
2017 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY POLICY STATEMENT

1 Protecting natural resources and sustaining
2 efficient environmental stewardship is an
3 overarching mission of government.
4 Additionally, VML recognizes the
5 importance and challenge of maintaining
6 natural resources and managing
7 environmental services while
8 simultaneously encouraging economic
9 growth and responsible human development
10 in our cities, towns and counties.

11
12 To achieve these ends, VML pursues these
13 goals:

- 14
15 1. Promoting environmental quality
16 through a coordinated, comprehensive
17 approach that addresses air and water
18 quality, hazardous and solid waste
19 management, protection of special lands
20 and features including biological
21 diversity, prudent land use policies,
22 noise abatement and energy use.
- 23 2. Attaining an equitable distribution of
24 responsibilities among governments for
25 resource protection and environmental
26 services, and attaining sufficient
27 financial resources from the federal and
28 state governments to implement
29 mandates, without duplicating efforts.
- 30 3. Environmental resources cross
31 jurisdictional boundaries and positive
32 dispute resolution of issues should be
33 supported.
- 34 4. Pursuing the orderly and planned
35 development of communities and
36 encouraging the revitalization of older
37 communities.
- 38 5. Promoting cooperation and coordination
39 among governments, citizens,
40 institutions, and organizations to achieve
41 these goals while encouraging
42 innovative, cost-effective solutions to
43 environmental problems.
- 44 6. Advocating legislation and policy
45 initiatives that provide sufficient

46 resources to implement the least costly
47 and most efficient mandates.

48 49 **WATER RESOURCES, QUALITY &** 50 **CONSERVATION**

51 **Quality**

52 Point and nonpoint sources of pollution
53 continue to create significant challenges in
54 protecting water quality: wastewater
55 treatment plant upgrades, urban and
56 agricultural storm water runoff,
57 sedimentation, stream channelization,
58 specific agricultural activities, pet wastes
59 and indiscriminate use of agricultural, yard,
60 lawn care and homecare chemicals. Water
61 resource protection is critical throughout all
62 watersheds of Virginia. Local governments,
63 the state government, the federal
64 government and private interests must
65 recognize these threats and implement
66 precautions and protections that reflect the
67 level of responsibility for offensive activity,
68 as well as technical and economic
69 competence to correct problems.

70
71 Additionally, the federal and state
72 governments cannot ignore the financial
73 limitations that local governments face in
74 attempting to resolve these threats. Without
75 adequate funding sources and data to assist
76 local governments water quality will not
77 improve. Local governments managing
78 combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and
79 sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) require
80 federal and state financial assistance.

81
82 VML supports dedicated and adequate state
83 appropriations to the Water Quality
84 Improvement Fund to make full and timely
85 payments under point source upgrade
86 contracts with local governments.
87 Additionally, VML supports dedicated and
88 ample state financial assistance to the
89 Stormwater Local Assistance Fund to
90 address costs associated with the permit

1 requirements of Municipal Separate Storm
2 Sewer Systems (MS4) and new EPA
3 regulations.

4
5 Local governments are legally obligated to
6 ameliorate water pollution and reduce its
7 harmful effects. Because they are in close
8 physical proximity to pollution sources, they
9 are well-positioned to develop innovative
10 solutions. VML supports the ability of
11 localities to employ credible and efficacious,
12 low impact water pollution prevention and
13 control measures without the additional
14 burden of securing the prior review and/or
15 permitting of state and federal agencies.

16
17 Municipalities have made extraordinary
18 investments and progress in reducing
19 nutrients from wastewater treatment plants.
20 Permitted waste load allocations to
21 municipal wastewater treatment plants are
22 central to localities' ability to comply with
23 current water quality laws and to
24 accommodate future growth and economic
25 development. The Commonwealth should
26 support regulatory stability as to existing
27 facilities and their allocations. The Virginia
28 Nutrient Credit Exchange Program should
29 continue as the primary vehicle for new
30 public or private sources to acquire
31 allocations and/or credits with facilities
32 owners' consent on agreed terms.

