



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT

2021 Environmental Quality Policy Statement

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

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6 To achieve these ends, VML pursues these goals:

- 7 1. Promoting environmental quality through a coordinated, comprehensive approach that addresses air
8 and water quality, hazardous and solid waste management, energy conservation and use, protection of
9 special lands and features including biological diversity, prudent land use policies, and noise
10 abatement.
- 11 2. Attaining an equitable distribution of responsibilities among governments for resource protection and
12 environmental services and attaining sufficient financial resources from the federal and state
13 governments to implement mandates, without duplicating efforts.
- 14 3. Environmental resources cross jurisdictional boundaries and positive dispute resolution of issues
15 should be supported.
- 16 4. Pursuing the orderly and planned development of communities and conserving natural and historic
17 resources by encouraging the revitalization of older communities.
- 18 5. Promoting cooperation and coordination among governments, citizens, institutions, and organizations
19 to achieve these goals while encouraging innovative, cost-effective solutions to environmental
20 problems.
- 21 6. Advocating budget, legislation and policy initiatives that provide sufficient resources to implement
22 the least costly and most efficient regulations.

23 24 **Water Resources, Quality & Conservation**

25 **Quality.** Investing in water quality infrastructure is a shared State-Local partnership. The Commonwealth
26 owns our streams, rivers, and Bay; localities own most water quality improvement treatment systems and
27 related infrastructure. Sharing resources and investment responsibilities leads to more cost-effective, positive
28 outcomes in public and environmental health as well as to other natural resources, recreational, and tourism
29 benefits.

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31 Point (direct) and nonpoint (indirect) sources of pollution continue to create significant challenges in
32 protecting water quality: wastewater treatment plant upgrades, urban and agricultural storm water runoff,

33 sedimentation, stream channelization, specific agricultural activities, pet wastes and use of agricultural, yard,
34 lawn care and homecare chemicals.

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36 Water resource protection is critical throughout all watersheds of Virginia. Local governments, the state
37 government, the federal government and private interests must recognize these threats and implement
38 precautions and protections that reflect their level of responsibility for preventing and mitigating offensive
39 activities, safeguarding local public and environmental health, as well as maintaining the technical and
40 economic competence to respond to and correct problems.

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42 Recent years have seen significant improvements in water quality throughout the Commonwealth. However,
43 without adequate funding sources and data to assist local governments and public service authorities, water
44 quality will not continue to improve. Combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and sanitary sewer overflows
45 (SSOs) are significantly expensive infrastructure undertakings, often costing hundreds of millions of dollars.
46 Local CSO and SSO improvement projects are often mandated by federal and state law and regulation and
47 require federal and state financial assistance. VML supports state financial assistance to local governments
48 and public service authorities facing legislative mandates related to CSO or SSO management and
49 remediation.

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51 VML supports dedicated and adequate state appropriations to the Water Quality Improvement Fund to make
52 full and timely payments under point source upgrade contracts with local governments. Additionally, VML
53 supports dedicated and ample state financial assistance to the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund to address
54 costs associated with the permit requirements of Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4).

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56 Local governments are legally obligated to ameliorate water pollution and reduce its harmful effects and they
57 are well-positioned to develop innovative, and meaningful community- based solutions. VML supports the
58 ability of localities to employ credible and efficacious, low impact water pollution prevention and control
59 measures without the additional burden of securing the prior review and/or permitting of state and federal
60 agencies.

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62 VML supports legislation providing localities with greater authority to preserve trees and planting and
63 creating opportunities for developers and local governments to have more tools for stormwater and flood
64 mitigation.

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66 VML supports an amendment to Virginia Code § 15.2-961 that would allow local governments greater
67 flexibility in the reforestation, preservation, and management of urban forests.

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69 Municipalities have made extraordinary investments and progress in reducing nutrients from wastewater
70 treatment plants. Permitted waste load allocations to municipal wastewater treatment plants are central to
71 localities' ability to comply with current water quality laws and to accommodate future growth and economic
72 development. The Commonwealth should support regulatory stability as to existing facilities and their
73 allocations. The Virginia Nutrient Credit Exchange Program should continue as the primary vehicle for new
74 public or private sources to acquire allocations and/or credits with facilities owners' consent on agreed terms.

