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FALL 2025

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION, INC.



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INSIDE

- VWEA Scholarships
- VWEA News
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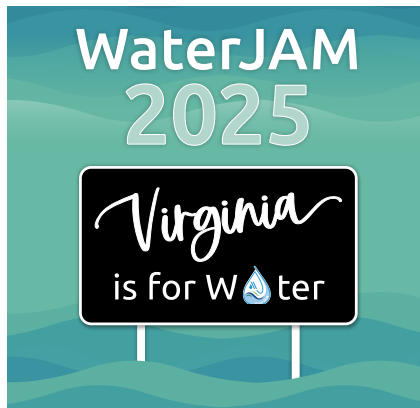


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▼ FEATURES



WaterJAM 2025: Virginia Is for Water

The Virginia Water Environment Association and the Virginia Section of the Virginia American Water Works Association raised the bar in every way for WaterJAM 2025, bringing the spirit of the oceanfront into every session, conversation, and celebration.

39



InFLOW: Turning Curiosity into a Career

Joseph Wright's journey from backyard experiments to the water sector shows how the InFLOW program transforms curiosity into a meaningful career.

68



page 18



page 25

▼ DEPARTMENTS & ASSOCIATION NEWS

President's Corner	9
VWEA News & Updates	12
VWEA Committee Updates	26
Member Spotlight	34
Advertiser Product & Information Center	70

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Shaping Tomorrow: Advancing People and Innovation in Water



Bryce Carter,
VWEA President

Throughout my life, I've been fortunate to have the opportunity to enjoy the James River. While hunting, fishing, or paddling growing up, I would often see a gentleman named Ralph White who managed the James River Park System. Ralph would be out on the banks of the James teaching students about its fragile ecosystem, cleaning up pollution, and rallying volunteers to save our river. This was during the time when the river was still sick and recovering from the impacts of Kepone and DDT. In fact, less than 10 years earlier, the river still had a moratorium on fishing – something that was hard for me to believe given my own time spent fishing the James.

Ralph's dedication to fixing a problem, along with the efforts of countless others, left a lasting impression on me. It showed that caring for our natural resources isn't optional – it's essential. Thanks to this kind of stewardship, Richmond became, at that time, the only U.S. state capital besides Anchorage, Alaska, where ospreys and bald eagles were again nesting within the city limits, an important milestone for the river's recovery.

It was this example that shaped my understanding of why organizations like VWEA matter so much. We are at our best when we come together as professionals, volunteers, and advocates to protect our resources and strengthen the future of our field. As we enter a new year for VWEA, I am excited to have the opportunity to work alongside such a dedicated group of volunteers and leaders who continue to advance our water industry for a healthier environment in Virginia.

We are now in the second year of our five-year strategic plan and are moving from vision to execution – putting our priorities into action. We'll build on recent momentum to shape the future of our industry and the communities that we serve. As we consider our strategic plan, **Elevate 2029: Educate, Empower, Engage**, our third goal is at the heart of our work and

what I believe will define our success: education and workforce development. Supporting the developing workforce of tomorrow and continuing to advance innovation through educational opportunities and knowledge sharing are critical to our mission and vision.

Looking ahead to our next year together, I'd like to share some VWEA achievements, reflections, and a call to action with you:

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Across Virginia and beyond, utilities and companies continue to face the pressing challenge of attracting, training, and retaining the next generation of water professionals. VWEA is uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in this effort. Through educational and technical programs, scholarships, student chapters, and mentoring opportunities, we are investing in future leaders who will carry our industry forward. At the same time, we are committed to supporting our seasoned professionals with pathways for continued growth, ensuring that knowledge and expertise remain strong throughout the profession.

INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Equally important is our responsibility to foster innovation. The water sector is evolving rapidly with new technologies, data-driven approaches, and advanced treatment solutions transforming how we serve our communities. VWEA provides forums where ideas are exchanged, challenges are addressed, and solutions are born. From technical sessions to committee work, VWEA is a hub for learning and collaboration.

EMPOWERING MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

As we execute our plan, we know that its success rests on the shoulders of our members and volunteers. By empowering people to lead by example, VWEA continues to build a culture

"We are now in the second year of our five-year strategic plan and are moving from vision to execution – putting our priorities into action."

where leadership is demonstrated through action. Whether it's organizing a technical session, teaching, or volunteering, each contribution inspires others and strengthens our collective impact. This spirit of service and leadership echoes what I witnessed on the James River years ago – individuals stepping up to the challenge will always make a difference.

WATERJAM: GROWTH AND CONNECTION

This year's WaterJAM was a remarkable success, setting a record for attendance and continuing the trend of year-over-year growth. Membership in VWEA has also continued to climb, and the enthusiasm we are seeing at both the individual and organizational levels is encouraging. Each WaterJAM brings more members, more exhibitors, and more knowledge into the conversation. This growth is not only a testament to the quality of the program, but also to the energy and commitment of our members.

SUPPORTING WASTEWATER OPERATORS

We were excited to welcome back the Operations Challenge at WaterJAM this year, which gave

wastewater operators the chance to showcase their skills in a competitive, hands-on format. This event not only celebrated the talent and expertise of our operators, but underscored the critical role they play in protecting public health and the environment.

VWEA will continue to invest in operator development through strong technical programs for continuing education, training opportunities, and scholarships. The 5E Scholarship supports individuals employed at Virginia water and wastewater utilities who are pursuing continuing education. Opportunities may include technical training, certifications, or other forms of professional development, with award amounts varying to fit the need.

In addition, the Operators Scholarship provides direct support for those employed in the wastewater treatment field at Virginia utilities. Each year, VWEA awards up to five operators to attend the Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators Short Course at Virginia Tech.

By combining high-visibility events like the Operations Challenge with continuing opportunities such as the 5E Scholarship and Operators Scholarship, VWEA is ensuring that operators remain engaged, supported, and recognized as essential leaders in our profession.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we advance into our strategic plan, execution will remain our focus. VWEA's strength comes from our members, and success depends on retaining experienced professionals and engaging new members and leaders.

A CALL TO ACTION

- **Get involved** – Find a committee or program that aligns with your passion and dive in.
- **Share knowledge** – Submit an abstract, publish an article, or bring a new idea to VWEA.
- **Mentor and support** – Encourage the next generation to join and thrive in our profession.
- **Lead by example** – Volunteer your time, share your expertise, and show others what's possible.
- **Be an ambassador** – Help raise awareness of the critical role water professionals play in every community.

Together, we can ensure that VWEA not only meets today's needs, but also inspires the leaders, ideas, and innovations that will define tomorrow. Thank you for your dedication, your enthusiasm, and your commitment to making VWEA and our profession stronger every year. ☺

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Every year at WaterJAM, members elect officers to join the VWEA Board of Directors. The 2025-2026 Board officially kicked off their term on September 10, 2025, at the end of the Business Meeting.

2024-2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Member Engagement Representative: Lyndsey Davis, HRSD

Outreach Representative: Shelbie Puglio, Hazen and Sawyer

Two new members have joined the Board! Find out who they are and what they bring to the table below.

JEREMY HARRISON, Crowder Construction

Jeremy joins the VWEA Board of Directors as Vice President. He has been an engaged member of VWEA throughout his career. He volunteered on the WaterJAM Committee and served as committee chair in 2024.

Jeremy brings more than 15 years of hands-on experience in the water and wastewater industry, all with Crowder Construction. He is also a licensed professional engineer in Virginia.

As Regional Operations Manager, he supports Crowder's teams across Virginia, helping guide projects from pursuit and early planning through construction and final delivery. His role spans from business development and preconstruction to field operations and project management.

Whether it's a traditional design-bid-build or a collaborative delivery method like Design-Build or CMAR, Jeremy works closely with Owners, Engineers, and project teams alike to keep projects moving forward smoothly and efficiently.

Jeremy's passion is teaching and growing the next generation of builders and constructors in the water and wastewater industry.

MARTY MALONE, Hazen and Sawyer

Marty is a water resources engineer and project manager with Hazen and Sawyer in Virginia Beach. With 18 years of experience, his focus has been on leading master planning projects for sewer, water, and stormwater systems, including model development and GIS analysis. He feels lucky to have long-standing relationships with many of the public utilities and HRSD staff in Hampton Roads.

Marty feels equally fortunate for his involvement in VWEA and VAAWWA, serving alongside great folks on committees and our boards through the years. Starting out as a student in the WaterJAM student competitions, he helped implement member engagement tools such as online event registration and the initial VWEA e-newsletter, as well as launching the membership photo contest calendar. He received the Outstanding YP Award in 2013, and was President of VWEA in 2015.

Marty's first job was in a completely different water industry, serving six years in the Navy on board a nuclear-powered submarine. Following the Navy, Marty attended Old Dominion University, earning both undergraduate and master's degrees in environmental engineering. [e](#)



We had a jammin' good time
**and look forward to seeing you
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2025 VWEA Scholarships Awarded


By Stephen St. Angelo, Lynchburg Water Resources, Scholarship Committee Chair

One of the most important missions of VWEA is education. We all know that encouraging the next generation of operators, laboratory scientists, and engineers is essential to ensuring we have the best-trained professionals to continue the vital work of providing clean, safe water to our communities. VWEA remains firmly committed to this mission.

The VWEA Scholarship Committee offers scholarships to both professionals and students. Six scholarships are available: the Operator Short School Scholarship, the Military Veteran or Dependent Scholarship, the Undergraduate Scholarship, the Sonny Roden Graduate Scholarship, the Member Dependent Scholarship, and the 5E Rolling Scholarship.

Congratulations to our 2025 awardees! We are incredibly thankful to be able to contribute to their education and can't wait to see their continued success and contributions to the water industry and the environment.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who volunteered this year to score scholarship applications. Because of your dedication, this program continues to grow and succeed year after year.

If you are interested in volunteering as an application scorer next year or have any questions about the scholarship program, please reach out to Stephen St. Angelo (stephen.st.angelo@lynchburgva.gov) and Molly Sayles (msayles@hazenandsawyer.com). Scholarship applications for 2026 will be available on the VWEA Scholarships page (<https://www.vwea.org/page/scholarships>) around February 2026. 

We are proud to present the 2025 VWEA Scholarship winners:

Operator Short School:	Don Seymour, Town of Christiansburg Dondi Roberson, Town of Christiansburg Dennis Laing Jr, Town of Luray Blade Dunn, Falling Creek Mike Thomas, Lee County
Military Veteran or Dependent:	Samuel Rinehart, Bridgewater College
Undergraduate:	Jack Tigani, George Mason University Ashna Hussain, University of Virginia
Sonny Roden Graduate:	Cyrus Li, Virginia Tech Etinosa Igunbor, Old Dominion University
VWEA Member Dependent:	Logan Heselton, University of Virginia
5E Rolling:	Shawne Gallagher, Chesterfield County Benjamin Heffner, Western Virginia Water Authority

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VWEA Helps Professional Geologists Obtain Mandatory Licensure in Virginia

By Jason Early, PG, Stantec and VWEA Member

Professional geologists are critical to the protection of public health, safety, and the environment throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. As indicated by the Geological Society of America (GSA) in their position statement: "State and federal governments are encouraged to promote legislation that supports professional licensure for geologists and protects existing licensure requirements... As of July 2025 in the United States, 31 states as well as Puerto Rico require licensure for geologists working in domains that affect public safety and health..." The GSA further adds that: "A highly qualified workforce of licensed professional geologists is critical as societies address significant challenges with burgeoning populations, changing climate, and increasing demand for natural resources. Professionally licensed geologists in applied fields have tremendous insight into the critical interface between the built environment and the geology on which it resides" (The Geological Society of America, 2019).

In the water and wastewater sectors specifically, professional geologists provide invaluable services. They identify, site, drill, and test new water supply wells; investigate the geotechnical characteristics of soils for water and sewer mains as well as foundations for treatment plants and pumping stations; and monitor groundwater near treatment lagoons and storage facilities. Despite our profession's importance to infrastructure and economic development and our long history of working in the water industry along with our professional engineer and water utility colleagues, professional geologists were slated for deregulation in the 2023 General Assembly (GA). In response to this initiative, the Virginia Geologists Workgroup (VGW) was formed, and with the assistance of the Association of Engineering and Environmental Geologists (AEG) worked to educate the legislature and stop this potentially devastating development.

Through the VGW's efforts, the 2023 deregulation Bill was defeated, and the Virginia code was amended in the 2024 GA session to redefine the practice of geology. In the 2025 GA Session, the VGW worked tirelessly to further amend the Virginia code to make professional geology licensure mandatory for the first time ever, ultimately obtaining the Governor's signature in July following an initial deferment despite overwhelming bipartisan support and nearly unanimous votes in both houses. This is a huge victory for professional

geologists in Virginia and goes a long way in protecting our industry from future attempts at deregulation while increasing the recognition of professional geologists as critical to public health, safety, and the environment.

