out the Boards and Commissions application.
 - Executive Assistant Weaver will send them the link to apply.
- ◆ Heather Richards' second four-year term expires on 06/30/2026 and she is ineligible for reappointment.

Schedule of Next Meeting:

The next Board of Forestry meeting will be held in June or July. A Doodle poll will be sent to identify a place and date.

Adjournment:

Chairperson Mulligan called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made and seconded to adjourn the March 18, 2026, meeting at 1:30 p.m. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Executive Assistant Mary Weaver.