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76 Additionally, when in an era of extraordinary state or national emergencies or other circumstances that result
77 in long-term high unemployment, employee furloughs, and reduced wages, thus resulting in many
78 ratepayers' difficulty in paying monthly water and wastewater bills, the state should be cognizant of
79 municipal utilities' and public service authorities' reduced abilities due to lost revenue to undertake desired
80 or required capital improvements to water quality treatment systems.

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82 In the interest of increasing and improving the level of water quality data for impaired watersheds and
83 waterbodies in Virginia, the State should leverage and actively employ state university assets (laboratories,
84 equipment, etc.) and subject matter experts (scientists, graduate students, etc.) to collaborate with local
85 governments to gather and analyze rigorous water quality data. Such high-quality data can then be used by
86 state agencies and local governments to document the effectiveness of locally specific water quality
87 improvement plans, which are required of localities with MS4 Permits, and aid the state in its duty to
88 monitor and track the health of state waters.

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90 **Conservation.** Overuse and indiscriminate use of water, coupled with recurring drought conditions, require
91 state and local leaders to promote water conservation to help to avoid future water supply problems. Local
92 or regional comprehensive water conservation plans should urge conservation through construction building
93 material choices, grey water re-use, groundwater and aquifer recharge, rainwater harvesting, native and
94 drought tolerant landscaping, appliances (such as dual flush toilets), rate structure, education, and water
95 allocation.

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97 **Conservation Easements.** Water authorities and similar local agencies should have the power to receive
98 conservation easements under the authority of the Conservation Easement Act.

99

100 The Virginia Outdoors Foundation's operating costs should be fully funded.

101

102 State incentives (in-lieu of tax credits) need to be created for local governments seeking to place land
103 designated for watershed protection in conservation easements.

104

105 **Primacy.** The state should work to maintain the State Health Department's primacy role in implementing the
106 federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Additionally, the annual funds provided to VDH by municipal
107 utilities and public service authorities to ensure VDH has sufficient staffing to maintain primacy over the
108 SDWA should not be diverted for other uses.

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110 **Water Supply.** VML believes these principles governing the role of the Commonwealth must guide state
111 water supply planning:

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- 113 1. The availability of a safe, adequate, and reliable water supply is essential to the public health and the
114 economic vitality of the Commonwealth and its local governments. The state should participate in
115 providing funding mechanisms for local and regional water supplies.
- 116 2. As a partner with local government in providing water supplies, the state should invest in regional
117 projects to maximize the use of infrastructure and minimize environmental impacts.
- 118 3. Maintaining and analyzing a sound surface and ground water database is an essential state
responsibility.

- 119 4. The state must take an advocacy role to support local water supply projects that conform to state
120 regulations. This includes taking the lead in negotiating multi-state issues.
- 121 5. VML supports adequate state environmental staffing in the areas of permitting, enforcement,
122 communications and outreach, and research and development. VML believes that research funding is
123 especially important in such areas as inter-basin transfers and groundwater recharge, which results in
124 stronger technical assistance to municipal government and public service authorities.
- 125 6. The State should encourage water conservation measures to promote wise use and prevent and
126 minimize waste through incentives and educational programs.
- 127 7. The Commonwealth should consider use of reclaimed water to meet non-potable needs as part of its
128 water resources to reduce the demand on high quality potable water supplies where practicable and
129 environmentally beneficial. State officials should assist local governments and communities in
130 promoting wastewater reclamation and reuse.
- 131 8. VML supports the deployment of proven, safe, innovative water reuse technologies to replenish
132 aquifers statewide.
- 133 9. Water is essential to a healthy ecosystem. Stream flows to support beneficial in-stream uses should
134 be protected in the process of providing sufficient water to meet public drinking water requirements.
135

136 Local governments must continue to participate in the discussion of any water resource proposals, including
137 the current statewide water supply planning process.
138