33 34 **Primacy**

35 The state should work to maintain the State
36 Health Department's primacy role in
37 implementing the federal Safe Drinking
38 Water Act.

39 40 **Conservation**

41 Overuse and indiscriminate use of water,
42 coupled with recurring drought conditions,
43 require state and local leaders to promote
44 water conservation to help to avoid future
45 water supply problems. Local or regional
46 comprehensive water conservation plans
47 should urge conservation through

48 construction building material choices,
49 native and drought tolerant landscaping,
50 appliances (such as dual flush toilets), rate
51 structure, education and water allocation.

52 53 **Conservation Easements**

54 Water authorities and similar local agencies
55 should have the power to receive
56 conservation easements under the authority
57 of the Conservation Easement Act.

58
59 The Virginia Outdoors Foundation's
60 operating costs should be fully funded.

61
62 State incentives (in-lieu of tax credits) need
63 to be created for local governments seeking
64 to place land designated for watershed
65 protection in conservation easements.

66 67 **Water Supply**

68 VML believes these principles governing
69 the role of the Commonwealth must guide
70 state water supply planning:

- 71
72 1. The availability of a safe, adequate and
73 reliable water supply is essential to the
74 public health and the economic vitality of
75 the Commonwealth and its local
76 governments. The state should participate in
77 providing funding mechanisms for local and
78 regional water supplies.
- 79 2. As a partner with local government in
80 providing water supplies, the state should
81 invest in regional projects to maximize the
82 use of infrastructure and minimize
83 environmental impacts.
- 84 3. Maintaining and analyzing a sound
85 surface and ground water database is an
86 essential state responsibility.
- 87 4. The state must take an advocacy role to
88 support local water supply projects that
89 conform to state regulations. This includes
90 taking the lead in negotiating multi-state
91 issues.
- 92 5. VML supports adequate state
93 environmental staffing in the areas of
94 research and development, including legal

1 research into issues such as inter-basin
2 transfers or groundwater recharge, which
3 results in stronger technical assistance to
4 municipal government.
5 6. The State should encourage water
6 conservation measures to promote wise use
7 and prevent and minimize waste through
8 incentives and educational programs.
9 7. The Commonwealth should consider use
10 of reclaimed water to meet non-potable
11 needs as part of its water resources to reduce
12 the demand on high quality potable water
13 supplies where practicable and
14 environmentally beneficial. State officials
15 should assist local governments and
16 communities in promoting wastewater
17 reclamation and reuse.
18 8. Water is essential to a healthy ecosystem.
19 Stream flows to support beneficial in-stream
20 uses should be protected in the process of
21 providing sufficient water to meet public
22 drinking water requirements.

23
24 Local governments must continue to
25 participate in the discussion of any water
26 resource proposals, including the current
27 statewide water supply planning process.

28
29 **ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES**

30 The state should assist with paying for flood
31 protection where localities take precautions,
32 through land use controls, to limit the cost of
33 flood damage restoration.

34
35 Localities need increased funding for dam
36 safety updates.

37
38 In the event of an environmental emergency,
39 either man made or an act of God, local
40 government officials need maximum
41 discretion to determine measures to be taken
42 beyond those dictated by the state and
43 federal government, as well as ready access
44 to information and assistance.

45 VML supports a state requirement that rail
46 operators serve on federally mandated Local
47 Emergency Planning Committees.

48 **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT**

49 VML supports the continuation of certifying
50 compliance with local ordinances for waste
51 management facility proposals.

52
53 VML endorses developing local waste-to-
54 energy and co-generation facilities as
55 practical alternatives to landfill facilities.

56 To achieve these goals, VML asks the
57 federal and state agencies, as well as the
58 Virginia General Assembly, to fund research
59 into new technologies and processes leading
60 to the development of alternative solid waste
61 management practices.