This win could not have been accomplished without the financial and written support from allies like VWEA. VWEA's support, including a written letter in October 2024 and an educational exhibit booth at WaterJAM 2024, were essential in the VGW's recent success in preserving and elevating the practice of professional geology in the Commonwealth.

The elimination of VGW's references to professional services from the 2025 Bill in negotiations with the Department of Occupational and Professional Regulation (DOPR) and the Governor's Office has left unfinished business for the members of the Virginia Geologist Workgroup. Specifically, we intend to introduce a Bill in the 2026 GA adding the services provided by geologists to the list of those professions categorized as providing professional services. We would also like to eliminate the waiver of examination process that allows geologists with 12 years or more experience to forego demonstration of minimum competence by taking and passing the national Fundamentals and Professional Practice examinations.

Finally, we would like to have a "Continuing Education" requirement assigned to our profession. Requiring CEUs is common for the professions that provide professional services and that are linked to the enhancement and protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the public and the environment.

Our past successes could not have been accomplished without the support of VWEA and other industry associations. Our final push through the 2026 GA is going to need continued support. With continued strong support from VWEA and other allies, we expect that we will be successful as we have in years past.

Reference

The Geological Society of America, 2019, Position statement: The role of the geoscientist in assuring the safety and integrity of infrastructure: https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Science_Policy/Position_Statements/Current_Statements/gsa/positions/position5.aspx (accessed August 2025). 

"A highly qualified workforce of licensed professional geologists is critical as societies address significant challenges with burgeoning populations, changing climate, and increasing demand for natural resources."



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Engineering in Action: **VWEA CSC Hosts First Annual Field Trip to HRSD's Tabb PRS Project**

The VWEA Collections System Committee (CSC) kicked off its first annual field trip with an impressive visit to the HRSD Tabb Pressure Reducing Station (PRS) project in Yorktown, Virginia. This new wastewater pumping and storage facility – designed by Hazen and Sawyer and currently under construction by MEB – is poised to become a cornerstone of regional flow management and wet weather resilience.

A Facility Built for the Future

The Tabb PRS features a pressure-reducing pump station and a 2.5-million-gallon offline storage tank. Once operational, it will play a critical role in:

- **Wet Weather Relief:** Diverting peak flows during heavy rainfall to reduce pressure on the sewer system and prevent sanitary sewer overflows.
- **Flow Balancing:** Equalizing wastewater flows between HRSD's James River and York River Treatment Plants, supporting the long-term goals of the Sustainable Water Initiative for Tomorrow (SWIFT) program.

Behind the Scenes: Design and Innovation

Participants were treated to a deep dive into the project's purpose, operations, and design challenges. Presentations by Chris Stefan and Mike Hess (HRSD), and Brian Porter (Hazen), highlighted the station's strategic importance and technical ingenuity, including the use of screw impeller pumps and a complex control logic to the station to balance peak flows and flow balancing.

Learning and Networking in the Field

The event combined classroom instruction with an on-site tour, allowing attendees to earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and Professional Development Hours (PDHs). Special thanks go to Will Gibson (Hazen) for coordinating the event, and to John Riggins and the MEB team for hosting the site visit.

Looking Ahead

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with some claiming it set the bar high to what promises to be a new annual tradition for the CSC. Stay tuned for updates on the 2026 field trip – date and location to be announced! ☺

"Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with some claiming it set the bar high to what promises to be a new annual tradition for the CSC. Stay tuned for updates on the 2026 field trip – date and location to be announced!"



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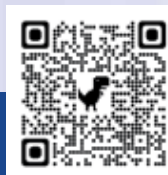
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The Communications Committee is responsible for the transfer of information within VWEA and its members. We solicit technical articles for *The Conduit*, which is the main communication tool for the VWEA membership at large.

Do you have an article you would like published in the next edition of *The Conduit*?

For more information, contact *The Conduit's* Committee Chair, Patsy Gordon at patsy.gordon@kimley-horn.com.



To submit articles, visit:

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LEADERSHIP ACADEMY LEARNS FROM INDUSTRY LEADERS PANEL

By Jessie Rosenthal, Senior Project Engineer, Ramboll

In May, the 2024-2025 Leadership Academy cohort met for our third in-person training session at the Virginia American Water facility in Dale City, VA. We began the day with a tour of the wastewater treatment facility, complete with some very happy goldfish living in the facility's filters and providing cleaning services free of charge!

The cohort was then introduced to our esteemed panel of local industry leaders:

- Allen McCullough, Vice President, Ulliman Schutte Construction, LLC
- Andrew Beatty, Manager, Planning Initiatives, Loudoun Water
- Phill Yi, Associate Vice President, Hazen and Sawyer
- Simon Scarlett, Senior Manager, Operations, Virginia American Water (Alexandria, Bel Air, and Dale City)
- William Elledge, Director of Engineering and Technical Services, D.C. Water

After introductions, the cohort broke into small groups, where each industry leader presented their group with a real-world problem they had faced in their career. These challenges ranged from staffing and reorganizing teams to determining the best engineering solutions for ambiguous projects – and even responding to an actual fire on a construction site! Each group gathered information and collaborated to develop a strategy to best resolve the issue.



These insightful conversations showed that leadership roles often present us with ambiguous situations where there isn't a clear path forward. In each case, the leadership problems required gathering information from various stakeholders, critical thinking, and mutual trust within their teams to arrive at the best solution.

The session concluded with a Q&A panel discussion with the industry leaders. The panelists shared what leadership meant to them, how they

continue to evolve and improve in their roles every day, and some invaluable lessons they've learned along the way. The Leadership Academy cohort left the session feeling inspired by this wonderful group of panelists and ready to tackle our own leadership challenges!

For more information on the Leadership Academy program and/or the Committee, visit www.vaawwa.org/page/leadership-academy, or contact Rebecca Currall, Committee Chair (rcurrall@hrsd.com).



Loyalty at Lakeside as Dan Widdel becomes new President

Dan Widdel has become the new President of Illinois-based Lakeside Equipment Corporation, who since their formation back in 1928, have become a highly renowned provider of wastewater treatment systems, including screens, grit collectors, clarifiers, screw pumps, and biological processes.

With Lakeside for 25 years, Dan steps up to replace retiring President, Karen Wolk, who served the employee-owned company for 40 years. Karen had been in the head role for the past three years, following the sudden passing away of Lakeside's much-admired President, Steve Eckstein.

"This is a huge honour for me to follow in the footsteps of those who have led Lakeside Equipment Corporation so diligently for almost a century," said Dan Widdel.

"Despite some challenging times in our long history, including the Pandemic, and the tragic loss of our former President, we have stuck together as a very solid team, determined, no matter what, to deliver the very best solutions for our customers. I would like to sincerely thank Karen Wolk for her huge contribution in pushing Lakeside forward."

Jim Snyder (Lakeside's Production Manager), who has been with the business for 43 years, moves up to become joint Vice President, sharing the new mantle with Jim McKee (National Sales Manager), who has been at Lakeside for 25 years.

Meanwhile, Jamie Marshall has joined Lakeside as its new Controller. She recently completed her Master of Business Administration, together with achieving a human resources graduate certificate.



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Collaborative project delivery is a technique used to improve the process for completing infrastructure improvement efforts. The traditional project delivery method (Design-Bid-Build) has been used for many years here in Virginia and across the U.S.

In recent years, project delivery methods such as Construction Management at Risk (CMAR), Design-Build (D-B) and Public Private Partnerships (P3), have become more common. In an effort to highlight these projects, the VWEA | VA AWWA Utility Management Committee has created a database for completed water-related projects using collaborative project delivery in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

We are hoping to increase the number of projects included in the database. We encourage owners to provide information on their projects. To provide new projects or provide updated information on a project already listed, visit <https://www.vwea.org/page/vacollaborativeprojectdelivery>.




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EVRAC Celebrates Water Professionals and Plans for an Exciting Year Ahead

WaterJAM was a great success, and it was wonderful to welcome VWEA members from across the state for a planning session and recruitment drive."

AUGUST 2025 HAPPY HOUR

Always great to see members from all walks of life and with all kinds of water industry experience, all doing great things! It was also fun to learn about the EVRAC President's "secret" drawing talent.



*Some after work bonding!
And yes, we are all very jealous of
Alan's abilities.*

WATER & WASTEWATER PROFESSIONALS APPRECIATION DAY

Water professionals from across Eastern VA came together to celebrate Virginia's Water & Wastewater Professionals Day. We enjoyed food, drinks, games and great company at Beachside Social in Virginia Beach.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As we plan for the next year, EVRAC is prepping for the annual holiday party, local volunteer opportunities, and more to come!



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friends from
all over
Virginia
converge
on Virginia
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needs a little
recognition?
We'll see you
both next year!*



*Both fun and planning
can happen over good
food with good vibes
here at WaterJAM.*

Following WaterJAM in September, EVRAC is organizing the annual family fall picnic, a holiday-themed happy hour, and local food drive support.

Interested in volunteering? Reach out to Muskan Amin (muskanamin@kennedyjenks.com). We also welcome opportunities to co-host events with other committees. ☺



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LPC Workshop Showcases Innovation and Collaboration

By Felicia Bracey, LPC Chair

The Laboratory Practice Committee (LPC) held a very successful VWEA–VA AWWA WaterJAM workshop on September 8 at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. This year’s theme was “Testing the Water.” The workshop featured a series of 45-minute presentations for water, wastewater, and environmental laboratory professionals, including:

- **Regulatory Updates for Drinking Water** – Daniel B. Home, P.E., Virginia Department of Health (VDH)
- **Back to the Future: Return of the Previously Resolved Deviations** – Stacie Crandall, Retired
- **Youth Outreach Programs, Fairfax County** – Elizabeth Barbour and Lisa Good, Fairfax County
- **Succession Planning: Building a Future-Ready Workplace** – Becky Dieffenbach, Newport News Water Works
- **Sharing Your Value to the Community Through Leading in a World of Continuous Change** – Fritz Wiant, Fairfax County

Following the workshop, the LPC held a committee meeting to welcome new members and discuss alternative meeting opportunities and ideas for 2026.

Gary Hampton of Big Stone Gap served as LPC Chair over the past year. In the upcoming year, Felicia Bracey of the City of Richmond will serve as Committee Chair.

We invite VWEA and VA AWWA members from the water, wastewater, and environmental laboratory community to participate in LPC meetings, held on the third Wednesday of January, March, April, June, and October.

Be on the lookout for more information about next year’s **Good Laboratory Practices Conference and Workshop**, scheduled for August 10-11, 2026, at Hotel Madison in Harrisonburg, VA.

For more information on how to get involved with our committee, please contact **Felicia Bracey** at felicia.bracev@rva.gov.

“We invite VWEA and VA AWWA members from the water, wastewater, and environmental laboratory community to participate in LPC meetings, held on the third Wednesday of January, March, April, June, and October.”



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Highlighting Workshops, Tours, and Operations Challenge

The VWEA O&M Committee will continue its commitment to delivering high-quality, accessible educational events across Virginia in 2026. These one-day regional workshops are designed to expand training opportunities for operators. They feature a variety of O&M and utility management topics, CPE credits, and facility tours showcasing treatment technologies in action. The Committee also hosts an Operations Challenge competition to showcase highly skilled operators from Virginia and beyond.

OPERATIONS CHALLENGE AT WATERJAM 2025

For the first time, the VWEA Operations Challenge competition took place at WaterJAM! Six teams from four states and Washington, DC, participated in this exhibition event ahead of competing at WEFTEC in Chicago. Virginia was represented by teams from HRSD and Prince William Water. HRSD took home the second-place award.

If you are interested in learning more about this event or participating in 2026, contact Subcommittee Chair Pat Porto at pporto@hrsd.com.

Learn more about the O&M Committee: <https://www.vwea.org/page/OperationsMaintenance>.

Details on the Operations Challenge: <https://www.vwea.org/page/OpsChallenge>.



"These one-day regional workshops are designed to expand training opportunities for operators. They feature a variety of O&M and utility management topics, CPE credits, and facility tours showcasing treatment technologies in action."



LOOKING BACK – 2025 EVENTS

January –

WVWA Roanoke Regional Water Pollution Control Plant Workshop

This event offered five CPE credits through sessions on wastewater math, activated sludge, and pump troubleshooting, as well as a plant tour.

July –

Tabb Pressure Reducing Facility Workshop

In partnership with the Collections Committee, the O&M Committee hosted a workshop highlighting HRSD's new pressure reducing station and offline storage tank. The event featured three CPE-approved sessions: a facility overview, technical guidance on screw centrifugal pumps, and a tour of key infrastructure.

September –

License Prep Workshop at WaterJAM 2025

This workshop, titled "Mastering the Basics: A Comprehensive Wastewater Operator Licensure Review," was hosted at WaterJAM 2025. This full-day, interactive session prepared operators for licensure exams while strengthening core operational skills.

October –

UOSA Plant Workshop (Centreville)

This one-day event offered four CPE credits through a series of O&M-focused sessions and a plant tour.

