
2009 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY POLICY STATEMENT

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2
- 3 Protecting natural resources and sustaining
4 efficient environmental stewardship is an
5 overarching mission of government.
6 Additionally, VML recognizes the
7 importance and challenge of maintaining
8 natural resources and managing
9 environmental services while
10 simultaneously encouraging economic
11 growth and greater human development in
12 our cities, towns and counties.
13
- 14 To achieve these ends, VML pursues these
15 goals:
- 16
- 17 1. Promoting environmental quality
18 through a coordinated, comprehensive
19 approach that addresses air and water
20 quality, hazardous and solid waste
21 management, protection of special lands
22 and features including biological
23 diversity, prudent land use policies,
24 noise abatement and energy use.
- 25 2. Attaining an equitable distribution of
26 responsibilities among governments for
27 resource protection and environmental
28 services, and attaining sufficient
29 financial resources from the federal and
30 state governments to implement
31 mandates, without duplicating efforts.
- 32 3. Recognizing the inter-jurisdictional
33 nature of many environmental resources
34 and pursuing dispute resolution for the
35 continued viability of natural, living, and
36 cultural resources and for the
37 sustainability of efficient environmental
38 services.
- 39 4. Pursuing the orderly and planned
40 development of communities and
41 encouraging the revitalization of older
42 communities.
- 43 5. Promoting cooperation and coordination
44 among governments, citizens,
45 institutions, and organizations to achieve
46 these goals.
- 47 6. Advocating legislation and policy
48 initiatives that provide sufficient
49 resources to implement the least costly
50 and most efficient mandates.
- 51 7. Encouraging cost-effective regional
52 approaches to protecting natural
53 resources and providing environmental
54 services.
- 55
- 56 **WATER RESOURCES, QUALITY &**
57 **CONSERVATION**
- 58
- 59 **Quality**
- 60 Point and nonpoint sources of pollution
61 continue to create significant challenges in
62 protecting water quality: wastewater
63 treatment plant upgrades, urban and
64 agricultural storm water runoff,
65 sedimentation, stream channelization,
66 specific agricultural activities and
67 indiscriminate use of agricultural, yard, lawn
68 care and homecare chemicals. Water
69 resource protection is critical throughout all
70 watersheds of Virginia. Local governments,
71 the state government, the federal
72 government and private interests must
73 recognize these threats and implement
74 precautions and protections that reflect the
75 level of responsibility for offensive activity,
76 as well as technical and economic
77 competence to correct problems.
- 78
- 79 Additionally, the federal and state
80 governments must recognize the financial
81 limitations that local governments face in
82 attempting to resolve these threats, as well
83 as develop and maintain adequate funding
84 sources and data to assist local governments.
85 Local governments managing combined
86 sewer overflows (CSOs), including the cities
87 of Lynchburg and Richmond, require
88 adequate federal and state grant resources.
89 Local governments managing sanitary sewer
90 overflows (SSOs) also require financial
91 assistance.

1 Adequate state funding is necessary for
2 state- and state-assisted agencies, including
3 the Department of Conservation and
4 Recreation, the Department of
5 Environmental Quality, the Cooperative
6 Extension Service and registered (tax-
7 exempt) nonprofit organizations to meet
8 statewide environmental protection
9 commitments. With less than two percent of
10 the state general fund budget allocated for
11 state natural resource agencies, the state
12 should enable localities to proactively
13 explore creative solutions to meet water
14 quality goals. This includes alternative
15 approaches to supplement voluntary efforts
16 to manage nonpoint source pollutants
17 generated by residential, silvicultural, and
18 agricultural activities.

20 **Primacy**

21 The state should work to maintain the State
22 Health Department's primacy role in
23 implementing the federal Safe Drinking
24 Water Act.

26 **Conservation**

27 Overuse and indiscriminate use of water,
28 coupled with recurring drought conditions,
29 require state and local leaders to promote
30 water conservation to help to avoid future
31 water supply problems. Local or regional
32 comprehensive water conservation plans
33 should urge conservation through
34 construction building material choices,
35 appliances (such as dual flush toilets), rate
36 structure, education and water allocation.

38 **Conservation Easements**

39 Water authorities and similar local agencies
40 should have the power to receive
41 conservation easements under the authority
42 of the Conservation Easement Act.

43
44 The Virginia Outdoors Foundation's
45 operating costs should be fully funded.
46 State incentives (i.e. tax credits) need to be
47 created for local governments seeking to

48 place land designated for watershed
49 protection in conservation easements.

