

Wastewater Infrastructure Policy Working Group (WWIWG)
Eastern Virginia Roundtable Discussions
September 8, 2021 – 10:00 to 12:00
Meeting Summary

Meeting Location: Virginia Institute of Marine Science
Davis Hall, 1st Floor, Owens-Bryant Board Room
7539 Spencer Road 23062
Gloucester Point, Virginia

Virtual: Virtual meeting using Webex.

WWIWG Members

Karen Duran – Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Jay Grant – Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Shawn Crumlish – Virginia Resource Authority (VRA)
Lance Gregory – Virginia Department of Health (VDH)

Attendees

Ann Jennings – Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources
Kirk Havens – Virginia Institute for Marine Science (VIMS)
Molly Mitchell – VIMS
John Bateman – Northern Neck Planning District Commission
Julie Henderson – VDH
Karri Atwood – VDH
Megan Senseman – VDH
Whitney Wright – VDH
David Fridley – VDH
David Waldrep - VDH
Andy Carter - VDH
Jay Dillion – Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP)
Amy Pemberton – SERCAP
Danna Revis – Virginia Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (VOWRA),
Old Dominion Onsite
Trapper Davis – VOWRA, Millers Services
Jake Hooley – Deloitte
Sarah Cunningham - Deloitte
Carroll Courtenay – Southern Environmental Law Center
Patrick Fanning – Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Barrett Hardiman – Woolpert Engineering
Steve Pennington
Sarah Rash

1. Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions by Policy Working Group Chair Designee, Karen Duran, Clean Water Financing and Assistance Program Manager, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

Ms. Duran called the meeting to order and welcomed the participants. Workgroup members and participant then introduced themselves.

2. Overview of American Rescue Plan Act Funding.

a. Karen Duran, DEQ

Ms. Duran covered three different funding items provided to DEQ in the recently approved [budget bill](#) for the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding. The three items are:

- \$75,000,000 for septic, straight pipe, and sewer collection system repairs, replacement and upgrades.
- \$125,000,000 for grants to the cities of Alexandria, Lynchburg, and Richmond to pay a portion of the cost of combined sewer overflow control projects.
- \$100,000,000 to reimburse eligible entities provided in the Enhanced Nutrient Removal Certainty Program, and to reimburse the Town of Pound and City of Petersburg for capital costs incurred for infrastructure improvements.

She noted that there are given some priorities for certain projects, including need being based on a per household basis, and that all funds that are not dispersed must be returned.

Ms. Duran was asked whether she anticipated an application process for these funds. She noted that DEQ is currently working on that plan to establish eligibility criteria. She noted a goal to reach the areas of most need and asked how funds could be provided equitably across the state. She also noted a need for conversations with planning district commissions.

Mr. Bateman asked if there are any plans to align the funds with existing programs, such as indoor plumbing rehabilitation through DHCD or SERCAP programs. Ms. Duran and Mr. Grant both commented they were open to that potential.

b. Lance Gregory, Division of Onsite Sewage and Water Services Director, Environmental Engineering, and Marina Programs, Virginia Department of Health

Mr. Gregory then provided the attached presentation on ARPA funding provided to VDH. The budget bill provides VDH with \$11,500,000 in total for improvements for wells and septic system for homeowners at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Mr. Gregory noted that VDH would rely, in part, on the Virginia Wastewater Data Viewer to identify target areas for outreach on the ARPA funding program. He noted that VDH is still in the process of developing a plan for the funding program, and welcomed feedback and suggestions.

Mr. Bateman suggested a method for ground truthing of information in the data viewer. He also commented on the potential to align the funding with existing programs such as CBIG. If combined with septic pump out funds you could identify issues with pump out funding, and assist with repairs when identified. He suggested having septic evaluations when providing pump outs.

Mr. Fridley noted that if and when local health departments get more involved with septic pump outs, which could go a long way to identifying problem areas.

There was also a suggested that planning district commissions could meet periodically with local business to get more real time information about where needs are located.

3. Roundtable Discussion with Working Group Participants facilitated by Ann Jennings, Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources on the following issues:

a. How to promote public education about the importance of adequate wastewater treatment?