Stay tuned for 2026 events. If you have suggestions for future topics or locations, send email to Committee Co-Chairs David Jarrell (djarrell@rapidan.org), or Mike Hutchison (mhutchison@pfrwta.com). 

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How does stormwater play a role in your work?

Almost all my work is stormwater-related. My focus tends to be on data and modeling assessments to better understand the impacts of stormwater on water quality and flooding, and assess stormwater solutions like green/gray infrastructure and nature-based solutions to mitigate those impacts on communities.

How did you end up working in stormwater?

I took a meandering path to get to stormwater, starting out as a chemical engineer, and then working on wastewater treatment plant hydraulics. I realized this wasn't my passion, so I sought other project work and found myself working on a stormwater assessment project for the Storm King Art Center in New York. I loved the challenge of understanding stormwater – how it changes depending on the landscape, the weather, the infrastructure, and the needs of the community – and I haven't stopped seeking out those projects since.

What project relating to stormwater are you most proud of?

I've been fortunate to have worked on several amazing stormwater projects in my career. It's hard to pick one that I'm most proud of. I had a formative project early in my career, assessing the impact of trees and green roofs on stormwater and combined sewer overflow (CSO) reductions in D.C. It was a collaborative project between LimnoTech, Casey Trees, EPA, and the District of Columbia. We showed, through modeling, how expansive adoption of green roofs and trees across the city could make a real improvement in stormwater and CSO discharges. It really ignited my interest in green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, especially in urban communities.

What do you wish everyone knew about stormwater?

I had the opportunity to collaborate closely with the U.S. Army Corps "Engineering with Nature" program for several years. Their program name sums it up – work with nature, not against it. This applies to stormwater as well. We need nature-based solutions, at scale, to build up community stormwater resilience.

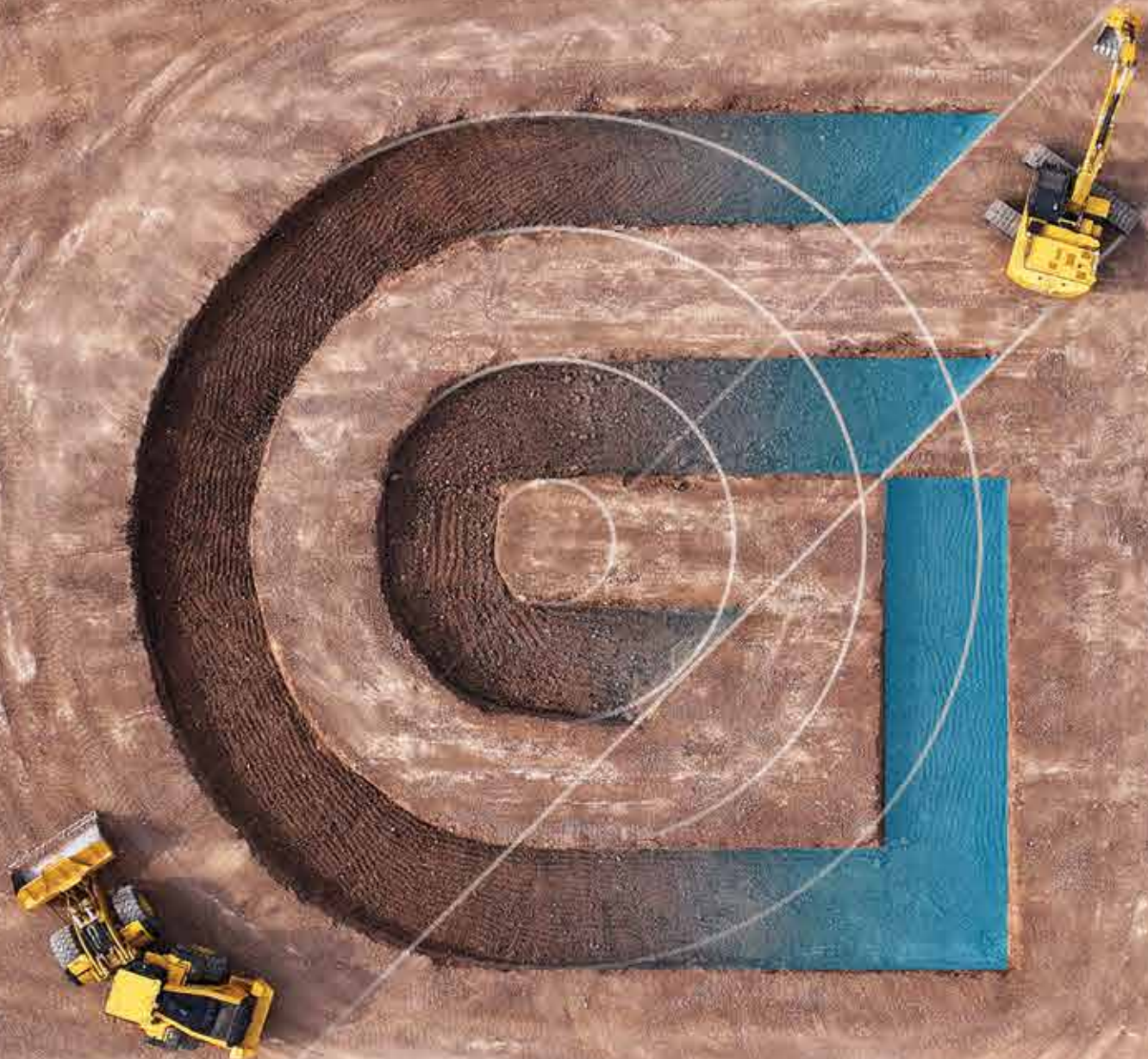
Why did you join the Stormwater Committee (or VWEA/VA AWWA)? What do you enjoy most about being part of the Committee (or VWEA/VA AWWA)?

I joined VWEA and the Stormwater Committee to get to know other people doing stormwater work in Virginia. I admire how dedicated and motivated the Committee is. We always come up with interesting new topics for our stormwater seminars and workshops.

What do you like to do for fun?

Anything in the outdoors with friends – hiking, biking, kayaking, skiing – I'm usually up for anything as long as it's outside. I also really enjoy getting lost in a good book while at the beach. ☺

"I loved the challenge of understanding stormwater – how it changes depending on the landscape, the weather, the infrastructure, and the needs of the community."



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WaterJAM 2025

September 8-11, 2025
Virginia Beach, VA

Virginia

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RECAP

WATERJAM 2025: VIRGINIA IS FOR WATER

A Record-Breaking, Connection-Building Conference

What a phenomenal week! WaterJAM 2025 raised the bar in every way – attendance, engagement, innovation, and energy. With the theme “Virginia Is for Water,” this year’s conference brought the spirit of the oceanfront into every session, conversation, and celebration.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of our volunteers, WaterJAM delivered on its mission to provide a comprehensive, sustainable, and high-value experience. From technical excellence to meaningful networking, the event offered something for everyone. A heartfelt congratulations to all who made this year’s conference a resounding success!

“WaterJAM 2025 broke records and reaffirmed its place as a cornerstone of the water industry. The energy and enthusiasm throughout the week were unmatched, and the connections made will ripple forward for years to come.”

With **3,102 attendees** and **345 exhibitor booths and trailer displays**, WaterJAM 2025 broke records and reaffirmed its place as a cornerstone of the water industry. The energy and enthusiasm throughout the week were unmatched, and the connections made will ripple forward for years to come.



The week kicked off with two fan favorites: the Golf Outing and the Clay Shoot. Both events sold out quickly, and the golf tournament raised funds for Water For People. Under sunny skies and ideal temperatures, attendees enjoyed a perfect start to the conference.

At the Virginia Beach Convention Center, Monday was filled with engaging workshops and hands-on learning experiences. A total of **220 attendees** participated in seven workshops, which spanned both full and half-day sessions. Topics focused on laboratory operations, wastewater licensure preparation, capital planning, SCADA systems, water reuse strategies, resource recovery, and inclusive team-building practices. The day also celebrated the graduation of the fifth class of the Leadership Academy, a proud moment for the program and its participants.

Meanwhile, the Young Professionals Committee led a successful Stream Clean-Up Service Project, drawing **46 participants** who contributed to a cleaner Hampton Roads and stronger community ties.

Monday evening's Meet and Greet took place outdoors for the first time at Neptune Park, where the new WaterJAM sign was unveiled under the beautiful night sky. Despite the breeze, more than **870 attendees** gathered for a lively evening of connection and celebration.

TUESDAY

Tuesday began with the Water For People 5K Fun Run/Walk along the Boardwalk, followed by the First-Timers' Breakfast and the Women Impacting Water Breakfast, which welcomed 152 attendees for a morning of networking and empowerment.

The Tuesday morning events were followed by an engaging Opening Session. The session started with an address and proclamation of Virginia Beach Water Professionals Week by the Mayor of Virginia Beach, Robert M. "Bobby" Dyer. The keynote speaker, Samantha Villegas, kicked off the conference by showcasing the many ways Virginia's water workforce has led the water sector



nationwide in its commitment to the cause of protecting public health, our environment, and our economy with sound, savvy water management. In addition to featuring and celebrating the work of several of Virginia's leading agencies, a panel of speakers shared their insights, including Shannon Spence, P.E., (Prince William Water), Mike Tippin, P.E., (City of Virginia Beach Department of Public Works), and Caleb Taylor, P.E., (New River Valley Regional Water Authority).

The Exhibit Hall buzzed with innovation and interaction. Attendees explored cutting-edge

technologies, participated in Mobile Sessions, joined a scavenger hunt, and enjoyed the fourth annual Biosolids Beauty Competition.

This year, the conference introduced a suite of new digital screens throughout the convention center, including interactive digital maps to help attendees locate specific booths, and real-time displays of daily events and announcements. These enhancements significantly improved navigation, and kept everyone informed and engaged. The upgraded rooms for technical sessions featured enhanced presentation





podiums and high-resolution screens elevating the experience for both presenters and attendees.

Tuesday also saw the close of the Water Reach Silent Auction, which raised nearly \$1,900 for committee initiatives. Meanwhile, the InFLOW program welcomed three STEM students from underrepresented groups, offering them a gateway into the water industry. In total, **155 students** attended this year's conference, reflecting strong engagement by the next generation of water professionals.

The DEI Pavilion, now in its second year, remained a favorite among attendees. Located in the Exhibit Hall, the Pavilion offered a vibrant and lively space, while creating a welcoming environment for attendees to engage in meaningful networking, and providing a place to recharge – both themselves and their devices! The continued success of the DEI Pavilion underscores its importance as a space for connection, relaxation, and celebration of diversity within the water industry.

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY

This year also marked the exciting return of the Operators Challenge to WaterJAM – the first occurrence in over a decade! **Six teams** competed in this hands-on event, showcasing their skills and teamwork across a series of utility challenges. The competition concluded on Wednesday and was a highlight for both participants and spectators alike.

Emerging professionals took center stage in the Fresh Ideas Poster Contest and the Student Water Challenge, presenting innovative solutions to real-world problems. The Young Professionals hosted a Roundtable and Bingo Networking Reception, bridging connections across generations.

Wednesday night's Awards Banquet and Fun Night brought out the excitement and passion



among water professionals with a jumping dance floor, trivia, and casino games, all while celebrating the beauty of our great state of Virginia.

There were also **three insightful tours** on Thursday: the City of Virginia Beach Bow Creek Stormwater Park Project Tour, Boat Harbor Pump Station Construction Tour, and Northwest

River Water Treatment Plant Tour, with over **30 attendees** participating.

We hope everyone had an unforgettable experience at WaterJAM 2025. On behalf of the WaterJAM Committee, thank you for being part of this incredible journey. We look forward to welcoming you back in 2026! ☺



VIRGINIA BEACH PUTS ITS TAP WATER TO THE TEST

Can you tell the difference between tap water and bottled water? On Sunday, September 7, visitors to the Virginia Beach Boardwalk put their taste buds to the test in a blind tasting between tap water and bottled water as part of Virginia Beach Public Utilities' annual WaterJAM Taste Test.

The final results showed that tap water came out on top: 35 participants preferred tap water, 31 preferred bottled water, and two participants tasted no difference. While taste preferences may vary, there is a huge difference between tap water and bottled water when it comes to cost and environmental impact, so we encourage all citizens to choose tap!

The VWEA Communications Committee joined this year's WaterJAM Taste Test with their "What Not to Flush" table, helping raise awareness about protecting plumbing systems and the environment. Eye-catching displays educated visitors on the dangers of flushing items like so-called "flushable" wipes, paper towels, dental floss, and more. Beachgoers walked away with a clear message: only flush water, toilet paper, and human waste!

The WaterJAM Taste Test is a kickoff event for the Joint Annual Meeting of the Virginia Section of the American Water Works Association and the Virginia Water Environment Association. Each year, WaterJAM provides numerous professional growth opportunities for hundreds of water industry professionals from the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond. ☺



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YPs MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT VIRGINIA BEACH CLEANUP

The Young Professionals Service Project Committee held a successful service event this year in partnership with the Virginia Beach Department of Parks & Recreation. A total of 30 attendees participated, including professionals, students, and InFLOW scholars. Volunteers collected litter starting at Beach Garden Park and worked their way down to and along the oceanfront.