51 **Water Supply**

52 VML believes these principles governing
53 the role of the Commonwealth must guide
54 state water supply planning:

- 55
56 1. The availability of a safe, adequate and
57 reliable water supply is essential to the
58 public health and the economic vitality of
59 the Commonwealth and its local
60 governments. The state should participate in
61 providing funding mechanisms for local and
62 regional water supplies.
63
- 64 2. As a partner with local government in
65 providing water supplies, the state should
66 invest in regional projects to maximize the
67 use of infrastructure and minimize
68 environmental impacts.
69
- 70 3. Maintaining and analyzing a sound
71 surface and ground water database is an
72 essential state responsibility.
73
- 74 4. The state must take an advocacy role to
75 support local water supply projects that
76 conform to state regulations. This includes
77 taking the lead in negotiating multi-state
78 issues.
79
- 80 5. VML supports adequate state
81 environmental staffing in the areas of
82 research and development, including legal
83 research into issues such as inter-basin
84 transfers, which results in stronger technical
85 assistance to municipal government.
86
- 87 6. Water conservation measures to prevent
88 and minimize waste and promote wise use
89 should be encouraged through incentives
90 and educational programs.
91
- 92 7. Use of reclaimed water to meet
93 nonpotable needs should be considered part
94 of the Commonwealth's water resources and

1 should be used to reduce the demand on
2 high quality potable water supplies where
3 practicable and environmentally beneficial.
4 Emphasis should be given to completing the
5 state's "Wastewater Reclamation and
6 Reuse" regulations that govern standards for
7 the reuse of treated wastewater.

8
9 8. Managing water resources should include
10 protecting water sources by such techniques
11 as open space conservation easements held
12 by state and local land trusts.

13
14 9. Water is essential to a healthy ecosystem.
15 Stream flows to support beneficial in-stream
16 uses should be protected in the process of
17 providing sufficient water to meet public
18 drinking water requirements.

19
20 10. Installing water supply planning
21 expertise in the Office of the Secretary of
22 Natural Resources will support equitable
23 access by all Virginians to a reliable supply
24 of quality water while ensuring that the
25 resources protect public health and support
26 environmental quality.

27
28 11. Local governments must continue to
29 participate in the discussion of any water
30 resource proposals, including the current
31 statewide water supply planning process.

32
33 12. The state should provide a consolidated
34 and streamlined state permitting process to
35 minimize applicants' time and expense.

36
37 13. Water supplies are important to local
38 governments for many reasons and
39 constitute a common resource that should be
40 managed as such.

41
42 **ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES**
43 The state should assist with paying for flood
44 protection where localities have taken
45 precautions, through land use controls, to
46 limit the cost of flood damage restoration.

47 Increased funding is needed for localities for
48 dam safety updates.

49
50 In the event of an environmental emergency,
51 or an act of God, local government officials
52 need maximum discretion to determine
53 measures to be taken beyond those dictated
54 by the state and federal government, as well
55 as ready access to information and training.

56
57 **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**
58 VML supports the continuation of certifying
59 compliance with local ordinances for waste
60 management facility proposals.

61
62 VML endorses developing local waste-to-
63 energy and co-generation facilities as
64 practical alternatives to landfill facilities.
65 To achieve these goals, VML asks the
66 federal and state agencies, as well as the
67 Virginia General Assembly, to fund research
68 into new technologies and processes leading
69 to the development of alternative solid waste
70 management practices.

71
72 VML supports efforts to ensure that Waste
73 to Energy (WTE) is consistently defined as a
74 renewable energy source in any renewable
75 energy standards relating to the
76 Commonwealth. Currently the Code of
77 Virginia defines "renewable energy" as
78 including energy derived from waste.

79
80 VML supports increased recycling and state
81 efforts to share best recycling practices, to
82 provide seed money for innovative local
83 recycling approaches, and to provide special
84 assistance to smaller communities for
85 recycling.

86
87 **HAZARDOUS WASTE**
88 Advanced technology, waste minimization,
89 and waste exchange should be used, to the
90 extent possible, to eliminate or reduce
91 hazardous waste.

92

1 VML recognizes the need for hazardous
2 waste treatment and disposal facilities to
3 provide adequate capacity for wastes
4 generated within state borders. The
5 Commonwealth is encouraged to establish,
6 and if necessary operate, hazardous waste
7 facilities appropriate for improving the
8 treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous
9 waste generated within Virginia.

