

**TESTIMONY FOR THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING,
TRANSPORTATION, AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

VIRGIN ISLANDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

35TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2023

10:00 A.M.

ROGER E. MERRITT, JR. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

VIRGIN ISLANDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



Good morning, Honorable Marvin A. Blyden, Chairperson, and other Committee members of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications, and members of the viewing and listening audience. My name is Roger E. Merritt, Jr., Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority.

I am appearing before you today with the Authority's Executive Leadership Team consisting of Luis Sylvester, Deputy Executive Director, Daryl Griffith, Chief Financial Officer, Alex Bruney, Wastewater Engineering Manager, Eloise Brown, Territorial Grant Administrator, Juanita Iles, Territorial Lead Grant Administrator, and Keith Smith, Technical Manager Wastewater Operations to provide testimony relevant to the status and future of landfills in the Territory; assessment of the tipping fee implementation, status and future of residential and business solid waste collection, the status of the Authority's operations, (including hazardous pay), the status and future plans for recycling and source separation, and the status of wastewater collection and treatment for the Territory.

Before we begin this discussion, I would like to remind the community and members of the viewing and listening audience, that when the Waste Management Authority was created in 2004 (from the Department of Public Works), the Authority was immediately responsible for the pre-existing US Department of Justice (USDOJ) solid waste and wastewater consent decrees. These consent decrees have imposed added costs beyond the normal operation of the agency, which have further increased the unfunded mandates for the agency. Nevertheless, we remain committed to our mission to provide solid waste and wastewater services for the Territory in the most environmental and cost-effective way possible.

Additionally, we must be honest and recognize that overseeing two infrastructures (solid waste and wastewater) doubles the cost for the agency to fulfill its mandates. These services are very costly, especially when you consider the Authority is tasked with maintaining a wastewater system that has



outlived its useful life, and operating and maintaining two antiquated, un-permitted landfills which should have been replaced with modern, Subtitle D facilities with liners and leachate collection systems decades ago.

Despite the formidable challenges the Authority faced from its inception, we have nevertheless strived to bring both systems into compliance with all applicable local and federal laws.

With this foundation being presented, I would now like to begin to address the issues raised in the letter of invitation.

FINANCE

The Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands has recommended an appropriation of \$35 million from the General Fund to the Authority for Fiscal Year 2024. However, the true costs for the Authority to provide solid waste and wastewater collection, disposal and treatment services is over \$50 million annually. Technically, this means the General Fund appropriation does not cover all the necessary costs (i.e., personnel, machinery and equipment, emergency repairs and maintenance, etc.) to effectively provide these critical services. As a result, the Authority continues to look for operational cost-saving measures throughout the Territory.

SOLID WASTE

The Authority manages the Territory's solid waste collection, transportation, and disposal network. Municipal solid waste is collected (i.e., from bin sites, convenience centers, public receptacles, and curbside locations) and ultimately disposed of at the Bovoni and Anguilla landfills.

Approximately six hundred tons of waste per day is disposed of daily and nearly 200,000 tons of waste is disposed of annually in the Territory's landfills. The Authority is working with our local and federal partners to receive funding to modernize our solid waste infrastructure (i.e.,



Subtitle D Landfills, convenience centers, waste diversion and source separation programs, etc.).

SOLID WASTE COLLECTION

Currently, the Authority spends \$1.8 million annually for garbage collection for 13,225 homes on St. Croix. We began collecting the town of Frederiksted on June 26, 2023, and plan on servicing the town of Christiansted during this fiscal year (which will save the Authority an additional \$1.8 million). The contracted pickup for the Concordia and Mon Bijou bin sites on St. Croix currently costs the Authority \$1,516,370.00 annually. The Authority has purchased five (5), 2024 Kenworth roll-off trucks, so that we can begin servicing those sites during this fiscal year too. This will result in annual savings of approximately \$1.2 million.

FEDERAL GRANTS UNIT-SOLID WASTE

CDBG-DR Tranche 2 Funding

The Tranche 2 subrecipient grant agreement between the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) and VIWMA has been executed. This grant provides funding for the implementation of designated projects outlined in the Tranche 2 Action Plan under the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Infrastructure Repair and Resiliency Program directly tied to the damages related to Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The Authority has submitted the applications for the convenience centers and landfill projects in the amounts of \$18,046,064.00 and \$46,760,901.00 respectively totaling \$64,806,965.00.