Typical litter and debris were picked up, but the group also made some interesting finds this year, including a piece of luggage and even a wheelchair. In total, approximately 125 pounds of debris were collected from the oceanfront and surrounding area.

The Virginia Beach Department of Parks & Recreation was a great partner in organizing the event and providing all of the supplies and transportation needed for the cleanup. We're also very grateful to all of the volunteers who came out this year. Keep an eye out for next year's service project! ☺



“A total of 30 attendees participated, including professionals, students, and InFLOW scholars. Volunteers collected litter starting at Beach Garden Park and worked their way down to and along the oceanfront.”





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'FORE' THE GREATER GOOD: WATERJAM GOLF TOURNAMENT TEES OFF WITH PURPOSE

The greens were pristine, the skies cinematic, and the energy electric. On a picture-perfect Monday with temperatures hovering at a breezy 77 degrees, Cypress Point Country Club played host to a sold-out crowd for the WaterJAM Golf Tournament – an annual tradition that blends competitive spirit with coastal charm.

With 148 players filling every tee slot (plus one), the tournament delivered a full-throttle celebration of community, camaraderie, and clean drives. It's no longer just a kickoff – it's a rite of passage. A day when water professionals trade spreadsheets for scorecards and budget forecasts for pitching wedges, channeling the giddy enthusiasm of kids ditching homework for recess.

Sure, many could've opted to sleep in or head to the clay shoot instead. But golf offers something more: tales of heroic putts, tragic sand traps, and the kind of sport where missing the target by 40 yards still earns polite applause and a vague compliment about your "form." Clay shoot stories? Mostly bruises and someone yelling "safety off!" like they're auditioning for a utility-themed action movie. For those who chose fairways over firearms – or

“The tournament delivered a full-throttle celebration of community, camaraderie, and clean drives. It's no longer just a kickoff – it's a rite of passage.”

resisted the siren call of sleeping in – it wasn't just smart, it was a masterstroke in team spirit and sun-safe solidarity.

And speaking of the sun, Mother Nature clearly RSVP'd. The day unfolded under radiant sunshine and a gentle breeze that kept spirits high and sweat low. It was the kind of weather that makes you believe in karma – because when good people gather for a good time, even the clouds take the day off.

The morning began, as tradition dictates, with a relaxed breakfast and a few strategic stretches that looked suspiciously like yoga. Some players warmed up with textbook swings at the driving range, while others took a more interpretive approach – re-enacting *Happy Gilmore* scenes or attempting synchronized putting routines. Then came the real test of versatility: the infamous "Porcelain Precision" contest, where players teed off while seated on a full-sized toilet. There's no way to practice that shot – unless your home course is unusually accommodating. Between awkward angles, suppressed giggles, and one player who insisted on flushing for luck, it was a masterclass in dignity management and core stability. The men's and ladies' "Hit from the Crapper" long-drive winners earned bragging rights and took home a new plunger as a trophy.

In the official tournament competition, the winning team sponsored by EMC (Electric Motor & Contracting) brought both skill and swagger to the fairways. Troy Renfrow, Barney Campbell, Todd Haynes, and Chris Moore clinched top honours with a performance as smooth as their swings. And in a moment of pure golf magic, Brad Smith nailed a legitimate hole-in-one during regulation play. Fate, however, had a sense of humour: it wasn't on the designated prize hole that would've netted him \$50,000. Still, the cheers were deafening, and the feat unforgettable. Brad took it in stride – though rumour has it his ball is now in therapy for performance anxiety. Beyond the EMC-sponsored champs, two other flights crowned their own top-scoring teams – proof that the fairways were full of contenders.

Course contests were as lively as ever: longest drives, closest-to-the-pin surprises, and a marshmallow long-drive challenge that returned with sticky pride and sweet rewards. Hole #10 was unforgettable, thanks to the towering Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man and the ever-charismatic Jarus "Fluff Daddy" – part hype man, part swing coach, and full-time marshmallow ambassador – dishing out swing tips and one-liners like "Stay soft, swing hard." The key, as always: focus, timing, and resisting the urge to snack mid-swing.

Hole #14 featured the ever-popular "Skip it Through the Coupling," where golfers attempted to skip a ball off the pond and thread it through a four-foot floating Victaulic pipe coupling – like a halo of glory bobbing in judgment. Some approached it like engineers, calculating angles and spin; others yelled "YOLO!" and whacked it like they were skipping rocks at summer camp. The



“Between swings and scenic cart detours (some tactical, some beverage-related), the fairways echoed with laughter, choreography-worthy fist bumps, and the occasional impromptu cart karaoke. The pace of play was questionable, the banter was sharp, and the fundraising was record-setting. Proceeds supported clean water initiatives through Water For People, adding a meaningful layer to the day’s festivities.”

splash zone was real, the coupling was unforgiving, and the successful skips were met with cheers, disbelief, and one spontaneous cannonball from a golfer who may or may not have misunderstood the rules.

Between swings and scenic cart detours (some tactical, some beverage-related), the fairways echoed with laughter, choreography-worthy fist bumps, and the occasional impromptu cart karaoke. The pace of play was questionable, the banter was sharp, and the fundraising was record-setting. Proceeds supported clean water initiatives through Water For People, adding a meaningful layer to the day’s festivities.

As the sun dipped low and golf carts rolled back to the barn, the spirit of the day lingered like a well-struck drive—long, true, and impossible to ignore. From the first sip of coffee to the final raffle prize, WaterJAM delivered a living collage of camaraderie, comedy, and collective purpose.

A huge thank-you to our generous sponsors, tireless volunteers, and every player who showed up with heart, humour, and a healthy swing. None of this would be possible without you—and we wouldn’t want it any other way.

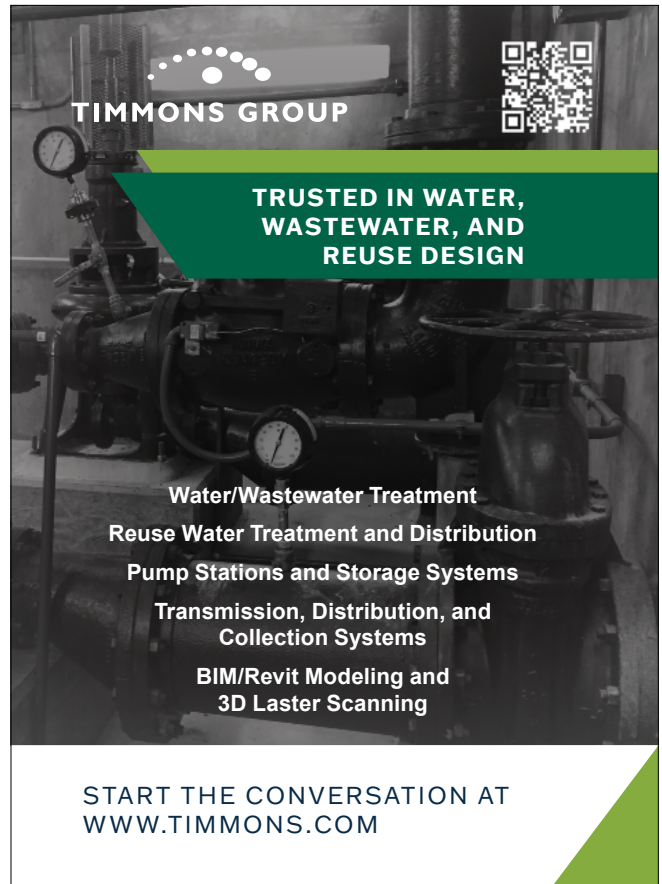
Here’s to clean water, clean drives, and a tradition that swings bigger every year. Same time next year? You bet. ☺



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ON TARGET AGAIN: WATERJAM CLAY SHOOT BREAKS RECORDS

Different year, same story – WaterJAM had record attendance, and the Clay Shoot sold out! A total of 85 participants signed up for this event – 29 of whom were first-time participants.

The weather could not have been better at Old Forge Sporting Clays in Providence Forge, one of the finest sporting clays facilities in Virginia. Participants enjoyed 100 challenging targets, delicious food from Mission BBQ, and an overall great time together.

Southern Corrosion #1 (Pam Baughman, Tom Delbridge, Mark Estes) roared back to reclaim the Team Champion title after being upended last year. Henrico County DPU (Roger Cronin, Ed Overman, Chris Sullard, Jeff Sullard) moved up a spot from last year, taking second-place honours. Synagro (Jay Buerger, Biju George, Allen Guilliams, Peter Price) edged out Hazen and Sawyer #3 (Scott Braatz, Jordan Combs, Joe Messere, Matt Wimmer) by only three targets to secure the third-place spot.

“Participants enjoyed 100 challenging targets, delicious food from Mission BBQ, and an overall great time together.”

Greg Everhart was Shoot Champion, followed closely by Matthew Redifer and Bryce Carter.

The generosity of our sponsors allowed us to provide a door prize to each shooter again this year. Thank you to our participants and sponsors for another successful and safe event.

Good news – we have reserved Old Forge Sporting Clays again for WaterJAM 2026. This year's Clay Shoot sold out in late June, so be sure to register early if you plan to participate next year! We hope to see you there. ☺



Jessie Lissner (above), Austin French (below)





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WORKSHOP FOCUSES ON RESOURCE RECOVERY

The Education Committee hosted a workshop at WaterJAM titled "The Value of Water: Recovering Resources from Wastewater."

The half-day workshop focused on innovative approaches to water reuse and resource recovery. The first half of the workshop featured presentations on innovative technologies for resource recovery, proactive strategies for addressing the EPA's PFAS risk assessment for biosolids, creative applications of water reuse in data centers, and converting sludge

to renewable energy at WSSC. In the second half, an interactive panel discussion included leaders from the Upper Occoquan Service Authority (UOSA), Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD), Loudoun Water, and Anne Arundel County, MD, who shared insights and real-world experiences in advancing resource recovery at their facilities.

For more information, visit the VWEA website: Virginia Water Environment Association (vwea.org). 



Visit the VWEA website
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NOT EVEN WIND AND WAVES CAN STOP THE WATER FOR PEOPLE 5K FUN RUN



Despite blustering wind and threatening clouds, the 2025 Water For People 5K run was a smashing success. Over 50 runners made the trek down the Virginia Beach boardwalk, launching from the iconic Neptune statue.

Congratulations to our race winners: **Mark Titcomb** of Newport News Waterworks and **Ashley Williams** of Crowder Construction!

A big thank you to all of our sponsors – Delta Systems Environmental, Haskell, IDEXX, Timmons Group, Brown and Caldwell, Hazen, GFT, Carollo, and Dewberry – and a special thanks to all our volunteers, without whom this event would not be possible! 🌊




SILENT AUCTION SUCCESS: WATER REACH COMMITTEE SUPPORTS SMALL SYSTEM COMMUNITIES

As part of WaterJAM 2025, the Water Reach Joint Committee of the Virginia Section of the American Water Works Association (VA AWWA) and the Virginia Water Environment Association (VWEA) held their Annual Silent Auction on Tuesday, September 9, in the Exhibit Hall.

This year's auction raised \$1,893 to support the Water Reach Committee's mission of ensuring safe drinking water and proper sanitation for small

system communities throughout Virginia. Thank you to everyone who donated and participated!

Our committee volunteers include utility directors, engineers, operators, groundwater specialists, permit specialists, professors, students, and others dedicated to this mission. If you are interested in joining the Water Reach Committee, please contact Chair Hunter Martin at martinhr@nnva.gov. 



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REFLECTIONS ON THE VA AWWA | VWEA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY AT WATERJAM 2025

Submitted by the Leadership Academy

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is a deep truth: water sustains us, connects us, and challenges us – and it demands leadership. The VA AWWA | VWEA Leadership Academy leverages that reality. It's not about the folks who distribute or treat our water: it's about shaping people who can lead change, inspire teams, protect public health, and steward precious resources for future generations. This year's WaterJAM theme was “**Virginia Is for Water.**” But not only is Virginia for Water – we are also for **LEADERS**. The recent culmination of the Class of 2025 and the launch of the Class of 2026 remind us that in water, leadership matters just as much as infrastructure.

Final Training Session for Class of 2025: Working Genius

The Leadership Academy Class of 2025 wrapped up their yearlong journey with a training session focused on **Working Genius**. This tool helps individuals and teams understand where their natural gifts lie, what tasks energize them, and where they may need support. In water and

wastewater – where emergency responses, regulatory compliance, and infrastructure challenges require teamwork under pressure – having clarity on what you excel in is a powerful asset. Through the Working Genius session, participants gained deeper self-awareness, learned how to partner more effectively with colleagues whose strengths differ from their own, and set a foundation for leadership that is resilient, adaptive, and collaborative.

Graduation

The 29 graduates in the Class of 2025 celebrated with friends, family, and coworkers. We had four guest speakers; three of whom are Leadership Academy graduates!

