Wastewater Infrastructure Policy Working Group (WWIWG)
Western Virginia Roundtable Discussions
September 22, 2021 – 10:00 to 12:00
Meeting Summary

Meeting Location: Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project
347 Campbell Ave. SW
Roanoke, VA 24016

Virtual: Virtual meeting using Webex.

WWIWG Members

Karen Duran – Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Matt Weaver – Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Stephanie Hamlett – Virginia Resource Authority (VRA)
Lance Gregory – Virginia Department of Health (VDH)

Attendees

Jean Bass – VRA
Julie Henderson – VDH
Karri Atwood – VDH
Brad Stallard – VDH
Brian Stanley – VDH
Cindy McDow - VDH
Darren Doss – VDH
Marcia Degen – VDH
Megan Senseman – VDH
Shawn Carman - VDH
Jay Dillon – Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP)
Amy Pemberton - SERCAP
Danna Revis - Virginia Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (VOWRA), Old Dominion Onsite
John Bateman – Northern Neck Planning District Commission
Mike Lynn – SES Mid-Atlantic, Chairman Sewage Handling and Disposal Advisory Committee
Perry Hickman – USDA Rural Development
Sarah Cunningham - Deloitte
Jon Wixom - Deloitte
Aaron Sizemore – Mount Rogers Planning District Commission
Chris Pomeroy - AquaLaw
Jim Baldwin – Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission
Gabriel Irigaray – Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission
Katie Sallee – Special Assistant to the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources
Sandra Stuart
Sasha Earl
Chloe Hodges

Eddie Wells
Mike Jefferies
Mike Ritchie
Steve Pennington

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)**

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 Doran, 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 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.

    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. The current draft plan includes providing at portion of available funding to partners that have experience with providing septic and well grant funds.

3. **Roundtable Discussion with Working Group Participants facilitated by Karen Doran on the following issues:**

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

Ms. Doran 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:

- Put educational flyers with water bills.
- Biggest hurdle is gaining acceptance by local governments and political boards that onsite sewage can be a permanent solution.
- Find ways to do outreach through churches and existing community groups that are already trusted sources.
- Reach people under the poverty line who see septic as a higher level problem; with support from planning district commissions, DEQ, or community groups.
- Do local water quality fairs or similar events.
- Promote economic stability and new job creation of wastewater infrastructure projects to local governments. Example, Clinch River State Park can be an economic draw; important to address straight pipes and failing systems to maintain good water quality.
- Offer assistance to people to help with making applications for funds.
- Many people cannot afford alternative systems.

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

Ms. Doran then asked participants how the WWIWG could encourage collaboration among agencies and coordination of grants. Participants provided the following comments and suggestions:

- Staff to organize various grants that can used for small single family systems, multi-family systems, and discharge systems less than 1,000 gallons per day.
- Find ways to combine Indoor Plumbing Rehabilitation funding, with other funds available at DEQ and VDH.
- Develop a pilot program to gather information on needs and troubleshoot issues.
- Individual grant requirements and deadlines cause some of the problems. Timelines can be problematic as well. Trying to bring funders under similar timeframes is difficult.

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.

Mr. Gregory 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:

- Would be helpful to have local government entities willing to take ownership of smaller community based solutions, and charge owners a monthly fee. Many local entities do not want the liability.
- Complete a wastewater infrastructure needs assessment.
- Conduct a long term cost comparison between individual systems versus community based systems.
- Address barriers to discharge systems when they are the best solution for a community.
- Improve data reporting to help identify pockets of needs.
- Increase funding where there is cooperation across jurisdictions.
- There is a delay in getting capital needs for community systems. Larger systems are better able to manage

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, Mr. Gregory 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:

- Allow for skilled labor contributions on projects to be counted towards the match contribution. The DHCD water program supports this approach, called the self-help program.
- Develop a program where people can gain work skills, obtain licensure working under a licensed professional.
- Get support from VDH Population Health to assist with these types of Community Health Assessments.