139 **Environmental Emergencies**

140 The state should assist through the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund and other appropriations
141 with paying for flood prevention and protection where localities take precautions, through shoreline
142 resiliency and land use controls, to limit the cost of flood damage restoration.
143

144 Localities need increased funding for state-mandated dam safety infrastructure improvements.
145

146 In the event of an environmental emergency, either man made or an act of God, local government officials
147 need maximum discretion to determine measures to be taken beyond those dictated by the state and federal
148 government, as well as ready access to information and assistance.
149

150 VML supports a state requirement that rail operators serve on federally mandated Local Emergency Planning
151 Committees.
152

153 **Solid Waste Management**

154 VML supports the continuation of certifying compliance with local ordinances for waste management
155 facility proposals.
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157 VML endorses developing local waste-to-energy and co-generation facilities as practical alternatives to
158 landfill facilities.
159

160 VML supports efforts to ensure that Waste to Energy (WTE) is consistently defined as a renewable energy
161 source in the Virginia Energy Plan and in any renewable energy standards relating to the Commonwealth.
162 Currently the Code of Virginia defines "renewable energy" as including energy derived from waste.

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

Plastics serve many appropriate purposes in our society, yet their use in disposable products – especially in single-use products – has become ubiquitous and their polluting effects have followed. These products cost localities dearly in time and expense needed to unclog storm and sanitary drainage systems, damage to mowing equipment, ensnarement in trees and other vegetation, and more. Further, these products accumulate in area waters and wetlands where they harm wildlife, impair outdoor recreation, and degrade into compounds which are known toxins. VML continues to support a local governments option to regulate the distribution, sale or offer of disposable and other such single-use products, such as straws and extruded polystyrene food and beverage containers. Exceptions shall continue to be made for such bags and containers used for garbage, medical waste, and other refuse containment, and for disposable plastic wraps designed to ensure the safety and integrity of medical supplies and other sensitive products used in public health and safety, whose purpose and distribution shall be permissible.

Recycling

VML supports recycling and reuse wherever possible to promote better and wiser use of our resources.

In recent years, the global recycling market has contracted, especially for plastics. As a result, municipal solid waste landfills are now receiving significant additional volume of plastics and other materials that for decades had been diverted to recycling markets. The additional volume not only wastes reusable materials but shortens the life of landfills. VML supports the General Assembly directing a study of the contracted global recycling market, the effects and costs this has had on municipal landfills, to consider policies, such as bottle deposits, and other possible solutions to minimize those effects with the goals of maximizing recycling to the extent possible and thus helping extend the life of landfills.

VML supports the concept of a circular economy, which is an economic system aimed at preventing waste and the continual use of resources. A circular economy encourages systems that reuse, share, repair, refurbish, remanufacture, compost, and recycle to create a close-loop system, minimizing the use of resource inputs and the creation of waste, pollution and carbon emissions. A circular economy can bring about the lasting benefits of a more innovative, resilient, and productive economy.

Hazardous Waste

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

VML recognizes the need for hazardous waste treatment and disposal facilities to provide adequate capacity for wastes generated within state borders. VML encourages the Commonwealth to establish, and if necessary, to operate, hazardous waste facilities appropriate for improving the treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous waste generated within Virginia.

206 Adequate state and federal funding should be provided for cleaning up abandoned and hazardous waste sites.
207 Expedient clean-up of sites is essential.

208

209 The Commonwealth should address the collection of household hazardous waste by collecting it or providing
210 liability coverage for local collection programs. Consumer education and discouraging reliance on household
211 chemicals should be encouraged.

212

213 The state needs to address pharmaceuticals and associated endocrine disruptors, including
214 collection/disposition, and to encourage pharmacies to accept unused pharmaceuticals. State research
215 institutions should examine and provide policy recommendations on the impact of pharmaceuticals and
216 endocrine disruptors to water quality, agricultural products, and human health.

