



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Ed Stoots – 540-492-0152

ed.stoots@dof.virginia.gov

Virginia State Forester Presents Highest Honor to Matthews Foundation Board of Trustees

State Forester Robert W. Farrell today recognized the Matthews Foundation Board of Trustees as recipients of the Crown Award for their leadership, support and commitment to the Matthews State Forest and Matthews Natural Resource Education Center in Galax, Virginia. The Crown Award is the highest honor bestowed by the State Forester of Virginia.

During today's Crown Award presentation, Farrell also announced the completion of the Matthews State Forest Natural Resource Education Center.

Matthews State Forest includes 566 acres in the central Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia. The land was originally settled by the Nuckolls family in the late 1700s and Judge Jack Matthews purchased the property from a Nuckolls heir in 1946. Matthews later conveyed his land to VDOF and parcels that make up the Matthews State Forest were deeded to the VDOF in 1993, 1994 and 2006.

"In his Last Will and Testament, the Judge detailed his vision to create a State Forest which provides for the scientific, educational, recreational and research needs of Southwest Virginia's children and the public, and to continue the work to enhance and bring back indigenous species, such as the American chestnut," said Farrell. "We remain grateful for Judge Matthews' gift and express our gratitude to the Trustees for their dedication to manifesting his vision. The success of this project stems from their leadership and commitment."

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The education center includes a pavilion and a beautifully renovated home, both of which will be used for educational events. A second renovated home will be leased as office space to partners working in natural resources and education fields. These capital improvements, which also include a new entry, parking and lighting, and restrooms to support use of the facilities, were made possible by Judge Matthews' gifts as well as funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation's Recreational Access Grant Program, and from the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund. Thanks to this support, no state general funds were used to complete the capital project.

The Matthews State Forest is managed for multiple uses. Forestland is managed for sustainable timber production, with an overriding goal of continual improvement of the forest. Other management goals include protecting and improving water quality, protecting and developing wildlife habitat and promoting native biological diversity. In addition, two American chestnut breeding orchards exist on the forest: one in partnership with the American Chestnut Foundation, and a second managed solely by the VDOF.

"Matthews State Forest is a unique and valuable resource," said Farrell. "It is an excellent example of how partnerships and intentional forest management can support conservation goals, economic initiatives, research and education simultaneously."

Teachers and other educators are welcome to schedule educational trips to the state forest. The citizens of Virginia are very fortunate to have the Matthews State Forest and we encourage them to take advantage of it. For information, or to schedule a trip, contact: [Zach Olinger](#) at 276.236.2322 ext. 103.

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The Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. With nearly 16 million acres of forestland and more than 108,000 Virginians employed in forestry, forest products and related industries, Virginia forests provide an overall economic output of more than \$21 Billion annually.

Headquartered in Charlottesville, the Agency has forestry staff members assigned to every county to provide citizen service and public safety protection across the Commonwealth, which it's been doing now for more than 100 years. VDOF is an equal opportunity provider.