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.

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
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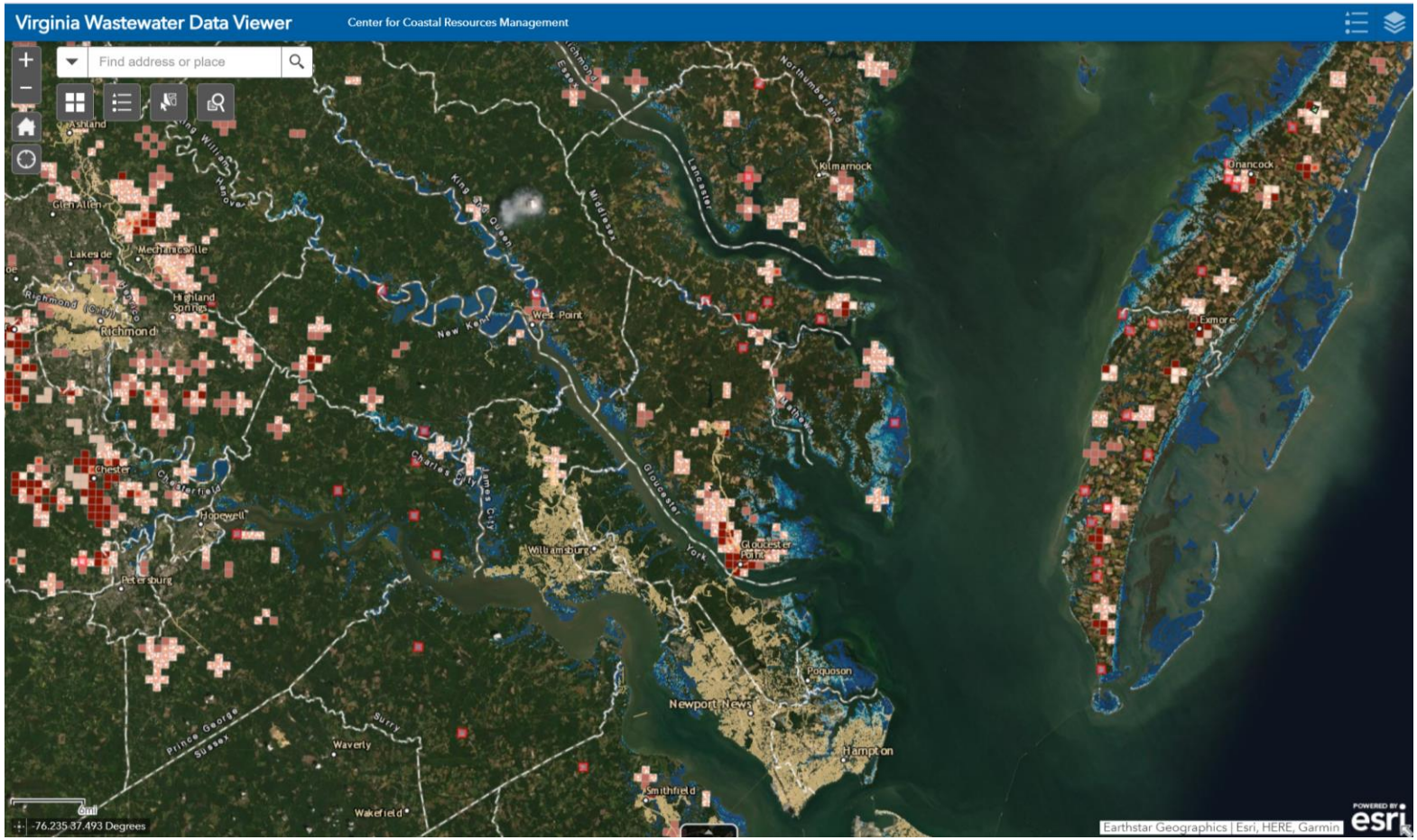
ARPA Funding For Well and Septic