62
63 VML supports efforts to ensure that Waste
64 to Energy (WTE) is consistently defined as a
65 renewable energy source in any renewable
66 energy standards relating to the
67 Commonwealth. Currently the Code of
68 Virginia defines "renewable energy" as
69 including energy derived from waste.

70
71 VML supports state financial assistance in
72 developing programs that reduce waste
73 entering local landfills, thereby increasing
74 their longevity. Such programs should
75 emphasize processes that reduce waste,
76 reuse materials, and recycle refuse.

77
78 **HAZARDOUS WASTE**

79 Advanced technology, waste minimization,
80 and waste exchange should be used, to the
81 extent possible, to eliminate or reduce
82 hazardous waste.

83
84 VML recognizes the need for hazardous
85 waste treatment and disposal facilities to
86 provide adequate capacity for wastes
87 generated within state borders. VML
88 encourages the Commonwealth to establish,
89 and if necessary, to operate, hazardous waste
90 facilities appropriate for improving the
91 treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous
92 waste generated within Virginia.

1 Adequate state and federal funding should
2 be provided for cleaning up abandoned and
3 hazardous waste sites. Expedient clean-up
4 of sites is essential.

5
6 The Commonwealth should address the
7 collection of household hazardous waste by
8 collecting it or providing liability coverage
9 for local collection programs. Consumer
10 education and discouraging reliance on
11 household chemicals should be encouraged.

12
13 The state needs to address pharmaceuticals
14 and associated endocrine disruptors,
15 including collection/disposition, and to
16 encourage pharmacies to accept unused
17 pharmaceuticals. State research institutions
18 should examine and provide policy
19 recommendations on the impact of
20 pharmaceuticals and endocrine disruptors to
21 water quality, agricultural products, and
22 human health.

23
24 **PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND**
25 **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

26 VML supports the renewal of federal
27 funding for parks, historical structure
28 preservation and recreational opportunities.
29 The federal Land and Water Conservation
30 Fund (LWCF) program provides matching
31 grants to States and local governments for
32 the acquisition and development of public
33 outdoor recreation areas and facilities. VML
34 encourages state officials to work with local
35 officials in combining matching dollars for
36 LWCF grants for local and regional
37 facilities. VML also supports additional state
38 funding for local land preservation through
39 Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
40 (VLCF) grants and matching grants to
41 localities for qualifying purchase of
42 development rights (PDR) programs

43
44 **NOISE CONTROL**

45 State and federal governments must assume
46 the regulatory and financial responsibility of

47 attaining satisfactory noise levels adjacent to
48 major highways, railways and airports

49
50 **ENERGY USE & CLIMATE CHANGE**

51 The state should maintain an overall state
52 energy plan that includes provisions for
53 energy emergencies. Regulations and
54 emergency orders should include
55 alternatives that consider the economic
56 impact on political subdivisions that border
57 neighboring states.

58
59 Clean energy sources should be emphasized,
60 and both long and short-range energy usage
61 should be designed to maximize
62 conservation of energy resources.

63
64 Conservation should be a major
65 consideration in formulating state and local
66 energy policies and plans as it usually is the
67 most efficient.

68
69 Virginia should require energy conservation
70 measures, renewable energy generation and
71 the deployment of distributed energy
72 infrastructure for all utilities operating in the
73 state. These measures will help to reduce
74 energy costs to consumers and increase the
75 available supply of energy without further
76 degradation of the environment.

77
78 VML supports the creation of an
79 independent office of the consumer advocate
80 within the state government to actively
81 participate in the siting of gas, liquid and
82 electric transmission lines.

83
84 VML supports state assistance to help local
85 governments, businesses and residents
86 obtain energy audits. VML also supports
87 state tax incentives for (1) energy efficiency;
88 and (2) homeowners using renewable
89 energy, including solar, geothermal, wind
90 and others.