- **Chris Carey**, Water Distribution Manager at Western Virginia Water Authority
- **Ryan Radspinner**, Business Process Engineer at Hampton Roads Sanitation District
- **Matt Wisniewski**, Contract Manager at GFT (formerly Gannett Fleming)
- **Karlyn Owens**, Civil Engineer at James City Service Authority

Each speaker illustrated different dimensions of leadership and encouraged our graduates to take the next step. What's next for our graduates? Only they know!

Kicking Off Class of 2026

As the Class of 2025 steps forward as alumni and emerging leaders, the Academy kicked off with the **Class of 2026**. We have an action-packed year of training for our new cohort, and can't wait to get started!

This isn't just professional development: it's an investment in Virginia's water future. It's ensuring that when pipelines age, regulations tighten, climate impacts deepen, or emergencies strike, there are capable, committed people ready to lead.

Why 'Virginia Is for Water' – and for Leaders

Water connects everything in Virginia: from the mountains to the coast, from city suburbs to rural communities, from source to tap to wastewater treatment. It's a shared responsibility. But shared responsibility needs vision, integrity, courage, and skill – all qualities of leadership.

- Water is technical, but to move projects forward you need collaboration, communication, and trust.
- Water is regulated, but also public, so leaders must understand the intent of policies, people, and community.
- Water is essential for public health, the environment, and our economy – and leaders must think long term to balance costs, sustainability, and equity.

In that sense, believing that “**Virginia Is for Water**” naturally carries the corollary: “**Virginia Is for Leaders.**” Because water will only sustain us if we have leaders who are prepared to take on the responsibility: to plan, to act, to adapt, to guide.

As the Class of 2025 graduates, the members leave with new tools and strengthened capacities. As the Class of 2026 answers the call, the Commonwealth strengthens. If water is Virginia's most vital resource, leadership is one of its most vital investments.

Interested in the Leadership Academy and/or joining the Leadership Academy Committee? Reach out to Rebecca Currall (rcurrall@hrsdc.com). ☎



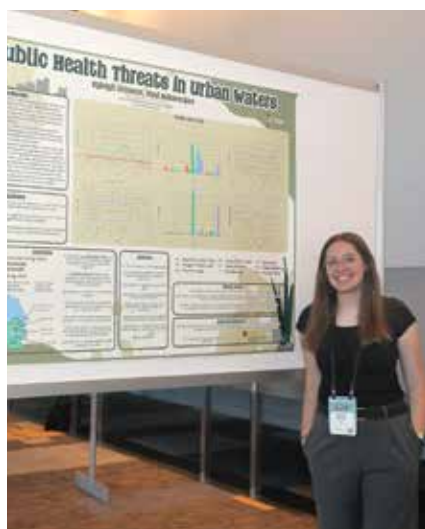
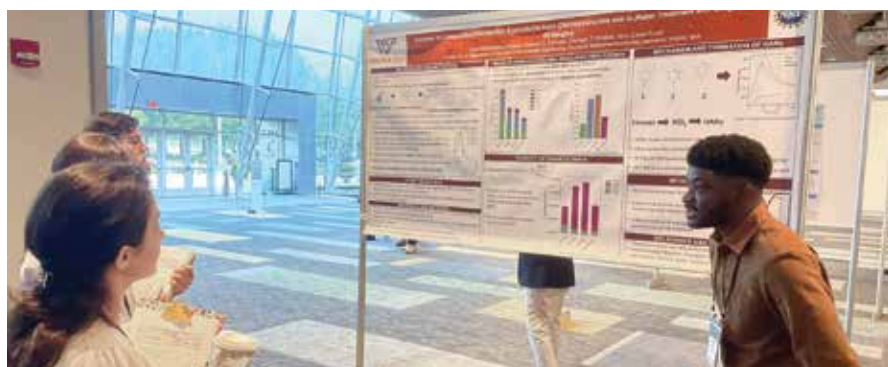
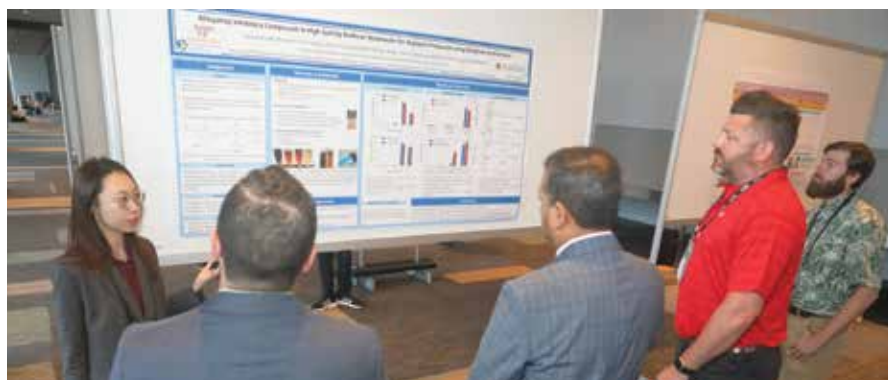
INNOVATIVE RESEARCH ON DISPLAY IN 2025 YP POSTER CONTEST

The 2025 Fresh Ideas Poster Contest received a record-breaking 20 abstracts and featured participants from Young Professionals in academia, consulting, and public utilities, all eager to present their work to WaterJAM attendees. The contest took place on Wednesday, September 10, in the WaterJAM lobby and showcased research exploration, case study reviews, current and future regulatory impacts on the world of water, and more. Participants competed in two categories: water-related and wastewater/environmental-related topics.

The first-place winner for a water-related poster was Kadmiel Adusei, a PhD student at Virginia Tech, for his poster *"Increase in Unregulated Disinfection Byproducts from Chlorocyanurate Use in Water Treatment and Mitigation Strategies."* The second-place winner was Kate Albi, an Assistant Engineer with Hazen and Sawyer, for her poster *"Chlorate and Perchlorate Monitoring at a Central Virginia WTP to Prepare for Future Regulatory Actions."*

The first-place winner for a wastewater/environmental-related poster was Mrudula Meghana Kuppa, a PhD candidate at George Mason University, for her poster *"Hitchhiker's Guide to Understanding Breakthrough of Emerging Contaminants from Wastewater Treatment Systems: How Dissolved Organic Matter Affects the Fate of Phthalates."* The second-place winner was Yitao Li, a PhD student at Virginia Tech, for his poster *"Harnessing Ferric Chloride Dosing for Sludge Thermal Hydrolysis Byproduct Removal at Full-scale during Dewatering."*

The YP Committee thanks all participants who contributed to a fantastic contest. Special thanks are extended to the judging panel: Mary Vahdati and Chris Mata (CDM Smith), Veronica Shalotenko (Spotsylvania County Utilities), Uday Khambhammettu (Stantec), and David Sisson (HDR). [📍](#)



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YPs MAKE CONNECTIONS AT HIGH-ENERGY NETWORKING BINGO

As Wednesday night of WaterJAM2025 wrapped up, Young Professionals from across Virginia gathered for a high-energy networking bingo event that exceeded all expectations. With an incredible turnout, attendees connected over shared goals, industry insights, and a little friendly competition.

More than a dozen prizes were raffled, including three tickets to the inaugural Virginia Young Professional Summit. One lucky winner, Kelly Riggan, scored a full pass to WaterJAM 2026! With new connections made and ideas exchanged, the next wave of water professionals is already making its mark. ☺



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YP ROUND TABLE INSPIRES FUTURE LEADERS

By YP Round Table Sub-Committee (Nicole Proto, Muskan Amin, Daquan Beavers, Travis Miller, Kelly Riggan, and Mackenzie Rickard)

The YP Roundtable was a success at this year's WaterJAM, with a room packed with 50 young professional (YP) attendees. At the event, YPs had the opportunity to learn about leadership in water from industry experts, including speaker Jen Cobb (Newport News Waterworks) and table leaders David Sisson (HDR), Matt Wisniewski (GFT), Shelby Wease (American Water), Christiana Tambone (Kennedy Jenks), and Lawrence Latour (Town of Herndon).

Jen Cobb shared insights on the value of communication, networking, mentoring, collaboration, and goal setting/execution in leadership. Following her presentation, attendees had the chance to network and participate in an engaging collaborative activity designed by Tim Moore (HDR). Each of the five roundtables discussed one of five different industry scenarios: an emergency overflow event, PFAS public engagement strategy, a workforce retention challenge, a design-build delivery conflict, and climate resilience and equity planning.

At each table, attendees assumed various leadership roles to discuss and resolve these scenarios as a group, helping YPs understand how everyone can step up as a leader in the industry and the importance of collaboration. Table leaders facilitated meaningful conversation and provided expert insight. Attendees then had the opportunity to showcase their leadership skills by presenting their discussions to the room, followed by a raffle of inspiring leadership books and fun YP Roundtable mugs.

The event sparked insightful discussions, facilitated learning, and fostered new connections. The YP Committee hopes the event left attendees feeling inspired to take on leadership in the industry – whether by stepping up in their current roles or pursuing formal leadership positions in the future.

For more information on how to get involved in planning YP events for next year's WaterJAM, please contact Sarah Ozenkoski (loomisse@cdmsmith.com) and Molly Sayles (msayles@hazenandsawyer.com). ☺



Volunteers for the YP Roundtable including speaker, table leaders, and event sub-committee. Pictured from left to right: (Back) Jen Cobb, Shelby Wease, Lawrence Latour, David Sisson, Daquan Beavers, Kelly Riggan, Matt Wisniewski, (Front) Muskan Amin, Christiana Tambone, Mackenzie Rickard, Nicole Proto, and Travis Miller.



Speaker Jen Cobb (Newport News Waterworks) presents on her experiences and knowledge gained regarding leadership.



A room packed full of over 50 attendees listening attentively to the speaker.



Attendees engage in a collaborative activity, where they step into different leadership roles to discuss and resolve industry scenarios as a group.

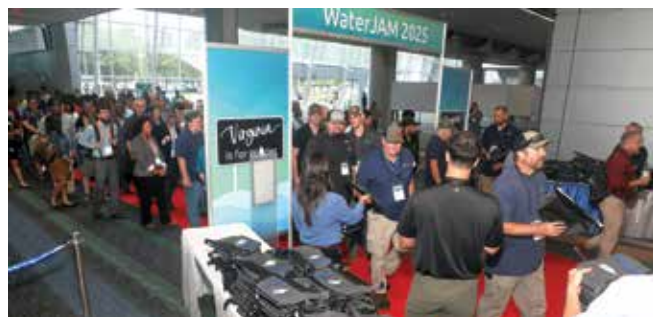


Prizes, including leadership books and YP Roundtable mugs, are raffled at the end of the event.

YPs HAVE FUN WHILE CONNECTING AT EXHIBIT HALL BOOTH

On Tuesday, September 9, and Wednesday, September 10, the Exhibit Hall Activity Booth provided a space for water and wastewater young professionals (YPs) from across Virginia to connect. The booth featured various games and activities, as well as a photo booth with props where YPs could take both professional and fun photos.

Attendees received raffle tickets for participating in the booth activities and signing up for the YP Committee. This year's prizes included a portable speaker, electric hand warmers, DoorDash gift cards, a Brita pitcher, portable charger, coffee warmer mug, and a selfie stick. Additionally, anyone who registered for the YP Committee became eligible for the grand prize: a free WaterJAM registration for 2026. [e](#)



JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY WINS DEBUT AT 2025 VA AWWA STUDENT WATER CHALLENGE

By Tyler Patrick, Hazen and Sawyer

The 22nd annual VA AWWA Student Water Challenge (SWC) took place on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at WaterJAM in Virginia Beach, bringing together student teams from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Old Dominion University, George Mason University, and, for the first time, James Madison University. Teams received their problem statement packets at 8:30 a.m. and had until 2:00 p.m. to develop solutions to a complex, real-world engineering scenario. Teams then presented their solutions to a panel of expert judges and conference attendees.

This year's challenge centered on the fictitious city of Cliffmere, a growing municipality in Virginia facing increasing demand and the need for resilient water treatment and distribution infrastructure. Each team selected one of three design problems: designing a booster pump station and transmission main to connect Cliffmere's two pressure zones; developing a clearwell for improved disinfection and operational flexibility; or recommending filter and pump upgrades for an undersized treatment plant. In addition to their technical solutions, teams evaluated emergency action plan criteria, considering how their proposed projects would help Cliffmere prepare for and respond to natural disasters and other emergencies. The competition format included a buffet lunch, afternoon presentations to a panel of expert judges, and concluded with bingo at the Student & Young Professionals Reception and dinner at the WaterJAM Awards Banquet.

The judging panel consisted of Carlos Toro-Escobar (Brown and Caldwell), Christene Mitchell (AECOM), Justin Manzie (Newport News Waterworks), and Rebecca Haley (Hazen and Sawyer), who generously volunteered their time and expertise to evaluate the teams' presentations. The event was especially notable for the debut of James Madison University, whose team impressed the judges and took home first place in their very first appearance at the SWC, winning a plaque, a check for \$1,500, and the privilege of keeping the SWC Traveling Trophy until next year's competition. Last year's winner, George Mason University, took second place and received a plaque and a check for \$750. All teams were recognized for their hard work and innovative solutions at the Awards Banquet.