- 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



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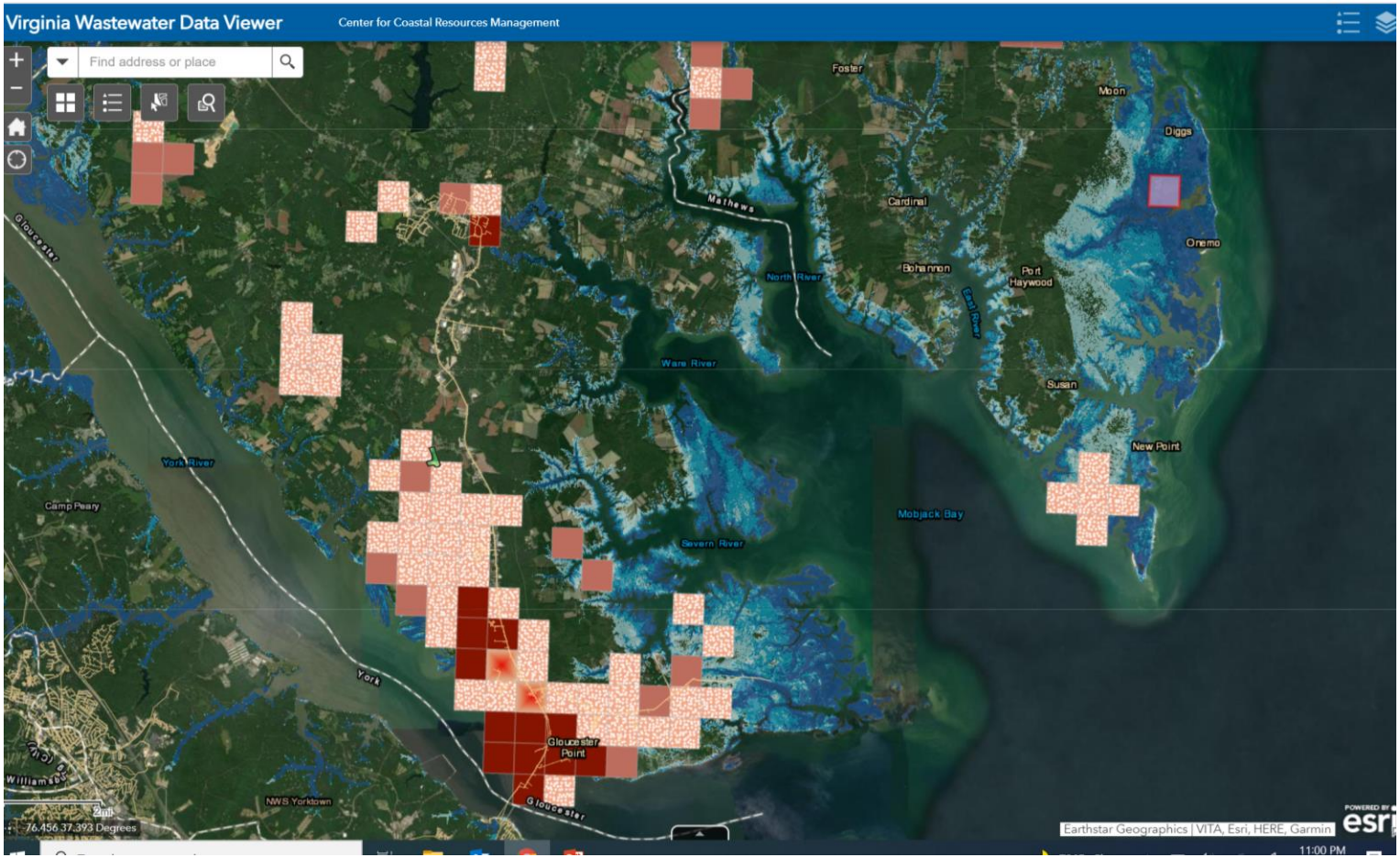
Assessing At Risk Septic Systems