91
92 VML encourages the Commonwealth to
93 develop building code standards that

1 enhance environmental sustainability and
2 energy efficiency and to enact policies that
3 enable local governments to promote
4 environmental sustainability and energy
5 efficiency in construction.
6
7 VML recognizes that the impacts of global
8 climate change, as it relates to relative sea-
9 level rise, habitat destruction and alteration,
10 temperature increase, and variations in
11 seasonal rainfall patterns, has the potential
12 to negatively impact our communities. State
13 officials should provide tools to localities to
14 take inventory of greenhouse emissions
15 output and assist with greenhouse gas
16 emission reduction plans. Additionally, the
17 Commonwealth should participate in
18 regional collaborations to reduce greenhouse
19 gas emissions.
20
21 **CHESAPEAKE BAY**
22 The Chesapeake Bay provides vital
23 economic and recreational benefits to all
24 Virginians. The Commonwealth and federal
25 government must assume responsibility for
26 leading the clean-up of the Bay and work
27 with its local governments -- in addition to
28 the neighboring states -- to develop
29 interstate as well as intrastate strategies
30 designed to "Save the Bay." The
31 Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure, and
32 the state must work with the federal
33 government to ensure adequate financial
34 resources are available to implement the
35 plan for complying with federal Clean Water
36 Act. At the federal level VML supports
37 accountability and oversight which seeks to
38 achieve greater cost-effectiveness in meeting
39 pollution reduction targets. This will help
40 localities address the expensive costs
41 associated with the Chesapeake Bay
42 cleanup.
43
44 Living resources such as oysters, crabs,
45 mussels and underwater grasses are critical
46 to water quality. Oysters and mussels in
47 particular have the capacity to filter

48 sediments and reduce pollutants. While
49 reductions from sewage treatment plants and
50 urban runoff are important to restoring the
51 bay it will become increasingly expensive to
52 reduce a smaller amount of pollutants from
53 these sources resulting in a diminishing
54 return for investment. Increasing those
55 living resources that improve water quality
56 should be considered as an alternative to or
57 work in combination with expensive
58 retrofits of urban areas in an attempt to
59 reduce costs and pollutants.
60
61 The Commonwealth must continue to share
62 in the funding of local government water
63 quality improvement projects in Virginia at
64 appropriate levels designed to clean up the
65 Bay. The Commonwealth would defeat the
66 spirit of community partnership if it required
67 local governments to undertake unfunded
68 mandates designed to remove the
69 Chesapeake Bay from the EPA's impaired
70 waters list.
71
72 **HIGHWAY BEAUTIFICATION**
73 VML is discouraged that modification to the
74 Federal Highway Beautification Act has
75 undermined local authority and continues to
76 allow tree-cutting simply for billboard
77 visibility. The General Assembly should
78 enact legislation that restores local
79 government authority to remove billboards
80 along federal highways through
81 amortization; supports local governments'
82 ability to require non-conforming signs
83 along federal highways to comply with size
84 and height requirements without cash
85 payments; allows local governments to
86 require the removal of billboards in
87 inappropriate locations, especially in rurally-
88 designated scenic, historic, and residential
89 areas; and provides local governments with
90 the authority by local ordinance to prohibit
91 the construction or to determine the
92 placement of any new billboards.
93

1 VML encourages the local identification of
2 roads with special natural, historical, scenic,
3 or cultural values and encourages local
4 enhancement and protection of these scenic
5 byways.

6
7 VML encourages assisting in the progress
8 towards a reduced consumer waste
9 environment by invoking extended producer
10 responsibility. We ask that producers and
11 first importers of plastic products consider
12 having a strategy for how they will recover
13 or dispose, without cost to taxpayers, their
14 products when consumers are done with
15 them, as a condition of sale in a
16 municipality. This strategy should include
17 measurable results, outcomes and timetables
18 for achievement.