Special thanks go to Tyler Patrick (Hazen and Sawyer) for planning and coordinating the SWC, and to the following members of the VWEA | VA AWWA Student Activities Committee who assisted in developing this year's design prompt: Mark Titcomb (Newport News Waterworks), Kayla Rutherford (HRSD), and Allen Shue (Ramboll). The dedication and professionalism of all participants, faculty advisors, and volunteers made the 2025 Student Water Challenge a memorable and impactful experience for everyone involved. For questions about the competition or ideas for future problem statements, contact Tyler Patrick (tpatrick@hazenandsawyer.com). ☺



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2025 VWEA AWARDS

Enslow-Hedgepeth Award

Robert Forgione



This award is presented to an Association member who, during the past year or recent years, has made outstanding contributions to VWEA through service to the Association, made outstanding technical or other contributions to the field of wastewater treatment or water pollution control, or made a major contribution to the improvement or control of water quality or the environment.

Bob's involvement with VWEA has spanned decades. He was instrumental in the creation of the Work for Water Committee and can still be seen at career fairs educating students about opportunities in water. He has been an active member of the Utility Management Committee, serving as chair, and has recently led the Asset Management Focus Group. Bob is also active on the VWEA Operations & Maintenance Committee and advocates for the development of quality training for O&M staff. Other involvement includes chairing the Northern VA Utility Management Committee and serving on the WARIN Committee. Bob retired from UOSA as Director of Operations and Maintenance. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering and a Master's Degree in Environmental Science.

VWEA Outstanding Young Professional

Trey Harksen



The Outstanding Young Professional Award recognizes a young VWEA professional, 35 years old or younger at the time of nomination, who, through individual effort, has made significant contributions to VWEA via activities including volunteer work, committee involvement, leadership activities, and/or conference paper presentations.

Trey has been a dedicated volunteer since entering the water industry. His engagement has centered around the Young Professional Committee, Sustainable Utilities Committee, and WaterJAM. Trey is currently the Water Reuse Focus Group lead for the Sustainable Utilities Committee and coordinated the committee workshop at WaterJAM in 2024. He has served as vice chair of Central VA YPs and is currently the statewide YP Committee Chair. He spearheaded the development of Virginia's inaugural YP Summit, scheduled for this October in Richmond. Trey has also been involved with YP programming at WaterJAM and can often be found volunteering at service projects or engaging other YPs in the Association.

WEF William D. Hatfield Award

Steven Dunn



The WEF Hatfield Award recognizes operators of wastewater treatment plants for outstanding performance and professionalism.

Steven is currently serving as Superintendent of the Lynchburg Regional Water Resource Recovery Facility. He holds a Class I Wastewater Operators license and a Class I Water Operators license in Virginia. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Christopher Newport University and has enjoyed a lifetime working in the water/wastewater industry since 1984.

WEF Arthur Sidney Bedell Award

Phill Yi



Established in 1948, the Bedell Award acknowledges extraordinary personal service to a member association.

Phill's involvement in VWEA has been impactful throughout his career. He began as YP Chair for Northern VA and as the YP Representative for the VWEA Board. Phill served as Chair of the VWEA Education Committee, led the WaterJAM Technical Program Committee, and then Chaired WaterJAM. He served as an officer on VWEA's Board, including as President from 2019–2020. Phill is a former recipient of the Outstanding Young Professional Award for both VWEA and WEF.

WEF Laboratory Analyst Award

Mason Hopkins



The WEF Laboratory Analyst Award recognizes an individual for outstanding performance, professionalism, and contributions to the water quality analysis profession.

Mason is a Laboratory Analyst II at the Henrico County Central Environmental Laboratory, located at the county's Water Reclamation Facility, where she has worked since 2022. Prior to her current role, Mason attended Warren Wilson College, where she received a B.S. in Biochemistry and spent her final year developing methods for future

student research. She currently runs analyses vital to the plant's operation and is an active member of the facility's Team Building Committee. Outside of work, she trains for bike races, coaches the local youth mountain bike team, and enjoys rock climbing.

WEF George W. Burke, Jr. Safety Award Alex Renew



This award recognizes a municipal or industrial wastewater facility for establishing and maintaining an active and effective safety program.

AlexRenew's 130+ employees manage wastewater for more than 300,000 people in Alexandria, Virginia, and parts of Fairfax County. AlexRenew maintains capital assets valued at approximately \$1.2 billion and treats approximately 38 MGD (up to 116 MGD during wet weather) of wastewater. Each year, AlexRenew helps improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay by removing over 2,400 tons of nitrogen, 300 tons of phosphorus, and reducing bacteria to near-zero levels. AlexRenew is currently overseeing RiverRenew, the largest infrastructure project in Alexandria's history, which will prevent over 120 million gallons of combined sewage from entering Alexandria waterways each year once complete.

A.H. Paessler Environmental Stewardship Award Sam Hale

This award recognizes a government employee's service to the water environment field and to the Association.

Sam has played a role in many of Southwest Virginia's wastewater operators' stories, including mine when he hired me for an inspector job almost 20 years ago. Sam has worked for DEQ's Blue Ridge Regional Office for over 34 years, dedicating most of his career to assisting Virginia's municipalities/utilities and their certified Wastewater Operators. In addition, he has been an instructor at the Virginia Tech Wastewater Short School for over 20 years, training thousands of operators. Sam is first and foremost a Wastewater Operator who cares deeply about the profession, the industry, and protecting public health and the environment.

VWEA Public Official Award Virginia Senator Jeremy McPike



This award recognizes an elected or appointed public official who has made significant contributions in clean water legislation.

Senator McPike has demonstrated commitment to public water and wastewater utilities over the last two legislative sessions, advancing PFAS legislation focused on source reduction rather than placing the onus on passive receivers like wastewater treatment facilities. In 2025, he introduced Senate Bill 1319 – PFAS Industrial Discharge Monitoring – mandating industrial facilities discharging into publicly owned treatment works to monitor and report their PFAS discharges quarterly. The bill was vetoed, but elements remain in place to move it forward in the future.

Golden Manhole Award Brent Werlein



This award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of wastewater collection systems, including design, education, training, certification, construction, operations, maintenance, and management.

Brent is the FOG, Hot Spot Cleaning, and Wet Well Cleaning Program Manager for Virginia Beach Public Utilities. He has played a vital role in reducing capacity- and maintenance-related sanitary sewer overflows in the city. Brent champions the use of acoustic assessment tools to rapidly screen sewer lines for blockages and buildups, enabling

maintenance staff to target cleaning efforts efficiently. He is an active member of the Collection Systems Committee and often speaks at local and national conferences.

Facility Maintenance Award Pepper's Ferry Regional Wastewater Treatment Authority



This award recognizes outstanding performance, professionalism, and dedication to the maintenance of wastewater treatment equipment and processes.

In September 2024, historic flooding from Hurricane Helene inundated the New River Valley, with the New River reaching its second-highest crest on record at 31.04 feet. The Authority's Radford Pump Station (RPS) and New River Pump Station (NRPS), located along the river, were catastrophically flooded. The flooding damaged effluent pumps, electrical motors, wastewater processing equipment, electrical and power control panels, and other wastewater handling systems. O&M staff immediately worked to prevent further flooding, dewater flooded buildings, and repair or replace equipment, allowing the stations to resume operation within days.

Stormwater Splash Award Michael Rolband



The Splash Award recognizes dedication and service to the stormwater management field.

Mike is a Professional Engineer, Wetland Delineator, Wetland Scientist Emeritus, and LEED Advanced Professional. He pioneered many of the techniques, policies, and tools currently used in stormwater management. At DEQ, Mike led the update to the Stormwater Management

Handbook, the nation's first fully digital manual. He also participated in and led initiatives such as updates to the Virginia Runoff Reduction Method, consolidation of the Erosion & Sediment Control and Stormwater Management regulations, streamlining permit reviews, and increasing DEQ staffing. Mike's career reflects a lifetime of service to stormwater and water quality in Virginia.

Collection Systems Awards (New this year!)

The award recognizes utilities that demonstrate quality collection system maintenance through efficient use of labor, materials, equipment, and innovative methods to minimize environmental impact, public health hazards, and property damage from sanitary sewer overflows. Awards are given in two categories: Small Systems and Large Systems.

Small System (<500 miles of pipeline) Virginia American Water



The Virginia American Water team in Woodbridge, VA, maintains a 225-mile gravity sewer system and two wastewater pump stations serving approximately 21,000 customers, supported by six staff members. In addition to outstanding system performance, Virginia American Water stands out for innovative use of technology and commitment to minimizing public health hazards, property damage, and environmental impact from sanitary sewer overflows.

Large System (>500 miles of pipeline) City of Virginia Beach



The City of Virginia Beach collection system consists of 1,500 miles of gravity sewer, 200 miles of sanitary force main, and over 400 wastewater pump stations. The system serves approximately 385,000 customers and is supported by over 180 dedicated water and wastewater professionals. The City and its Department of Public Utilities are committed to minimizing public health hazards, property damage, and environmental impacts from sanitary sewer overflows.

5-S (Select Society of Sanitary Sludge Shovelers) Chris Pomeroy, AquaLaw Jeff Coyne, Hazen and Sawyer Matt Doyle, Fairfax County



As an honorary society, individuals are nominated and selected by society members for significant and repeated efforts to make VWEA a better association. Activities may include technical presentations, serving as instructors at workshops, holding officer positions, chairing productive committees, or being an active committee member, contributing time and effort deemed worthy of recognition.

Official Gavel Passing Ryan Hendrix, Pepper's Ferry RWTA



Outgoing VWEA President, Ryan Hendrix, right, is recognized for his service to the Association, and officially passes the gavel on to incoming VWEA President Bryce Carter.

WaterJAM 2026

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WHAT DOES 'LEADING ONE WATER' MEAN TO YOU?

By John J. Dano, Leading One Water Focus Group Chair

"Ensuring the future of water"
– Sakshi Poudel

"... acting as an ambassador, discussing the importance of water, and spreading the word 'all water is connected'"
– Andrew Casolini Dal Bo

"equal access at a reasonable rate to all citizens; conservation of our environment and resources for future generations"
– Shonia Holloway

"collaboration, efficiency, sustainability"
– Rich Voight

"finding solutions that integrate all aspects of water"
– Paula Sanjines

"having healthy, resilient, and sustainable integrated water management"
– Haile Tsehayu

"considering all water users to create the most beneficial use of our most precious resource"
– Stephen Henning

"utilities and contractors working across the sectors for better water, wastewater, stormwater and reuse across the country"
– Amber DiSomma

"working together instead of focusing on 'my' department"
– David Powell

"educating the public on practical water issues, where it comes from and where it goes"
– Paula Moore



These are the words of some of the water professionals who visited the "Leading One Water" table at WaterJAM, and picked up their Leading One Water sticker.

At its core, One Water is a holistic approach to water management that recognizes all water – water resources, drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and water reuse – as part of a single interconnected system. To *lead* in this context means not only leveraging our technical expertise and planning processes, but also championing cooperation and collaboration across political boundaries, institutional frameworks, and community interests.

One of the central challenges in achieving a One Water future is the political and administrative fragmentation of water management. Virginia's local governmental entities often operate independently, yet the natural systems that support all Virginians – our rivers, watersheds, and aquifers – do not respect jurisdictional lines. Our rivers, aquifers, floodwaters, nutrient discharges, and pollutants all flow freely across borders.

Just as boundaries on a map can divide our approach to managing water, so too can the organizational boundaries within governments and utilities. Drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and water resource planning are often managed

by separate divisions, departments, or sections, each with its own regulatory obligations, funding sources, and priorities. Meanwhile, emerging sectors – such as water reuse, green infrastructure, and climate adaptation – may be housed



John J. Dano, Margo Waisanen, Jen Cobb, and Ed Shea at the "Leading One Water" table at WaterJAM 2025.

within planning, public works, or environmental divisions. This compartmentalization can lead to missed opportunities for efficiency, innovation, sustainability, equity, and resilience.

One of the most persistent challenges across the water sector is securing adequate and equitable funding to support One Water initiatives. Traditional funding frameworks, both capital expenditures (CAPEX) and operating expenditures (OPEX), often reinforce silos due to separate financing streams for water resources, drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater –

with limited support for holistic solutions that cut across these silos and political boundaries. Green infrastructure, water reuse, and climate resilience projects may not even be considered if they lack a clear path to financing.

Larger utilities face pressure to balance affordability for ratepayers with the growing costs of regulatory compliance, infrastructure renewal, and innovation, while many smaller and rural communities may struggle to generate the revenue needed to maintain aging systems or implement new strategies. Coordinating sustainable and

regenerative infrastructure investments, data sharing, and regulatory compliance across the divisions, departments, and sections of multiple cities, counties, towns, and regional authorities requires greater regional leadership and collaboration.