217

218 Electrical and electronic products contain known toxic and hazardous components which must be tightly
219 control when such products are disposed (e-waste). Most such components can be safely harvested and
220 recycled or reused, reducing the environmental impacts of mining and producing new components from
221 virgin materials, such as rare earth elements, which are increasingly scarce and costly to obtain. VML
222 supports legislative efforts to increase the reuse and recycling of all electrical and electronic products,
223 devices and related materials, as well as economic and business development models to grow the necessary
224 skill, capability and infrastructure within Virginia to improve the ability of localities, small businesses and
225 citizens to easily, conveniently and ethically recycle their e-wastes.

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227 **Parks, Open Space and Cultural Resources**

228 As Virginia's population grows and diversifies, and as residential and other development expand into
229 previously undeveloped areas, there is increasing need to conserve open-space lands for scenic beauty,
230 wildlife habitat, agricultural and forestry production, and outdoor recreation.

231

232 VML supports state funding at no less than \$20 million annually, as required by state law, for the Virginia
233 Land Conservation Fund for local land preservation. VML also supports sufficient funding for the Virginia
234 Farmland Preservation Fund and other such programs for matching grants to localities for qualifying
235 purchase of development rights (PDR) programs.

236

237 VML supports the renewal of federal funding for parks, historical structure preservation and recreational
238 opportunities. The federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program provides matching grants to
239 States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and
240 facilities. VML encourages state officials to work with local officials in combining matching dollars for
241 LWCF grants for local and regional facilities.

242

243 **Noise Control**

244 State and federal governments must assume the regulatory and financial responsibility of attaining
245 satisfactory noise levels adjacent to major highways, railways, and airports.

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247 **Electric Vehicles and EV Charging Stations**

248 Virginia expects to continue seeing growth in the number of electric vehicles traveling local roads and state
249 highways. Growth in the number of electric vehicles will help reduce nitrogen oxides and other air

250 pollutants. However, the quickly growing electronic vehicle market also increases the demand for electric
251 vehicle charging stations. Virginia should continue working with the private sector to provide funds to
252 develop a statewide EV charging network and with localities to provide funding support for electric public
253 transit vehicles and other municipally-owned vehicles.

254
255 **Energy Conservation, Green Building & Climate Change**

256 The state should maintain an overall state energy plan that includes provisions for conventional and
257 renewable energy; support for research and development into energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable
258 energy technologies; alternative fuels and advanced vehicle technologies; energy infrastructure; and
259 increasing resilience relative to energy emergencies.

260
261 VML acknowledges passage of the Grid Transformation and Security Act of 2018 and its emphases on grid
262 modernization, solar and wind energy, energy efficiency and conservation, weatherization programs and
263 consumer protections. VML further notes that the State Corporation Commission (SCC) and utilities will
264 develop stakeholder groups regarding the Act's mandate that utilities invest approximately \$1 billion in
265 energy efficiency by 2028, and VML encourages the SCC and utilities to include local government
266 representatives in those stakeholder groups.

267
268 VML also acknowledges the Virginia Clean Economy Act of 2020 and its emphases on retiring carbon-
269 emitting electric generation facilities and dramatically increasing renewable energy sources so that Virginia's
270 electric grid is carbon-free by 2050. The Act also expands energy-efficiency programs, increases SCC
271 oversight of ratemaking and ratepayer protections, and moves Virginia to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas
272 Initiative (RGGI).

273
274 Energy conservation and efficiency should be major considerations in formulating state and local energy
275 policies and plans, as they are often the most cost effective.

276 VML supports state assistance to help local governments, businesses and residents obtain energy audits.
277 VML also supports state tax incentives for (1) energy efficiency; and (2) homeowners using renewable
278 energy, including solar, geothermal, wind and others.

279
280 VML supports the construction of buildings that are energy efficient, maximize natural light, minimize
281 stormwater runoff, use recycled materials and use other environmentally sustainable practices. Local
282 governments, state agencies, and developers can obtain green building practices guidance from organizations
283 such as the U.S. Green Building Council which promulgates the LEED (Leadership in Energy and
284 Environmental Design) Green Building Certification System.

285
286 VML supports the efforts of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia
287 Department of Housing and Community Development, the Department of Environmental Quality and others
288 to implement green building design and construction and encourages greater use of these environmentally
289 sound and energy efficient techniques. Ideally, all public buildings should be LEED certified or its
290 equivalent.