10
11 Adequate state and federal funding should
12 be provided for cleaning up abandoned and
13 hazardous waste sites. Expedient clean-up
14 of sites is essential.

15
16 The Commonwealth should address the
17 collection of household hazardous waste by
18 collecting it or providing liability coverage
19 for local collection programs. Consumer
20 education and discouraging reliance on
21 household chemicals should be encouraged.
22 The state needs to address pharmaceuticals,
23 including collection/disposition, and to
24 encourage pharmacies to accept unused
25 pharmaceuticals.

26
27 **AIR QUALITY**

28 The Commonwealth of Virginia has an on-
29 going responsibility to continue efforts to
30 achieve emission reductions in accordance
31 with Federal Clean Air Act requirements.

32 VML urges the state to recognize the
33 efficiencies of certain low-cost pollution
34 control technologies, such as Stage 2 vapor
35 control devices, and encourages the
36 application of the requirements in areas
37 beyond designated non-attainment areas for
38 improving air quality and meeting air quality
39 standards by the federal deadlines.

40
41 When affected by regional short-range or
42 long-range pollutant sources, localities
43 should be given an opportunity to participate
44 in developing a regional plan to reach
45 attainment of air quality standards, rather
46 than be excluded by arbitrary boundary
47 lines, especially in non-attainment areas.

48 The state acid rain monitoring network
49 should be enhanced and maintained.

50
51 **PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND
52 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

53 VML urges all localities to participate in the
54 development and implementation of the
55 State Outdoor Plan, and to express support
56 for the renewal of federal funding for parks,
57 historical structure preservation and
58 recreational opportunities.

59
60 **NOISE CONTROL**

61 VML supports state and local programs to
62 control unacceptable noise. Local
63 governments should have the authority to
64 determine the appropriate measure for
65 establishing unacceptable levels of nuisance
66 noise and to enact local ordinances to
67 address its curtailment.

68
69 State and federal governments must assume
70 the regulatory and financial responsibility of
71 attaining satisfactory noise levels adjacent to
72 major highways and airports.

73
74 **ENERGY USE & CONSERVATION**

75 The state is encouraged to develop an
76 overall state energy plan that includes
77 provisions for energy emergencies.
78 Regulations and emergency orders should
79 include alternatives that consider the
80 economic impact on political subdivisions
81 that border neighboring states.

82
83 A balanced use of all energy sources should
84 be emphasized. The state should amend its
85 regulations and requirements, such as the
86 Statewide Building Code, to remove barriers
87 to experimenting with alternative forms of
88 energy usage in buildings.

89 Both long- and short-range energy usage
90 should be designed to maximize
91 conservation of energy resources.
92 Conservation should be given the highest
93 priority in formulating state and local energy
94 policies and plans.

1 Energy conservation measures should be
2 required of utilities operating in Virginia.
3 These measures will help the state to reduce
4 energy costs to consumers and increase the
5 available supply of energy without further
6 degradation of the environment.

7
8 VML supports state assistance to help local
9 governments, businesses and residents
10 obtain energy audits. VML also supports
11 state tax incentives for homeowners using
12 renewable energy, including solar,
13 geothermal, wind and others.

14
15 VML encourages the Commonwealth to
16 develop building code standards that
17 enhance environmental sustainability and
18 energy efficiency and to enact policies that
19 enable local governments to promote
20 environmental sustainability and energy
21 efficiency in construction

22 23 **STREET LIGHTING**

24 Power companies, local governments and
25 others should be encouraged to use the most
26 energy efficient street lighting fixtures and
27 reduce light pollution.

28 29 **CHESAPEAKE BAY**

30 The Chesapeake Bay provides vital
31 economic and recreational benefits to all
32 Virginians. The Commonwealth must
33 assume responsibility for leading the clean
34 up of the Bay. To this end, the
35 Commonwealth must work with its local
36 governments -- in addition to the
37 neighboring states -- to develop interstate as
38 well as intrastate strategies designed to
39 "Save the Bay." The Chesapeake Bay is a
40 national treasure, and the state must work
41 with the federal government to ensure
42 adequate financial resources to implement
43 the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement.

44
45 The Commonwealth must continue to share
46 in the funding of local government water
47 quality improvement projects in Virginia at

48 appropriate levels designed to clean up the
49 Bay. If the Commonwealth required local
50 governments to undertake unfunded
51 mandates designed to meet the goals of the
52 Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement, the spirit
53 of community partnership prevalent
54 throughout the interstate agreement and
55 necessary to improve water quality would be
56 defeated.