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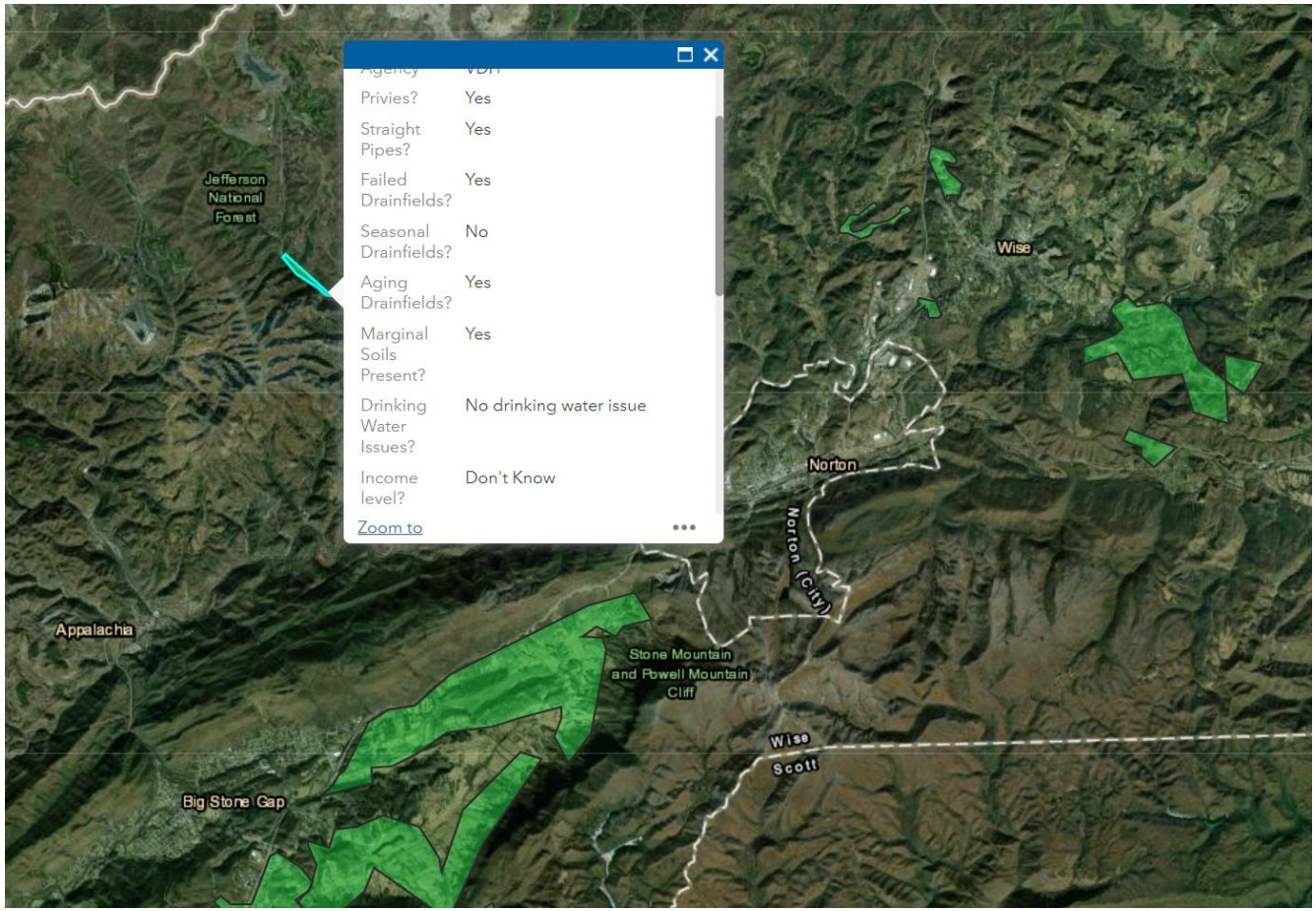

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Key Points of Consideration

- 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.

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