Convenience Centers Project (\$18,046,064.00)

The Authority is preparing to eliminate the majority of the public unmanned bin sites by constructing and operating additional convenience centers throughout the Territory, similar to the Mandahl and Peter's Rest



convenience centers located on St. Thomas and St. Croix, respectively. These solid waste drop-off facilities will be customer-friendly and designed to ensure the protection of human health, and the environment. These proposed sites will have multiple collection areas to segregate specific types of waste, which will allow the Authority to implement a waste diversion program for the Territory (e.g., recycling, construction & demolition, white goods, electronics, used oil, and scrap metal). On November 2, 2022, the Authority was issued a Notice to Proceed (NTP) for the following 5 out of 7 Convenience Centers under the CDBG-DR Grant – Tranche 2:

Convenience Centers	Location	Total Cost	30% Design, Environmental Assessment, Cost Analysis - Allotment
Mon Bijou	St. Croix	\$ 1,486,333.72	\$ 46,459.30
Estate Concordia	St. Croix	\$ 1,692,233.72	\$ 46,469.30
Cotton Valley	St. Croix	\$ 1,320,172.49	\$ 51,506.41
Cancryn	St. Thomas	\$ 1,915,726.37	\$ 53,753.20
Red Hook	St. Thomas	\$ 1,470,086.35	\$ 46,459.30
Bournefield	St. Thomas	\$ 1,742,933.65	\$ -
Susannaberg Transfer Station Upgrade	St. John	\$ 8,418,578.15	\$ -
Total Convenience Centers Budget		\$ 18,046,064.45	\$ 244,647.51

This officially authorized the Authority to use an engineering firm to complete the designs, the environmental assessments; the cost analysis; advertise the Request for Proposals (RFP) and receive bids to design and build the centers. The Authority is prohibited from taking any action for construction activities until VIHFA has issued a NTP specifically for those activities, as outlined in the Project Agreements.

Thus far, the Authority has used engineering consultants to conduct the Environmental Assessments on all approved applications and has submitted them to VIHFA for review and approval. After the environmental



assessments are completed, a report will be published, and a public comment period will be conducted. The Federal Consistency Determination (FCD) Pre-Application Meetings with DPNR required for the WMA Convenience Centers for St. Thomas was held on June 21, 2023, and the St. Croix FCD was held on June 29, 2023. VIWMA has incorporated DPNR's comments, and the RFP for the St. Croix sites is currently being advertised.

VIWMA is working with the Virgin Islands Housing Authority (VIHA) on a lease agreement for the Bournefield site, which the Authority needs to be eligible to receive funding for this site. VIHFA will grant the Authority the NTP based on the Letter of commitment from VIHA. This application is in the final approval stage, and we expect to receive a decision soon. The Susannaberg Transfer Station Upgrade application is completed and is also in the final stages of approval by VIHFA.

Landfill Project (\$46,760,901.00)

Included in the CDBG-DR Tranche 2 funding are the Southeast Fill project for the Anguilla Landfill on St. Croix and the partial phased closures (Phases 1-6). The Southeast fill area will increase airspace and give the Authority additional time to select and build a new integrated solid waste management facility on St. Croix slated in the CDBG Tranche 3 allocations. The proposed closure of the Anguilla Landfill will comply with existing DOJ Consent Decrees. VIWMA is in the application stage of this project to receive the necessary funding, and has complied with the request of VIHFA by receiving support letters from the DOJ, VIPA and DPNR. VIWMA is currently working with DPNR on all permits needed for these projects. Additionally, the Authority is working with the Virgin Islands Port Authority (VIPA) to finalize the Anguilla landfill lease. The VIPA and VIWMA attorneys are working together to update the lease, establishing VIWMA's site control. This collaboration between VIWMA and the various local and federal agencies will ensure this project is completed by the grant expiration deadline of September 2026.



CDBG-DR Grant – Tranche 3 (\$100,000,000.00)

The funding has been obligated in VIHFA's CDBG-MIT action plan and VIHFA is currently working on developing the grant application, so VIWMA can apply for the funds. This funding is earmarked for the following projects:

- Bovoni Landfill Expansion Project - Design, Permits, Assessments, Site Acquisition
- Bovoni Landfill Closure Project - Design, Environmental Assessments, Survey
- Anguilla Landfill Closure Project (Phases 7,8) - Design, Environmental Assessments, Survey
- New Integrated Solid Waste Management Facility St. Croix - Design, Permits, Assessments
- New Integrated Solid Waste Management Facility St. Croix - Site Acquisition

VIWMA will also incorporate a request for Demolition Grinders in the budget to VIHFA. This would decrease the amount of non-hazardous solid waste, construction, and demolition (C&D) material received from various Virgin Islands demolition projects. The proposal recommends the acquisition of (2) two Low Speed Demolition Grinders one on St. Croix and one on St. Thomas, along with trained personnel, and associated costs.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – Public Assistance (PA) Funds

The Authority has continued to work with local and federal agencies to review damages and formulate projects, resulting in the obligation of 16 FEMA category A and B solid waste projects to date. These projects total \$16,095,847.05. Ten projects have been reimbursed, five fully reimbursed and five partially reimbursed. The total reimbursement to the Authority thus far is \$11,823,160.28. Currently, project worksheets amounting to \$4,272,686.72 are being reviewed and/or processed for reimbursement or payment to the Authority.