Deputy Secretary Jennings then opened the meeting to comments from participants on a number of goals for the WWIWG. She began by asking how the WWIWG could promote public education about the importance of adequate wastewater treatment. Participants provided the following comments and suggestions:

- Most local health department interactions with the public are person to person, which provides a good opportunity to educate homeowners.
- Septic Smart week includes the potential for community wide materials, news releases, and other outreach opportunities at a statewide level.
- Would be helpful to have Septic Smart information pushed out to planning district commissions and local government.
- Continue the Governor's Septic Smart week proclamation and seek the same from the General Assembly.
- Is there an opportunity to build wastewater treatment into a programs for K-12 education?
- Having children pain stormwater drains helped bring understanding to that issue.
- Could wastewater treatment information be incorporated into Envirothon events.
- If there were a pump out requirement across the state, could that assist with raising awareness and help people learn more about their system?
- It has been difficult to get local governments to send out pump out letters regularly. Local government doesn't have the capacity to educate. VDH is in a better position to educate the public.
- There is a demographic difference on who understands maintenance needs of onsite systems.
- Right now pump outs are strictly environmentally related. Need to tie them more into the public health benefits.

- If owners get a letter about septic pump outs that comes off as punitive, they are going to avoid it. But if it focuses on how it helps me, they may be more apt to take action.
- Sewage haulers do a good job of educating home owners.
- Local health departments used to have a lot of handouts for education.
- SERCAP currently has a Virginia Environmental Endowment grant that focuses on septic tank pump outs for low to moderate income homeowners. One of the requirements to receive the pump out is that the homeowner must attend an informational program on basic septic tank information - how they work, the best way to care for them, etc. Perhaps that could be considered as part of receiving funds from other grants.
- Experience from a local health department perspective, VDH has missed out on providing education to new homeowners when they purchase their home. We have tried to work with our realtors because they are the direct contact to new homeowners to provide as much education as possible. In Virginia there is very little contact between a new home owner and the local health department if the septic system is existing or if they are not directly involved with the permitting process for a new home. Encourage some kind of coordinated effort to educate owners when a home with an onsite system is purchased.
- Septic system inspection should be required as part of a home purchase.
- Develop educational materials on public health and tie public and environmental health together.

b. How to encourage collaboration among local, state, and federal government entities, including consistent collaboration and coordination of grant requirements and timelines?

Deputy Secretary Jennings then asked participants how the WWIWG could encourage collaboration among agencies and coordination of grants. She noted comments provided during the ARPA discussion to connect with existing programs already working on the ground. Participants provided the following comments and suggestions:

- DHCD housing rehabilitation has an interagency interregional workgroup that has been really helpful to identify the needs (e.g. increases in material cost), and being able to tailor grant products to the needs. Having a periodic meeting of a group could help with consistent collaboration.
- Having grants on the agenda for the WWIWG every meeting, and having planning district commissions and other groups involved.
- Don't drive the discussion, have it open to identifying issues.
- Continue to do the work to get partners in the room.
- Bring accountability to participants in WWIWG meetings. The more we formalize participating from other groups, the more that will help. Possibly establish some committees (not too many) to help bring more accountability.
- DHCD has been really good at maximizing and collaborating across multiple funding programs. Example is the Town of Whitestone. SERCAP also does a good job.
- Need a way to streamline the process for individual homeowners that are not part of a community based project.

- Appropriate planning before implementation. Cannot have a drawn out planning process.
- Look to help with capacity building through planning district commissions.
- By statute the planning district commissions are conveners.
- Need a facilitated processes in place.
- Hold meetings of the WWIWG quarterly and include a grants discussion on every agenda including feedback from the public.
- Develop a stream lined grant application for single family households.

c. How to endorse community-based and regional projects as opposed to cumulative and repetitive site-by-site individual solutions and integrated solutions across sewer and onsite wastewater treatment systems.

Deputy Secretary Jennings then asked participants how the WWIWG could endorse community-based projects in favor of site-by-site solutions. Participants provided the following comments and suggestions:

- Community involvement and the counties commitment to finding a solution was important to move the Catlett Calverton project in Fauquier County forward.
- Designating an area as a service district is helpful from a planning and zoning perspective.
- Use existing data. Northern Neck Planning District Commission has a database of 400-500 people we've done a pump out for that could identify clusters of need.
- Advocate for VDH updating the database, and make the reporting of conventional system maintenance required. Service providers can populate the data.
- Collect and report to VDH evaluations of the status of an onsite system through existing pump out programs. Work with private sector to provide these evaluations.
- Increase funding when there is cooperation across jurisdictions.
- Score regional projects higher or provide a great amount of funding for regional based projects.

d. How to support prioritized, focused, and innovative uses of state and federal funding to address needs determined pursuant to the wastewater infrastructure needs assessment required under § 62.1-223.3.