291
292 VML encourages the Commonwealth to institutionalize best practices by developing building code standards
293 that enhance environmental sustainability and energy efficiency and to enact policies that enable local

294 governments to promote environmental sustainability and energy efficiency in construction. The Board of
295 Housing and Community Development is to be commended for adopting the latest model codes for
296 commercial buildings. Accordingly, VML supports adopting all provisions of the 2018 International Energy
297 Conservation Code for residential construction.

298
299 VML recognizes that the impacts of global climate change, as it relates to relative sea-level rise, habitat
300 destruction and alteration, temperature increase, and variations in seasonal rainfall patterns, has the potential
301 to negatively impact our communities. State officials should provide tools to localities to take inventory of
302 greenhouse emissions output and assist with greenhouse gas emission reduction plans.
303 Additionally, the Commonwealth should participate in regional collaborations to reduce greenhouse gas
304 emissions.

305
306 **Renewable Energy, Solar, & Onshore Wind**

307 Clean energy sources should be encouraged, with both long and short-range energy usage designed to
308 maximize conservation of energy resources.

309
310 The Virginia Clean Economy Act of 2020 sets the Commonwealth on a path to be carbon-free by 2050. The
311 act focuses on renewable energy generation, energy efficiency, distributed solar, offshore wind, and energy
312 storage, among other things.

313
314 Virginia should continue to allow and expand on renewable energy generation and the deployment of
315 distributed energy infrastructure for all residents, businesses, local governments and utilities operating in the
316 state. These measures will help to reduce energy costs to consumers and increase the available supply of
317 energy without further degradation of the environment. It is important that net metering with retail
318 compensation be retained or improved with the ability for production above specific site needs. Any claims
319 of harm to the grid as a result of distributed solar should be accompanied by holistic studies which also
320 consider the benefits of distributed solar.

321
322 Virginia's utility-scale solar and shared solar markets will dramatically expand in the years ahead to meet
323 clean-energy mandates. Expansion of utility-scale solar will impact tens of thousands of acres. Shared solar
324 will be smaller in scale, but also will impact thousands of acres. Solar developers should continue working
325 cooperatively with local governments on project siting, zoning, revenue-sharing, and other matters as the
326 renewable energy market expands.

327
328 Additionally, onshore wind projects are expected to appear in Virginia's higher elevations. Such projects are
329 necessarily large-scale and may visually impact scenic landscapes and avian wildlife. Onshore wind
330 developers necessarily must work early in the project development process with local governments on siting,
331 zoning, visual impact, revenue and taxation, and other issues.

332
333 Virginia is poised to host the nation's largest offshore wind power project. The General Assembly has
334 declared 5,200 MW of offshore wind power to be in the public interest and that such amount of power
335 generation be operational by December 2034. This offshore construction project will be some 27 miles off
336 Virginia Beach's coast. As the project is constructed, the Commonwealth and the project's utility owner
337 should continue working closely with coastal communities who may be impacted by and benefit from it.

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Additionally, the General Assembly and the State Corporation Commission should continue monitoring potential impacts to ratepayers, especially to ensure that low-income Virginians are not disproportionately impacted by any rate increases.

VML supports efforts to protect current net metering compensation and to allow for increased system capacity purchased to reflect future needs. The current limitations on non-utility scale photo voltaic generation system size should be examined for removal of restrictions. VML requests provisions for true community solar to be allowed to gain a broader set of customers for solar energy, including third-party owned and financed community solar.

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

Environmental Justice

VML supports the fair treatment and full participation of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, faith, disability, or income in the transparent development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

It is recognized that communities of color and low-income communities – generally referred to as environmental justice communities – have often been disproportionately negatively impacted by development of environmental policies and programs and in the siting of major public and private infrastructure projects and other developments. Inconsistent access to locally produced and sourced food in particular has had a significant impact on community health, welfare, and sustainability.

Local governments have principal authority over local land use. Local governments also have specific and important insights on proposed environmental policies and programs and on development’s environmental, social, cultural, and economic impact.

