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Forestry Equipment for the Changing Forest: Servicing Smaller Forest Parcels Effectively

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In order to promote the management of small forest parcels, the Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the New River-Highlands RC&D Council have teamed up to hold a equipment demonstration at the Matthews State Forest in Galax. On September 12, 2008, a series of live, in-woods demonstrations will show how, even on small forest parcels, an evolving suite of forestry equipment can be used for timber harvesting, improving timber stands, clearing brush, invasive species and/or slash, as well as for processing forest products on-site.

The equipment demonstration is in response to the parcelization and fragmentation that occurs as forest land throughout Virginia is increasingly being divided into smaller tracts and sold off to multiple owners. This parcelization and fragmentation has created a patchwork of smaller forest tracts and a host of economic and physical challenges for conventional forest management equipment operators. Consider a Warren County forest landowner who needed to thin five acres of backyard pine forest to reduce the risk of wildfire and improve aesthetics. Unfortunately, his residential setting was not conducive to having large scale logging equipment coming in to do the job.

As forest parcels decrease in size, forest management equipment is evolving to become smaller and more readily transportable. It may be capable of meeting different social acceptability thresholds required when operating in or around residential settings. It may be capable of further reducing soil disturbance and residual timber stand damage. Additionally, it may provide an opportunity to manage forests in the growing wildland-urban interface against a backdrop of higher fuel prices and a scarce supply of labor.

Despite the manufacture of specialized forest management equipment, few forest service providers or forest landowners have seen this equipment in action or are aware of its existence. Others may be unwilling to invest

without first taking it for a 'test-drive.' The September 12 workshop will be an opportunity to see this specialized forest management equipment in action. Several vendors have agreed to provide equipment, including small-scale skidders, forestry-modified skid-steers, forestry specific skid-steer attachments, and small-scale forwarding trailers for the event. If you are a forest landowner or forest service provider interested in attending this event, please contact David Richert at david.richert@dof.virginia.gov or call him at 276.228.2879.



Photo By: Harry Groot, Blue Ridge Forest
Cooperative

The Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. Headquartered in Charlottesville, there are Forestry staff members assigned to every county to provide service to citizens of the Commonwealth. VDOF is an equal opportunity provider. With nearly 16 million acres of forest land and more than 183,000 Virginians employed in the forest products industry, Virginia forests provide more than \$29 Billion annually in benefits to the Commonwealth.