Leading One Water means creating the structures, cultures, and incentives that foster integrated systems thinking and greater cooperation. It means advocating for a more unified, forward-looking financial framework – one that leverages creative funding mechanisms, encourages equitable long term regional collaboration, and values the multiple benefits of integrated water solutions. True leadership involves ensuring that all Virginians, especially underserved and overburdened communities, have access to safe, affordable water and a voice in decisions that affect their environment.

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

– Albert Einstein



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As our state grapples with challenges like aging infrastructure, PFAS contamination, recurrent flooding, and population growth, and opportunities like indirect potable reuse and managed aquifer recharge. It is clear that yesterday's fragmented water management approach does not effectively meet tomorrow's needs. The water sector must lead in shaping a resilient and sustainable future. An attitude of "it is not my problem" is a large part of the problem. WaterJAM itself is a microcosm of the integration we seek to achieve. The connections and networks forged here – between sectors, between jurisdictions, and between professionals – are where the real work begins. Leading One Water is not the responsibility of any one utility, agency, or water professional. It is a shared responsibility of all water professionals to manage water as a precious, interconnected resource for the benefit of every existing and future human being.

Leading One Water embodies a growing movement toward integrated, equitable, and sustainable water management that breaks down traditional silos and reimagines collaboration across sectors, disciplines, and geographies. We must all step into our roles as One Water Leaders. If you were unable to pick up your "Leading One Water" sticker at WaterJAM, look for them at your next VA AWWA or VWEA event. Please share your thoughts and give voice to what "Leading One Water" means to you (#LeadingOneWater). [@](#)

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS TECHNICAL SESSION AT CONFERENCE GIVES ATTENDEES STATE AGENCY UPDATES

By Elizabeth Barbour, VWEA Public and Government Affairs Committee Chair, and L. Jordan Combs, P.E., VWEA Public and Government Affairs Committee Vice Chair

The VWEA Public and Government Affairs Committee (PGAC) held its annual technical session at WaterJAM on September 10, 2025. This year's session included multiple joint presentations by senior staff of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Water Division and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of Drinking Water (ODW). Together, these five sessions provided updates on DEQ and VDH priorities for the coming year as well as developments in water permitting, water supply planning, PFAS, and updates to the Lead and Copper Rule (including revisions), agency staffing, and budgeting. DEQ presenters included Meghan Mayfield, Director of the Clean Water Finance and Training Services Division; Erica Duncan, Manager for the Office of Virginia Pollution Discharge Elimination System (VPDES) Permits and Compliance; Kay Alexander, Stormwater Program Engineer; Max Wheeler, PFAS Program Coordinator; and Liz McKerscher, Director of Water Planning. VDH presenters included Dwayne Roadcap, ODW Director; Bailey Davis, Chief of Field Operations; and Bob Edelman, Director of the Division of Technical Services.

VDH and DEQ Water Division Priorities

Roadcap and McKerscher provided an update on VDH and DEQ strategic initiatives and goals in light of several emergency response events in the Commonwealth of Virginia and changes in federal funding. Regarding DEQ, organizational updates as well as relevant agency updates were presented. These updates include DEQ Permits, Grants, and Loan Keys, the updated FOIA Portal, DEQAct, Permit and Enforcement Transparency, and the Pay for Outcomes Pilot. For changes in VDH funding, the General Assembly had provided an additional \$1.8 million for the VDH Drinking Water Program, with reporting from VDH due to the General Assembly starting October 1, 2025. Plans on how to use this additional funding include additional staffing, ODW's budget workbooks for FY25 and FY26, key performance indicators, and programmatic metrics, and a Workload Analysis of Virginia's Drinking Water Program. The new two-hour reporting initiative for equipment failures or malfunctions was also discussed. The flow chart (Figure 1) that lays out if an equipment failure or malfunction falls under the two-hour reporting requirement.

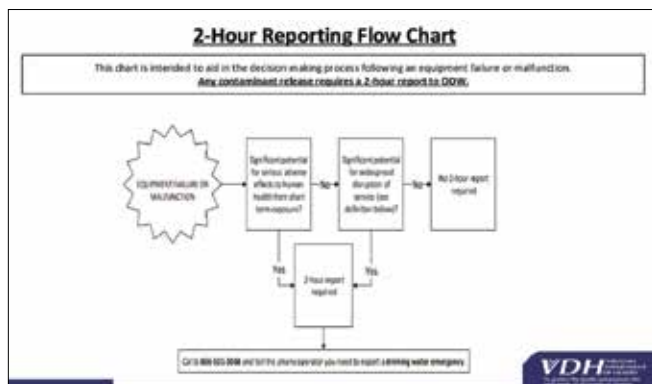


Figure 1

When reflecting on the reporting experience thus far, since July 1, 2025, ODW received 107 two-hour reports, 79 of which did not need to be reported within two hours. Examples of these unnecessary reports include a small campground that lost power and had no back-up generator, a school closed due to a well pump failure with no back-up generator, and an equipment failure with back-up equipment online and operational. These incidents did not have to be reported within the two-hour window because no widespread service disruption was expected in those cases. There were also 28 notifications that were correctly reported. Examples of correctly reported incidents include a large town that had a bad batch of chemical coagulant and a large water main break that caused a widespread boil water advisory and service disruption. There were also six incidents that needed a two-hour report but did not receive one. Examples of these unreported incidents include a power outage that lost service to 53 connections with an email sent over the weekend but was not received until that Monday and a booster pump failure that resulted in loss of service to 96 connections with reports completed four hours later.

DEQ Water Division Hot Topics

Mayfield and McKerscher presented on DEQ's Clean Water Finance Program and Water Planning Division hot topics. This presentation provided an overview of the Clean Water Finance program with an update on the Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF), the *American Rescue Plan Act* (ARPA), and the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF). This presentation also addressed FY25 initiatives DEQ is undertaking to increase program efficiency, increase engagement with partners, and expand training opportunities. This presentation also provided an overview of the status and priorities for DEQ's Water Division, including regulatory updates, legislative implementation and program enhancements, as well as review the agency's recent progress on water supply planning, groundwater characterization, water quality programs, and Chesapeake Bay programs.

The WQIF includes all antiquated grant agreements through public notice. There has been one new grant agreement in progress, with the WQIF Working Group ongoing, and FY25 Needs Assessment completed. The FY25 Needs Assessment reported 22 projects, with response from 14 individual localities or utilities. \$3.45 Billion may be required from state funds as well as locality financial contributions to meet water quality goals. For FY26 through FY2030, approximately 34% of this total (\$1.17 billion) could be needed from WQIF.

FY26 SLAF Grant solicitation closed October 1, 2025, with DEQ identifying an additional \$6 million for funding and a total of \$22 million still available with no outstanding historic SLAF agreements. The SLAF FY25 Needs Assessment is also completed with responses from 33 localities, 30 of which from Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits. For FY26 to 2030, approximately \$236 million could be requested from the SLAF program.

The ARPA has fully obligated all allocated money and all agreements signed totaling \$655 million. However, locality construction projects are behind schedule at \$300 million in spending whereas they should be at \$350 million. This is due to grantees having trouble staying on schedule with spending. The final reimbursement request is required by November 1, 2026.

The Local and Regional Water Supply Planning Regulation (9VAC25-780) has been amended, with current regional planning areas (RPAs) dropping from 26 to 25. In FY25, approximately \$8,800 was awarded to 22 RPAs. A map, Figure 2, highlights the various RPAs within Virginia.



Figure 2

In regard to drought monitoring, all 13 drought evaluation regions remain clear of drought and no advisories have been reported. Figure 3 reflects a drought regional indicator map last updated August 11, 2025.

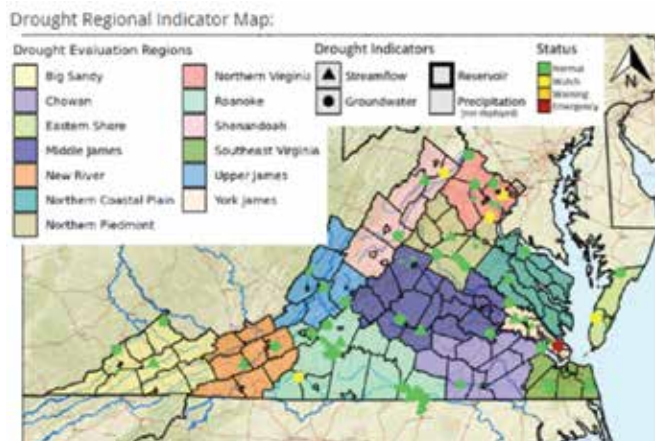


Figure 3

In terms of groundwater updates, the Climate Response Network has installed 17 out of 20 monitoring wells with project completion scheduled in the Fall of 2025. The Chloride Monitoring Network has up to 19 wells, with installation beginning in winter 2025.

All Things PFAS

Max Wheeler and Bailey Davis provided an update of activities at DEQ and VDH regarding PFAS. This included activities of the PFAS Expert Advisory Committee formed by House Bill 1085/Senate Bill 243, an overview of DEQ's data collection effort in support of PFAS source assessments, and an update on DEQ's ambient PFAS monitoring in surface waters. VDH presented on PFAS sampling at Virginia waterworks, current PFAS monitoring requirements, and the projected cost to Virginia waterworks of complying with the PFAS Rule.

In April 2024, initial monitoring for PFAS in Water Systems was under way, with completed implementation scheduled by April 27, 2027. Starting three years following rule promulgation (2027-2029) results of initial monitoring

must be shared with the public, regular monitoring for compliance must begin, and public notification begins for monitoring and testing violations. Starting five years following rule promulgation (starting 2029) full compliance with all MCLs and public notification for MCL violations will begin. As of April 2025, EPA regulations were rescinded for PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA (Gen-X), and the Hazard Index, including PFBS. However, regulation of PFOA and PFOS remain unchanged. There was also an extended compliance deadline from 2029 to 2031 with the establishment of a federal exemption framework. Figure 4 is a chart of the VDH ODW PFAS Study Summary.

Analyte	Criteria parts per trillion (ppt)	Phase 1 2021	Phase 2.1 2023	Phase 2.2 2023	Phase 3 2024-2025	Total**
PFOA	Label 4.02	4 systems	None	5 systems	23 systems	32 systems
PFOS	Label 4.02	7 systems	3 systems	4 systems	23 systems	37 systems
GenX	Label 8.02	3 systems	3 systems	None	None	6 systems
PFBS	Label 20.02	None	None	None	None	None
PFHxS	Label 8.02	None	None	None	None	None
PFNA	Label 8.02	None	None	1 system	3 systems	4 systems
PFHxS (Label 8.02 - see above*)	None	None	None	1 system	1 system	2 systems
Waterworks (see Label 8.02 - see above*)	None	0	0	0	30	30
Waterworks Sampled		45	48	224	276	693
Production Volume		5,228,000	187,200	8,894,000	75,000	14,384,200

** Total includes some systems that were sampled in both Phase 1 and Phase 2; these systems were counted once in the total

VDH

Figure 4

Present-day estimates of the PFAS compliance costs include \$643 million to \$904 million for capital infrastructure costs, \$72 million to \$88 million in estimated annual operational expenditures, and \$0.7 million for ongoing estimate of annual monitoring. Note that these costs predate the EPA's announcement in May 2025 of its intent to rescind certain regulation for PFAS.

Under HB1085/SB243, DEQ is directed to conduct PFAS Source Assessments for each public water system for which DEQ has received notification from VDH that the system had a PFAS MCL exceedance in its finished water. This gives DEQ the authority to require self-reporting of PFAS manufacture and use as well as require representative quarterly discharge monitoring. This also directs DEQ to form an Expert Advisory Committee, write an annual report, develop and implement a plan to prioritize and conduct PFAS source assessments for public water systems for which DEQ has been notified of an exceedance on or before September 1, 2024. Anticipated DEQ activities for the fall and winter include submission of the General Assembly Report, self-reporting and monitoring notifications for 2025 high priority drinking water systems, finalizing the 2026 Prioritization Plan, and self-reporting and monitoring notifications for the 2026 Prioritization Plan systems.

Lead and Copper Rule Improvement and CCR Rule Revisions

Bob Edelman highlighted recommended activities to position waterworks for the upcoming Lead and Copper Rule Improvements, with a compliance date of November 1, 2027 and the Consumer Confidence Report (CCR3) Rule with a compliance date of January 1, 2027.