19
20 **TRANSPORTATION AND LOCAL**
21 **LAND USE PLANNING**

22 VML supports the re-initiation of the state's
23 former environmental review procedure for
24 state highway projects. VML recognizes the
25 potential benefits of such a procedure
26 including the benefits to transportation
27 planning and resource management.

28 However, any such procedure and/or review
29 is incomplete if it does not evaluate the
30 proposed impacts against the state-required
31 local comprehensive plans. VML believes
32 that the environmental review process for
33 public roads should incorporate the local
34 comprehensive plan and involve and take
35 into the account the views of local officials.

36
37 In all permitting, the DEQ should defer to
38 local zoning decisions prior to the issuance
39 of any permits. Moreover, in exercising its
40 permitting authority, DEQ should recognize
41 the possible cumulative impacts of its
42 permitting activities.

43
44 **HAZARDOUS LIQUID AND GAS**
45 **PIPELINES**

46 The Commonwealth and local governments
47 should adopt appropriate restrictions on

48 development near liquid and gas pipelines
49 and require liquid and gas pipeline operators
50 to take safeguards to reduce the risk of oil
51 spills, particularly in environmentally
52 sensitive areas.

53
54 **BIOSOLIDS**

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

71
72 **GREEN BUILDING**

73 VML supports the construction of buildings
74 that are energy efficient, maximize natural
75 light, minimize stormwater runoff, use
76 recycled materials, and use other
77 environmentally responsible practices.
78 Local governments, state agencies and
79 developers can obtain guidance from the
80 U.S. Green Building Council and the LEED
81 (Leadership in Energy and Environmental
82 Design) Green Building Rating System.

83
84 VML applauds the efforts of the Virginia
85 Department of Conservation and Recreation,
86 the Virginia Department of Housing and
87 Community Development, the Department
88 of Environmental Quality and others to
89 implement green building design and
90 construction, and encourages greater use of
91 these environmentally sound and energy
92 efficient techniques. Ideally, all public
93 buildings should be LEED, or the
94 equivalent, certified.

1 **URANIUM MINING**
2 Uranium mining, milling and waste disposal
3 of generated wastes poses health and
4 environmental problems for Virginians.
5 VML supports studies that evaluate the
6 impacts of radiation and other pollutants
7 from mill tailings on (1) downstream water
8 supplies; and (2) the health and safety of
9 uranium miners.

10
11 VML supports the current moratorium on
12 the mining and milling of uranium in the
13 Commonwealth of Virginia until studies
14 demonstrate that it is safe for the
15 environment and health of citizens. Any
16 studies or efforts to develop a regulatory
17 framework should address the concerns,
18 warnings, and conclusions contained in the
19 National Academies of Sciences report to
20 the Commonwealth entitled “Uranium
21 Mining in Virginia” and dated December
22 2011. Furthermore, the state should take no
23 action to preempt, eliminate, or preclude
24 local government jurisdiction with respect to
25 whether uranium mining would be allowed
26 in the respective jurisdiction.

27
28 **HYDRAULIC FRACTURING**
29 The process of hydraulic fracturing raises
30 concerns about the potential pollution of
31 groundwater, the depletion of water supplies
32 and an increase in seismic activity in
33 previously benign or inactive zones. The
34 consequences potentially are costly,
35 irreversible and devastating to local
36 communities. VML supports a state
37 regulatory program that addresses these
38 concerns while protecting the authority of
39 local governments to regulate this type of
40 mining activity along with ancillary
41 activities through its land use ordinances.

42
43 **COAL ASH/NUCLEAR WASTE**
44 In order to ensure against accidental
45 discharge and contamination of
46 groundwater, coal contamination by-
47 products should be required to be removed

48 to a permitted landfill meeting Federal
49 criteria for this class of waste. Reclamation
50 of the impoundment site must be consistent
51 with Federal mine reclamation standards.
52 These requirements also apply to
53 impoundment sites that have been closed by
54 capping in place or have received approval
55 for closure by capping in place.