

Agriculture and Forestry

The Governor's proposed 2006-08 budget for Agriculture and Forestry includes \$90.8 million GF and \$71.2 million NGF. This is \$5.1 million GF and \$60,008 NGF greater than the adjusted appropriation for current operations.

Almost half of the general fund increases for the secretariat are tied to two amendments in the Department of Forestry -- \$1.2 million to replace firefighting equipment and \$1.3 million to fill eight unfunded forester positions for enforcing federal and state water quality laws.

- **Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**
 - ***Coyote Damage Control Program.*** Reduces by \$35,000 GF in each year of the biennium the amount of state dollars for the cooperative control program. The amendment is a technical correction to the department's base budget. The FY 2006 appropriation includes an administrative action that increased the program's funding. The remaining state dollars of \$60,000 each year are sufficient to match the annual federal grant of \$75,000.
 - ***Prepaid Legal Services Plan Regulation.*** Provides \$451,050 NGF in each year for the regulatory program. In the 2004 Session, the General Assembly passed HB 363 to establish requirements for the registration of legal services plan sellers, authorize the Agriculture Board to prescribe regulations, and authorize the agency to investigate violations.
 - ***Salary Adjustment for Veterinarians.*** Provides \$103,118 GF and \$30,004 NGF the first year and \$103,118 GF and \$30,004 NGF the second year to increase the salaries of the department's 21 veterinarians. The budget amendment increases the salaries to the statewide median salary for veterinarians.
 - ***Animal Health.*** Includes \$185,439 GF the first year and \$176,288 GF the second year and three full-time positions to protect the health of poultry and livestock animals. One livestock inspector will be added in each of the Harrisonburg, Lynchburg and Wytheville regions.
 - ***Small Scale Agribusiness.*** Provides \$88,358 GF each year to assist farmers and small agribusiness specializing in the production of higher valued products, including products certified under the National Organic Program, for customized, niche markets.

- *Weights and Measures.* Provides \$98,238 GF the first year and \$101,896 GF the second year and two full-time positions for the Weights and Measures Inspection Program. The number of businesses using devices regulated by the program increased by 35 percent over a 10-year period (79,092 in 1993 to 106,755 in 2003).
 - *Virginia Works.* Includes in the department’s base budget an amount of \$325,000 GF in each year for additional research and field tests of specialty crops and for developing and marketing high-value specialty agricultural products. The General Assembly approved these items in the 2005 Session as part of the Governor’s Virginia Works package.
 - *Information Technology.* Includes \$150,000 GF the first year to reduce the number of computer applications still running on an obsolete mainframe computer. These applications can be re-engineered for the Internet, resulting in greater customer access and reduced costs for the state.
 - *Indemnity Payments.* Budget language in the Central Appropriations portion of HB/SB 30 authorizes the Governor to expend up to \$1.5 million from the unappropriated general fund balance, under certain conditions, for payments to growers, producers, and owners for losses sustained as a result of an infectious disease outbreak in livestock and poultry populations.
- **Department of Forestry**
 - *Firefighting Equipment.* Includes \$579,629 GF each year to purchase firefighting equipment through the state’s master equipment lease purchase program. Total cost for the equipment will be \$2.7 million.
 - *Water Quality Team.* Provides \$767,544 GF the first year and \$520,459 GF the second year to fill eight unfunded forester positions to address enforcement of federal and state water quality laws.
 - *Reforestation of Timberland Program.* Provides \$233,662 GF in each year to match the proceeds raised by the forest products tax for reforestation efforts. Although the budget amendment increases the state match to \$983,662 GF each year, and language declares the amount sufficient to match the forest products tax revenues, the state dollars are less than the statutory requirement. The funding gap is an estimated \$138,695 GF in each year.