On October 30, 2024, the EPA finalized and published the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI). The LCRI was effective December 30, 2024, which means it went into the Code of Federal Regulations, and has a compliance deadline of November 1, 2027. The LCRI applies to all community and non-transient non-community (NTNC) waterworks. This presentation identified items that waterworks must address to prepare for November 1, 2027, including:

- Baseline service line inventory
- Material identification and information collection during normal operations
- Consumer Notifications of lead, galvanized required replacement (GRR) or unknown service lines
- Requirements in the Event of a Lead Action Level Exceedance
- Updated tap sampling monitoring plan

- Certain waterworks must conduct standard monitoring in 2028
- Public and consumer notifications
- School and childcare center lead testing

DEQ Stormwater Updates and VPDES Permitting and Compliance Program Updates

Erica Duncan and Kay Alexander provided an overview of the status and priorities for DEQ's Permitting and Compliance programs, including regulatory updates, legislative implementation, and program enhancements. This presentation also reviewed the DEQ Stormwater Programs, a recap of 2025 regulatory actions and program activity, a current update on the Programs, and future projections for the Programs.

Effective in 2025, the DEQ has two fast-tracks for Amendments to the VA Erosion and Stormwater Management Regulations (9VAC25-875). Fast-track 1 was effective on August 14, 2025 for plans submitted on or after July 1, 2025. This included the use Version 4.1 of the Virginia Runoff Reduction Method (VRRM) in conjunction with Version 1.1 of the Virginia Stormwater Management Handbook (VSMH). Fast-track 2 corrects several technical errors and addresses concerns raised in public comments concerning Fast-track 1 and was effective June 30, 2025.

The modifications included in Version 4.1 VRRM includes several major changes:

- The increase of land cover types from three to four cover types by adding "mixed open", category between "forest/open" and "managed turf";
- Modifying the stormwater runoff coefficient to be consistent with EPA's published stormwater runoff coefficient;
- Utilizing a more accurate total phosphorus (TP) load for new development of 0.26 lbs. per acre, per year;
- Addressing changes to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model (CBWM), reported through CAST, regarding urban phosphorus fertilizer applications; and
- Accommodating two new post-development Best Management Practices (BMPs), Regenerative Stormwater Conveyance (RSC) and Tree Planting, which are new in the Handbook.

The Virginia Stormwater Management Handbook is currently being updated from Version 1.1 to Version 1.2. The Technical Review Committee (TRC) will conduct four to five meetings per year and will include four subcommittees. The purpose of the TRC, and associated subcommittees, are to identify problems, submit comments, and encode technology platforms. The DEQ will meet with the TRC to review the TRC feedback and prioritize comments in order to provide proposed revisions of the handbook to the TRC. The TRC will review the DEQ proposed revisions, discuss solutions, and recommend final changes. Following the finalized revisions by the DEQ, there will be 30 public notices and if there are no objection then the guidance will become effective.

The DEQ provided reminders of the phase II general Permits shapefiles of MS4 services areas and outfalls are due by November 1, 2025. The DEQ is developing a "shell" to standardize the information for attributes as well as updating good housekeeping procedures to address storage, transportation, and application for anti-icing/deicing agents by November 1, 2025.

The DEQ presented information on the nonpoint source nutrient trading program guidance development for shoreline management are underway. DEQ has approved the first Shoreline Management Nutrient Bank in October 2023. Since this time, DEQ has identified credit calculation gaps in the Chesapeake Bay Program's. The Expert Panel is set to develop recommendations to define removal rates for shoreline management projects. The Guidance developed in November 2024 will serve as the technical criteria for crediting shoreline projects when applying perpetual nutrient crediting of shore line management projects.

DEQ reported for the 2024 progress year, Virginia reduced total nitrogen discharged to the Chesapeake Bay by 593,449 lbs. compared to the 2023 progress reporting year. See graph below.



Figure 5

DEQ reported for the 2024 progress year, Virginia reduced total phosphorus discharged to the Chesapeake Bay by 13,898 lbs. compared to the 2023 progress reporting year. See graph below.

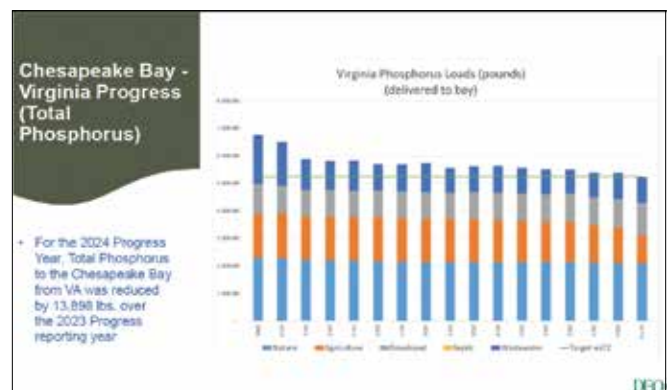



Figure 6

The *Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act* has been revised based on the feedback received during the informal comment period in 2024. Formal guidance publication is proceeding through final public comment period requirements. The deadline for local ordinance adoption is set for October 31, 2025 per the draft guidance, which has DEQ program staff working with localities on ordinance updates and reviews. The process is currently in Round 3 of program reviews with 12 locality reviews initiated and are set to complete a five-year cycle.

DEQ is implementing the Pay-for-Outcomes Pilot which includes \$20 million in grants to reduce nonpoint source nitrogen and phosphorus water pollution in the Chesapeake Bay. The grants will be awarded based on actual pollution reductions.

The Sewage Collection and Treatment (SCAT) Regulations Advisory Committee last met on August 27, 2025 to continue reviewing and provide feedback on recommended modifications to the SCAT Regulation. The Committee has met several times since September of 2024.

If you are interested in getting involved in PGAC or the upcoming National Water Policy Fly-In in Washington, D.C. in April 2026, please reach out to PGAC Chair, Elizabeth Barbour (elizabeth.barbour@fairfaxcounty.gov) and PGAC Vice Chair Jordan Combs (jcombs@msaplant.org). 

InFLOW[®] Turning Curiosity INTO A CAREER

The Virginia Water Environment Association (VWEA) and the Virginia Section of the American Water Works Association (VA AWWA) InFLOW (Introducing Future Leaders to Opportunities in Water) program is dedicated to enhancing diversity and inclusion within the water sector by introducing underrepresented groups to careers in water. Joseph Wright's trajectory into the water industry exemplifies the transformative impact of the InFLOW program. Originally from Vallejo, California, Joseph's unconventional path, from constructing a pyrolysis reactor in his backyard to becoming a professional in the water sector, underscores the significant influence of mentorship and targeted initiatives like InFLOW.

Early Inspirations and Pursuits

Joseph's initial engagement with environmental science was sparked by global recycling shifts that created significant plastic backlogs in the United States and other exporting countries. Motivated to find a solution to the growing environmental challenges posed by plastic accumulation, Joseph delved into pyrolysis, a process that converts plastics into usable hydrocarbons. He constructed a pyrolysis reactor at home, successfully producing paraffins from HDPE plastics. Recognizing the potential and inherent risks of his experiments, he sought expertise at Old Dominion University (ODU). Although ODU lacked a polymer science program, Joseph was introduced to environmental engineering, leading him to research biochar and its applications in water treatment.

Discovering InFLOW

Joseph became aware of VWEA's InFLOW program through an email from the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE). At the time, he was interning with a company in the water sector and beginning to consider how a long-term career in the industry could align with his academic background in civil engineering and personal interests in sustainability. The opportunity to participate in the InFLOW program came at a pivotal moment, offering the kind of structured, immersive experience he needed to move from curiosity to commitment. What stood out most to Joseph was that InFLOW offered more than just exposure. It provided access to a supportive network of professionals and peers, resources for career development, and a clear introduction to real-world applications of water sector work. Upon being accepted, he immediately felt welcomed and validated, recognizing that this program could serve as a launchpad for both personal and professional growth.

Experiences as a Scholar

Reflecting on his time in the InFLOW program, Joseph speaks with enthusiasm about the meaningful connections and sense of belonging he experienced. He highlights the supportive environment created by program administrators

like Mackenzie Rickard, who, through their dedication and personal engagement, helped cultivate a space where scholars felt seen, heard, and encouraged to explore their professional potential. This family-like atmosphere extended beyond logistics and programming – it was deeply rooted in shared experiences, peer collaboration, and access to mentors who were genuinely invested in each scholar's success.

One of the most memorable aspects of the program for Joseph was attending WaterJAM, VWEA's annual conference. There, he was immersed in the broader professional community, participating in technical sessions, networking events, and industry discussions that exposed him to the many facets of the water sector. For Joseph, WaterJAM was more than an event – it was a pivotal moment that broadened his understanding of the career pathways available to him and reinforced the relevance of his academic pursuits.

This exposure, combined with the consistent support and access to resources provided by the InFLOW program, helped Joseph transition from a student exploring possibilities to a future leader with a defined purpose in water and environmental engineering. His experience underscores how the InFLOW program does more than introduce students to opportunities; it equips them with the confidence, clarity, and community they need to thrive in a complex and evolving industry.

Growth after InFLOW

Since completing the InFLOW program, Joseph has been involved in several research projects. His initial work focused on using biochar



Wright's backyard pyrolysis reactor, built during his early exploration of plastic-to-fuel technologies, exemplifies the curiosity and initiative that later led him to the InFLOW program and a career in environmental engineering.



Wright, pictured far left, stands with fellow InFLOW scholars at WaterJAM 2024, representing the next generation of leaders committed to advancing diversity and innovation in the water sector.



Wright presents his research on electromagnetic shielding using plant-based graphene at Old Dominion University. His work showcases the innovative applications of carbon technologies and reflects the continued growth sparked by his participation in the InFLOW program.

to treat landfill leachate, leading to a published paper and recognition from Perry Honors College. He continued exploring carbon applications in mechanical and aerospace engineering by developing coatings to shield against electromagnetic interference and enhance battery safety. Currently, as a senior, Joseph is engaged in biomedical engineering research, characterizing conductive carbon for detecting triple-negative breast cancer and facilitating targeted drug delivery.



Wright mentors a fellow researcher in the laboratory, demonstrating his continued commitment to innovation, collaboration, and the advancement of sustainable technologies.

Professionally, Joseph has gained substantial experience as a construction inspector with HDR, contributing to projects like the HRSD Lucas Creek Pump Station and the Atlantic Treatment Plant. He obtained certification in HDPE pipe inspection from McElroy University, underscoring his commitment to advancing his expertise in the field. Presently, he interns with McDonough Bolyard Peck (MBP), working on projects such as a pressure reduction station in Tab, Virginia, and an upcoming pump station in Suffolk.

Advice for Future InFLOW Scholars

Joseph underscores the value of building connections through the InFLOW program. He advises participants to actively network, collect contact information, and maintain relationships, as these connections can evolve into vital resources throughout their careers. He recalls how even simple introductions at events like WaterJAM or follow-up conversations with

presenters became doorways to mentorship, internships, and technical insights that advanced his understanding of the water sector.

"I can definitely see the value in making connections," Joseph said. "I've met people from other companies and within the industry, and those connections will turn into resources in your future. The best thing you can do when you get there is get names, get numbers, get emails, and stay in touch."

Joseph emphasizes that many of these contacts have remained part of his professional network and continue to offer guidance and encouragement. His experience reflects the program's goal to engage participants in VWEA programs and events, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose. It also increases their interest in working in the water sector and enhances their potential for long-term career growth and success.

What the Future Holds

Looking ahead, Joseph aspires to pioneer the integration of carbon technologies into wastewater treatment and other industries. While his long-term goal is to establish his own business centered on carbon-based innovations, he remains committed to gaining experience and building technical expertise through work with established engineering firms. His journey from backyard experiments to high-impact research and infrastructure projects is a clear example of how passion and purpose can lead to real-world impact.

Joseph's professional development is inseparable from his experience with the InFLOW program. It served as a catalyst for growth, providing not just resources and opportunities, but also mentorship and affirmation needed to pursue an ambitious and meaningful career in water. His story stands as a compelling example of how curiosity, education, and structured support can shape the next generation of engineers and scientists. Programs like VWEA's InFLOW are essential for cultivating diverse talent and ensuring that tomorrow's water workforce reflects the innovation, inclusion, and leadership needed to meet evolving global challenges. [e](#)

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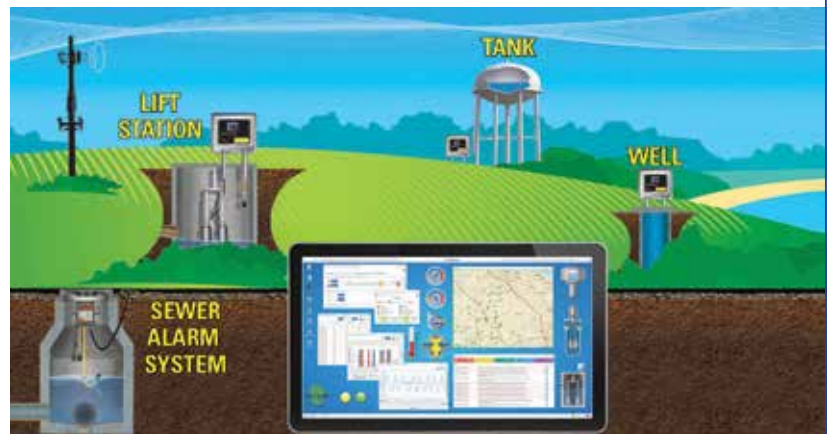
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