2026 Special Session I

Budget Bill - HB30 (Enrolled)

Department of Forestry

Item 96	First Year - FY2027	Second Year - FY2028
Forest Management (50100)	**$48,743,642**	**$48,608,642**
Reforestation Incentives to Private Forest Land Owners (50102)	$4,313,347	$4,313,347
Forest Conservation, Wildfire &Watershed Services (50103)	$36,799,193	$36,664,193
Tree Restoration and Improvement, Nurseries &State-Owned Forest Lands (50104)	$6,731,102	$6,731,102
Financial Assistance for Forest Land Management (50105)	$900,000	$900,000
Fund Sources:		
General	$28,856,465	$28,856,465
Special	$14,764,940	$14,764,940
Dedicated Special Revenue	$288,252	$288,252
Federal Trust	$4,833,985	$4,698,985

Authority: Title 10.1, Chapter 11, and Title 58.1, Chapter 32, Article 4, Code of Virginia.

A. The State Forester is hereby authorized to utilize any unobligated balances in the fire suppression fund authorized by § 10.1-1124, Code of Virginia, for the purpose of acquiring replacement equipment for forestry management and protection operations.

B. In the event that budgeted amounts for forest fire suppression are insufficient to meet forest fire suppression demands, such amounts as may be necessary for this purpose may be transferred from Item 471 of this act to the Department of Forestry, with the approval of the Director, Department of Planning and Budget.

C. The department shall provide technical assistance and project supervision in the aerial spraying of herbicides on timberland on landowner property. In addition to recovering the direct cost associated with the spraying contract, the department may charge an administrative fee for this service.

D. The Department of Forestry, in cooperation with the Department of Corrections, shall continue the use of inmate labor for routine and special work projects in state forests.

E. The appropriation in Reforestation Incentives to Private Forest Land Owners includes $1,850,000 the first year and $1,850,000 the second year from the general fund for the Reforestation of Timberlands Program. This appropriation shall be deemed sufficient to meet the provisions of Titles 10.1 and 58.1, Code of Virginia.

F. Out of this appropriation, $2,326,126 the first year and $2,326,126 the second year from the general fund is included for the purchase of forest fire protection equipment through the state's master equipment lease purchase program.

G. The department is authorized to enter into agreements with private entities for the active operational life of the tower located at 900 Natural Resources Drive in Albemarle County, Virginia. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any revenues received from such agreements shall be retained by the department and used for forest land management.

H.1. The State Comptroller shall continue the Virginia State Forest Mitigation and Acquisition Fund and the Long Term Mitigation Fund as established in Item 102, Chapter 806, 2013 Acts of Assembly. All moneys in these funds shall be used as provided for in this Item and in Item 102, Chapter 806, 2013 Acts of Assembly, and Item 98, Chapter 665, 2015 Acts of Assembly.

2.a. With the exception of the amounts prescribed in paragraph H.2.b. of this item, the Virginia State Forest Mitigation and Acquisition Fund shall be used solely for forest land or conservation easement acquisition.

b. The Long Term Mitigation Fund shall be used solely for long term management of the Cumberland State Forest Stream Buffer Preservation Stewardship Plan.

3. For any such future mitigation projects, no state forest land shall be used to provide compensatory mitigation for wetland or stream impacts of any public or private project until such time as due consideration has been given to the availability of mitigation credits available from private sources. State forest land means all sites, roadways, game food patches, ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, beaches, and lakes to which the Department of Forestry holds title for use, development, and administration.

I. Out of this appropriation, $100,000 the first year and $100,000 the second year from the general fund is provided for the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute.

J. Out of this appropriation, $175,000 the first year and $175,000 the second year from the general fund is provided to increase bandwidth capacity at the agency's offices.

K. Out of the amounts in this Item, $487,842 the first year and $487,482 the second year from the general fund is provided for a Hardwood Forest Habitat initiative.

L. Out of the amounts in this Item, $940,000 the first year and $940,000 the second year from the general fund and two positions are provided to support the implementation of strategies and to determine metrics to mitigate the impact of invasive species in support of the objectives outlined in the Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan (2018). The Department shall take steps to eradicate or slow the spread of priority species on private and public lands; support the creation of additional Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs); and provide statewide coordination of invasive species management working with VDACS, DCR, and DWR, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

M. Out of the amounts in this Item, $437,500 the first year and $437,500 the second year from the general fund shall be deposited to the Virginia Farmland and Forestland Preservation Fund established in § 10.1-1119.3, Code of Virginia.