VML believes localities can and should play a more collaborative role in the development of state environmental policies and programs and in determining infrastructure site suitability. Local governments have a clear interest in protecting their local vulnerable communities from disproportionate environmental and health impacts.

Environmental justice considerations are especially important when it comes to state regulatory processes for permitting major proposed public infrastructure or private infrastructure that is to have public benefit. Examples of such infrastructure include transportation facilities, electric generation and transmission facilities, solid waste facilities, and pipelines. As the state through its environmental regulatory boards and agencies increases its focus on environmental justice matters – especially on infrastructure siting and permitting matters – it is imperative that the state collaborate with local governments, especially in a project’s pre-planning and planning stages. In such early collaboration, it is important that the state ensure the locality has all relevant information and other subject resources so that the locality may meaningfully contribute to state’s planning and other regulatory processes and promote fair treatment.

381 **Flooding**

382 Virginia is experiencing more frequent and often more extreme storm events. These more frequent and
383 intense storm events often lead to major local flooding challenges to both natural stream channels and
384 stormwater infrastructure. Local, recurrent flooding has become a major issue in low-lying coastal Virginia,
385 though no region has been spared and all contend with growing stormwater-control costs.

386

387 The General Assembly has focused more attention and dedicated more funds to address recurrent flooding
388 issues. Most recently, the General Assembly created the Virginia Community Preparedness Fund to assist
389 through loans or grants for flood prevention or protection projects and studies localities affected by recurrent
390 flooding, sea level rise, and flooding from severe weather events.

391

392 VML supports continued policy and funding to support localities contending with growing stormwater and
393 other flooding challenges. Such support includes additional flood-control studies, coastal mapping, updated
394 precipitation forecasts, and local and regional planning funds and technical support.

395

396 **Chesapeake Bay**

397 The Chesapeake Bay provides vital economic and recreational benefits to all Virginians. The
398 Commonwealth and federal government must assume responsibility for leading the clean-up of the Bay and
399 work with its local governments -- in addition to the neighboring states -- to develop interstate as well as
400 intrastate strategies designed to "Save the Bay." The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure, and the state
401 must work with the federal government to ensure adequate financial resources are available to implement the
402 plan for complying with federal Clean Water Act. At the federal level VML supports accountability and
403 oversight which seeks to achieve greater cost-effectiveness in meeting pollution reduction targets. This will
404 help localities address the expensive costs associated with the Chesapeake Bay cleanup.

405

406 Living resources such as oysters, crabs, mussels, and underwater grasses are critical to water quality. Oysters
407 and mussels in particular have the capacity to filter sediments and reduce pollutants. While reductions from
408 sewage treatment plants and urban runoff are important to restoring the Bay, it will become increasingly
409 expensive to reduce a smaller amount of pollutants from these sources resulting in a diminishing return for
410 investment. Increasing those living resources that improve water quality should be considered as an
411 alternative to or work in combination with expensive retrofits of urban areas in an attempt to reduce costs
412 and pollutants.

413

414 The Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III), with its 2025 deadline, is designed
415 to bring together federal and state actions to reduce pollution in local waters and to improve the health of the
416 Bay. While VML generally supports the goals of WIP III, it also must be acknowledged that it calls for often
417 very costly improvements to locally-owned stormwater and wastewater treatment systems – thus
418 underscoring even more the need for adequate federal and state financial assistance.

419

420 The Commonwealth must continue to fully fund the Water Quality Improvement Fund and provide financial
421 assistance for local government water quality improvement projects in Virginia at appropriate levels
422 designed to clean up the Bay and its tributaries. The Commonwealth would defeat the spirit of community
423 partnership if it required local governments to undertake unfunded mandates for water quality improvement
424 projects.

425

426 **Highway Beautification**

427 VML is discouraged that modification to the Federal Highway Beautification Act has undermined local
428 authority and continues to allow tree-cutting simply for billboard visibility. The General Assembly should
429 enact legislation that restores local government authority to remove billboards along federal highways
430 through amortization; supports local governments' ability to require non-conforming signs along federal
431 highways to comply with size and height requirements without cash payments; allows local governments to
432 require the removal of billboards in inappropriate locations, especially in rurally-designated scenic, historic,
433 and residential areas; and provides local governments with the authority by local ordinance to prohibit the
434 construction or to determine the placement of any new billboards.