Lastly, Deputy Secretary Jennings asked participants how the WWIWG could support prioritized, focused, and innovative uses of available funding to address needs. Participants provided the following comments and suggestions:

- Think it helps to have programs that prioritize low and moderate income households.
- Would be helpful if the timing of those funding programs were aligned.
- DEQ solicits applications once a year for some programs, ongoing applications for others. Question to the localities is what is the timing that works best for them.
- Localities timing is flexible.

- Think open submission would be preferable. Probably more true for competitive programs.
- Community development block grants (CDBG) are open and targeted to shovel ready water and sewer projects. Competitive process is for projects that are going to take a little bit longer.
- Fully endorse the way DHCD does CDBG program. Forces people to plan out their project in advance.
- Use area median income to help align low and moderate income across programs.
- May be worth going back to look at language for the indemnification fund to use area median income rather than 200% of federal poverty guidelines.
- 80% of area median income is the gold standard for prioritizing low to moderate income households.
- A septic system can be the most expensive component of a home; even middle-income households can struggle to find funding for repairs.
- This is a very interesting program in Washington and Oregon <https://www.craft3.org/Borrow/clean-water-loans>. They have private and public funding for all types of home loans and homeowners. They blend the money from the different programs to meet the need. Plus they add \$2000 to each install to cover the first 4-5 years of maintenance.

4. Public comment.

Ms. Duran then opened the floor to any public comments. There were no further comments and the meeting was adjourned.

5. Adjournment.

Wastewater Infrastructure Policy Working Group
§ 62.1-223.2
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September 8, 2021 – 10:00 to 12:00
Draft Meeting Agenda

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Davis Hall, 1st Floor, Owens-Bryant Board Room
7539 Spencer Road 23062
Gloucester Point, Virginia
Map: https://www.vims.edu/about/contact_visit/campus_maps/index.php

Virtual:

Join from the meeting link
<https://vdhoep.webex.com/vdhoep/j.php?MTID=m3e5e1d771c3f913c372a8487d6d0b241>

Join by meeting number
Meeting number (access code): 132 979 1296
Meeting password: gdBmmWUf322

Join by phone
1-844-992-4726 United States Toll Free
+1-408-418-9388 United States Toll
Global call-in numbers | Toll-free calling restrictions

- 1. Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions by Policy Working Group Chair Designee, Karen Doran, Clean Water Financing and Assistance Program Manager, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**
- 2. Overview of American Rescue Plan Act Funding.**
 - a. Karen Doran, DEQ**
 - b. Lance Gregory, Division of Onsite Sewage and Water Services Director, Environmental Engineering, and Marina Programs, Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**
- 3. Roundtable Discussion with Working Group Participants facilitated by Ann Jennings, Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources on the following issues:**
 - a. How to promote public education about the importance of adequate wastewater treatment?**

- b. How to encourage collaboration among local, state, and federal government entities, including consistent collaboration and coordination of grant requirements and timelines?**
- c. How to endorse community-based and regional projects as opposed to cumulative and repetitive site-by-site individual solutions and integrated solutions across sewer and onsite wastewater treatment systems.**
- d. How to support prioritized, focused, and innovative uses of state and federal funding to address needs determined pursuant to the wastewater infrastructure needs assessment required under § 62.1-223.3.**

4. Public comment.

5. Adjournment.

§ 62.1-223.1. State policy as to community and onsite wastewater treatment. It is the policy of the Commonwealth to prioritize universal access to wastewater treatment that protects public health and the environment and supports local economic growth and stability.