57
58 VML endorses the commitment to nutrient
59 reduction in the Chesapeake Bay and its
60 tributaries, and will cooperate in achieving it
61 provided that localities are given
62 opportunities to participate in policy
63 development and implementation, and
64 provided that nutrient reduction is
65 approached equitably between point and
66 non-point sources. Incentives should be
67 created to increase the use of riparian
68 easements.

69
70 In addition to state support for cleaning up
71 and protecting the Chesapeake Bay,
72 adequate support should be provided for the
73 efforts of cities, towns and counties in all
74 watersheds to protect the rivers that flow
75 through Virginia. Such support should
76 include funding for publicly owned
77 wastewater treatment facilities as well as
78 local government stormwater management
79 systems.

80 81 **HIGHWAY BEAUTIFICATION**

82 VML is discouraged that modification to the
83 Federal Highway Beautification Act has
84 undermined local authority and continues to
85 allow tree-cutting simply for billboard
86 visibility. Legislation should be enacted that
87 restores local government authority to
88 remove billboards along federal highways
89 through amortization; supports local
90 governments' ability to require non-
91 conforming signs along federal highways to
92 comply with size and height requirements
93 without cash payments; allows local
94 governments to require the removal of

1 billboards in inappropriate locations,
2 especially in rurally-designated scenic,
3 historic, and residential areas; and provides
4 local governments with the authority by
5 local ordinance to prohibit the construction
6 or to determine the placement of any new
7 billboards.

8
9 VML encourages the local identification of
10 roads with special natural, historical, scenic,
11 or cultural values and encourages local
12 enhancement and protection of these scenic
13 byways.

14
15 **TRANSPORTATION AND LOCAL**
16 **LAND USE PLANNING**

17 VML supports the re-initiation of the state's
18 former environmental review procedure for
19 state highway projects. VML recognizes the
20 potential benefits of such a procedure
21 including the benefits to transportation
22 planning and resource management.

23 However, any such procedure and/or review
24 is incomplete if it does not evaluate the
25 proposed impacts against the state-required
26 local comprehensive plans. VML believes
27 that the environmental review process for
28 public roads should incorporate the local
29 comprehensive plan and involve and take
30 into the account the views of local officials.
31 In all permitting, the DEQ should defer to
32 local zoning decisions prior to the issuance
33 of any permits. Moreover, in exercising its
34 permitting authority, DEQ should recognize
35 the possible cumulative impacts of its
36 permitting activities.

37
38 **HAZARDOUS LIQUID PIPELINES**

39 The Commonwealth and local governments
40 should adopt appropriate restrictions on
41 development near liquid pipelines and
42 require liquid pipeline operators to take
43 safeguards to reduce the risk of oil spills,
44 particularly in environmentally sensitive
45 areas.

46

47 **BIOSOLIDS**

48 VML supports and encourages the beneficial
49 recycle/reuse of biosolids on farms and as a
50 crop nutrient and soil amendment in
51 accordance with federal and state handling
52 and disposal regulations, and supports local
53 authority to monitor and reasonably regulate
54 biosolids. VML supports full compliance
55 with all applicable federal, state and local
56 requirements regarding production at the
57 wastewater treatment facility, and
58 management, transportation, storage and use
59 of biosolids away from the facility. This
60 includes good housekeeping practices for
61 biosolids production, processing, transport
62 and storage, and during final use or disposal
63 operations.

64
65 **GREEN BUILDING**

66 VML supports the construction of buildings
67 that are energy efficient, maximize natural
68 light, minimize stormwater runoff, use
69 recycled materials, and use other
70 environmentally responsible practices.
71 Local governments, state agencies and
72 developers can obtain guidance from the
73 U.S. Green Building Council and the LEED
74 (Leadership in Energy and Environmental
75 Design) Green Building Rating System.

76
77 VML applauds the efforts of the Virginia
78 Department of Conservation and Recreation,
79 the Virginia Department of Housing and
80 Community Development, the Department
81 of Environmental Quality and others to
82 implement green building design and
83 construction, and encourages greater use of
84 these environmentally sound and energy
85 efficient techniques. Ideally, all public
86 buildings should be LEED, or the
87 equivalent, certified.

88
89 **EMISSIONS**

90 The state should provide tools to localities to
91 take inventory of emissions output and assist
92 with greenhouse gas emission reduction
93 plans.