435

436 VML encourages the local identification of roads with special natural, historical, scenic, or cultural values
437 and encourages local enhancement and protection of these scenic byways.

438

439 VML encourages assisting in the progress towards a reduced consumer waste environment by invoking
440 extended producer responsibility. We ask that producers and first importers of plastic products consider
441 having a strategy for how they will recover or dispose, without cost to taxpayers, their products when
442 consumers are done with them, as a condition of sale in a municipality. This strategy should include
443 measurable results, outcomes, and timetables for achievement.

444

445 **Transportation and Local Land Use Planning**

446 VML supports the re-initiation of the state's former environmental review procedure for state highway
447 projects. VML recognizes the potential benefits of such a procedure including the benefits to transportation
448 planning and resource management.

449

450 However, any such procedure or review is incomplete if it does not evaluate the proposed impacts against the
451 state-required local comprehensive plans. VML believes that the environmental review process for public
452 roads should incorporate the local comprehensive plan and involve and take into the account the views of
453 local officials.

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455 In all permitting, the DEQ should defer to local zoning decisions prior to the issuance of any permits.
456 Moreover, in exercising its permitting authority, DEQ should recognize the possible cumulative impacts of
457 its permitting activities.

458

459 **Hazardous Liquid and Gas Pipelines**

460 The Commonwealth and local governments should adopt appropriate restrictions on development near liquid
461 and gas pipelines and require liquid and gas pipeline operators to take safeguards to reduce the risk of oil,
462 gas and other pipeline product spills and leaks, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas.

463

464 **Biosolids**

465 VML supports and encourages the beneficial recycle/reuse of biosolids on farms and as a crop nutrient and
466 soil amendment in accordance with federal and state handling and disposal regulation and supports local
467 authority to monitor and reasonably regulate biosolids. VML supports full compliance with all applicable
468 federal, state, and local requirements regarding production at the wastewater treatment facility, and

469 management, transportation, storage and use of biosolids away from the facility. This includes good
470 housekeeping practices for biosolids production, processing, transport, and storage, and during final use or
471 disposal operations.

472

473 **Uranium Mining**

474 Uranium mining, milling and waste disposal of generated wastes poses health and environmental problems
475 for Virginians. VML supports studies that evaluate the impacts of radiation and other pollutants from mill
476 tailings on (1) downstream water supplies; and (2) the health and safety of uranium miners.

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478 VML supports the current moratorium on the mining and milling of uranium in the Commonwealth of
479 Virginia until studies demonstrate that it is safe for the environment and health of citizens. Any studies or
480 efforts to develop a regulatory framework should address the concerns, warnings, and conclusions contained
481 in the National Academies of Sciences report to the Commonwealth entitled “Uranium Mining in Virginia”
482 and dated December 2011. Furthermore, the state should take no action to preempt, eliminate, or preclude
483 local government jurisdiction with respect to whether uranium mining would be allowed in the respective
484 jurisdiction.

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486 **Hydraulic Fracturing**

487 The process of hydraulic fracturing raises concerns about the potential pollution of groundwater, the
488 depletion of water supplies and an increase in seismic activity in previously benign or inactive zones. The
489 consequences potentially are costly, irreversible, and devastating to local communities. VML supports the
490 state’s prohibition on hydraulic fracturing in groundwater management areas.

491

492 **Coal Ash / Nuclear Waste**

493 In order to ensure against accidental contamination of ground and surface waters, coal and other energy
494 production by-products should be required to be removed to a permitted disposal facility meeting Federal
495 criteria for this class of waste. Reclamation of such by-product impoundment sites must be consistent with
496 Federal mine reclamation standards. These requirements also apply to impoundment sites that have been
497 closed by capping in place or have received approval for closure by capping in place. VML recognizes
498 the Dominion Energy initiative to study all of its coal ash ponds in order to identify the ones with the highest
499 risk. VML requests that Dominion provide a detailed plan to address the highest risk sites.