American Recovery Plan Act for Well and Septic

Lance Gregory

Director

Division of Onsite Sewage and Water Services,
Environmental Engineering, and Marina Programs

Virginia Department of Health

Lance.Gregory@vdh.virginia.gov

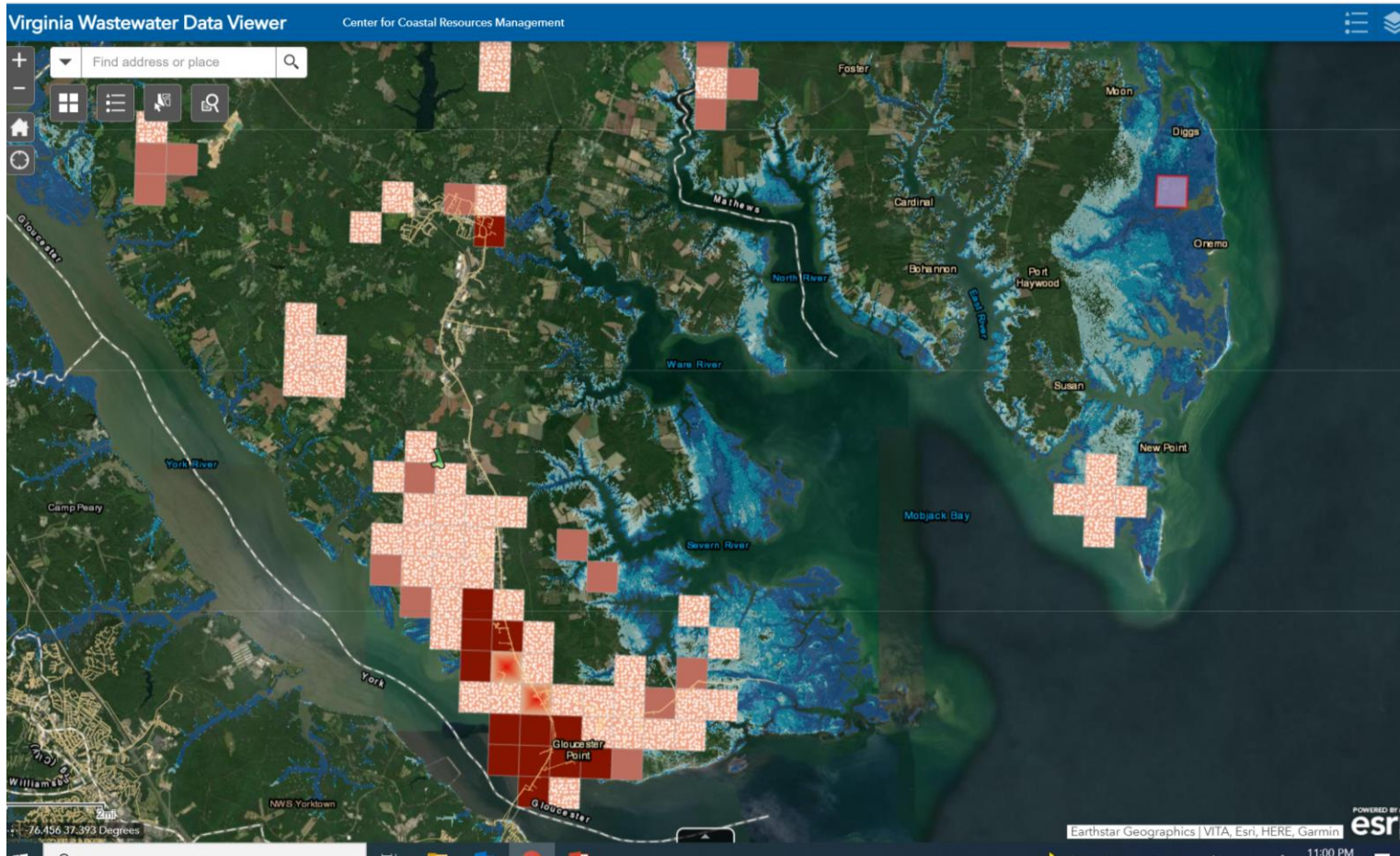
ARPA Funding For Well and Septic

- FY 2022 - \$5,750,000
- FY 2023 and 2024: \$5,750,000

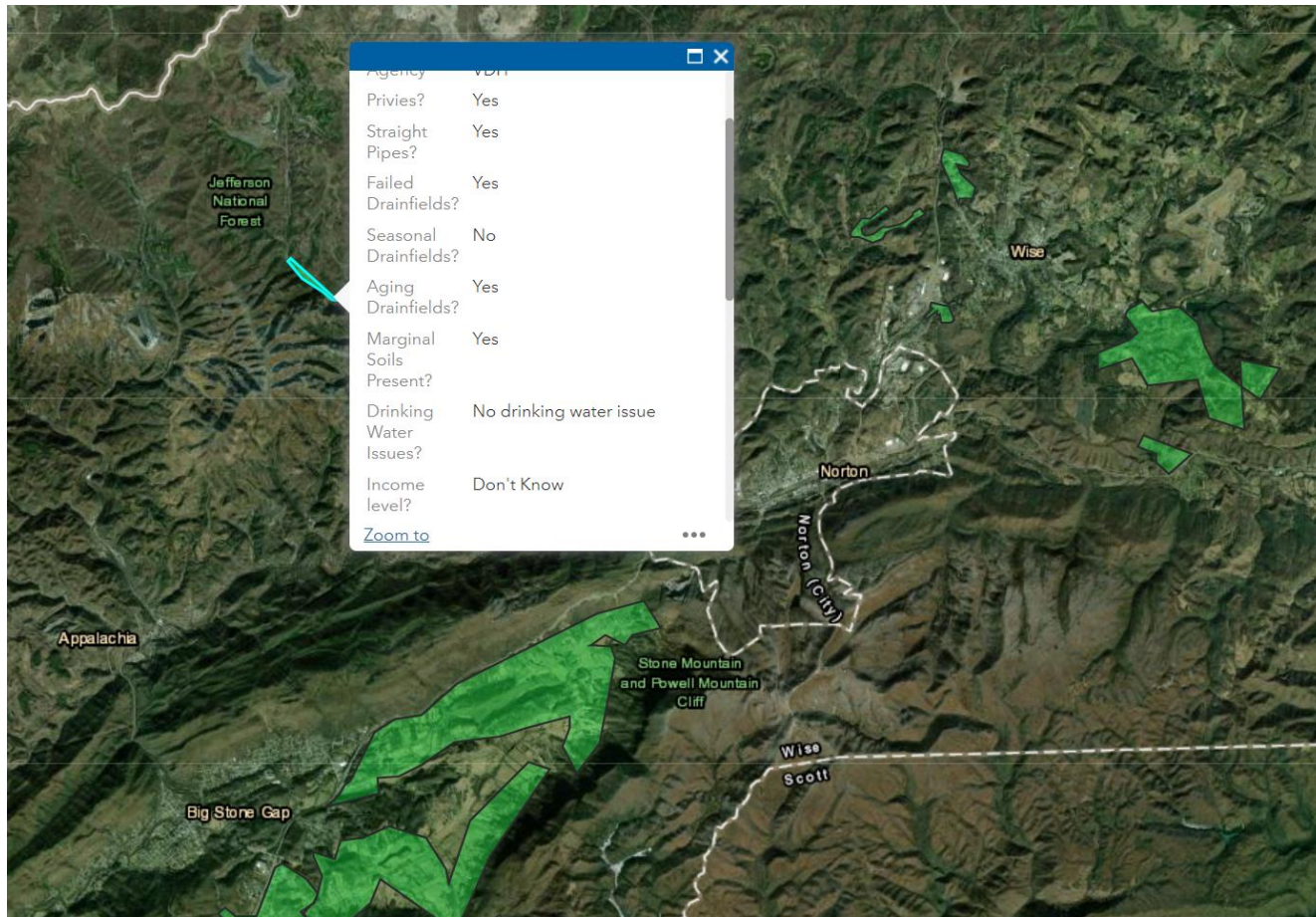
\$5,750,000 to the Department of Health (601) to provide improvement funds for well and septic systems for homeowners at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

Persons in Household	200% Federal Poverty Guidelines
1	\$25,760
2	\$34,840
3	\$43,920
4	\$53,000
5	\$62,080
6	\$71,160
7	\$80,240
8	\$89,320

Assessing At Risk Septic Systems



Assessing At Risk Septic Systems



Key Points of Consideration

- VDH processing vs. external partners.
- Need to build trust in assistance process.
 - Addressing septic shame.
 - Fear of coming forward for help.
- Individual vs. community based needs.
- Inclusion of operation and maintenance cost.
- Prioritizing outreach.
 - Public service connected vs. on-site solution.
 - Historic inequities.
 - Multiple benefits, e.g. within impaired watersheds.

Please feel free to contact me with thoughts or questions.

(804) 864-7491

Lance.Gregory@vdh.virginia.gov