DPNR Solid Waste Grant, Waste Diversion Grant (\$6,000,000.00)

DPNR was awarded the EPA Solid Waste Grant, (Waste Diversion) in FY 2021 and has worked with the Authority on the workplan. On July 18, 2023, DPNR issued the NTP for the Waste Diversion Grant. We will work in concert with the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (“DPNR”) through this grant agreement to plan, design, and implement an Integrated Sustainable Materials Management Program. This project will address the management of post-storm solid waste issues and develop a long-term sustainable materials program that addresses historic shortcomings and increases preparedness for managing waste materials from everyday life and future hurricanes or other natural disasters. The Authority will develop waste diversion programs that focus on extending the life of useful materials on island and the permanent removal of several waste streams that currently end up in the Territory’s landfills. Through public education and outreach programs, convenient disposal, and legislation, we intend to implement long term initiatives that will be geared towards making waste diversion part of the day-to-day function of all Virgin Islanders. This project will address the following:

- Various materials that are imported and disposed in the Territory (e.g., glass, metal, plastic, paper, and food waste)
- Develop plans to divert numerous materials through recycling back into use for the citizens of the USVI to build community resiliency
- Prevent organic waste fires at the landfills
- Conserve landfill airspace
- Create new beneficial materials for local use
- Greatly increase disaster debris response capacity
- Provides modularity in system to appropriately respond to storm debris

TASK 1 – Integrated Sustainable Materials Management Plan (ISMMP)

This task is to develop and begin implementing an Integrated Sustainable Material Management Plan (ISMMP) that will be a comprehensive source reduction, source separation, recycling, composting, reuse,



repair, and final disposal program. The reuse and repair portions will leverage private company resources to manage materials. WMA with its contractors will be the lead authors of this document. A new Solid Waste Coordinator/Staff Engineer will be hired to work full time coordinating the ISMMP development and will report to the Senior Engineer.

We are currently advertising the job description for a Sustainable Materials Coordinator, who will be responsible for administering the Territory's solid waste diversion/recycling program. This includes planning, budgeting, procurement, implementation, coordination, promotion, inspection, data collection and monitoring required to achieve program objectives, to comply with Territorial, and Federal policies, rules, and regulations. A Standard Operating Procedure for handling organics, beginning with source separation will be developed in conjunction with this Grant.

Vegetative Debris

The Authority currently diverts and stores green waste in designated areas of the landfill in each district. These stockpiles are a hazard for fires. The Authority has been working with multiple agencies to extinguish a fire at the Bovoni Vegetative Debris area since September 14, 2023. Funding from the DPNR/EPA grant will most likely eliminate any future fires caused by organics because compost or fertilizer will be produced using a horizontal grinder and trommel screen. The final product will be used for agricultural purposes or seeded and utilized for use on the landfill. An excavator, wheel loader and service truck will be required in each district to aid in the operational process.

We will develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for handling organics. Organics will be inspected for quality and stockpiled for processing. The next stage is to shred the material. The organics will be run through the horizontal grinder. The material will be mixed using a wheel loader, then distributed into windrows, with water added to increase the moisture content. Monitoring of the windrow contents for



moisture and temperature will continue for approximately 6 to 8 months while it processes. The final product will be screened using the trommel screen and then relocated using a wheel loader and stockpiled in an area for pickup by end users. There are plans for WMA to acquire a Gore Cover System to accelerate the composting process from 6 to 8 months to 4 months to have a final product). This system is planned to be acquired from other funding sources and will also aid in storm debris management.

Tipping Fees

The implementation of the tipping fees has been a tremendous success for the Authority thus far. It has given much needed funding to the Authority to help bring the landfills into compliance and help pay outstanding debts. Below you will find the tipping fee rate schedule.

Solid Wate Tipping Fees	Year	Amount
	2022	\$2.50 per CY
	2023	\$3.75 per CY
	2024	\$5.00 per CY
	2025	\$6.25 per CY
	2026	\$7.50 per CY

The implementation of the fees is one of the first steps the Authority has taken to become a self-sufficient, autonomous agency. Please see below actual tipping fees collected since the implementation of the program.



Tipping Fees Monthly Revenue Report

Month	FY 2022 Actual Collection	FY 2023 Forecasted Collection	FY 2023 Actual Collection	FY 2024 Forecasted Collection	FY 2023 Variance \$	FY 2023 Variance %
October	1,950	110,180	91,571	146,539	(18,609)	-17%
November	-	110,180	178,606	146,539	68,426	62%
December	900	110,180	140,115	146,539	29,935	27%
January	102,621	153,932	195,949	204,729	42,017	27%
February	143,732	215,597	196,108	286,744	(19,489)	-9%
March	155,281	232,921	229,408	309,785	(3,513)	-2%
April	150,980	226,470	200,955	301,205	(25,515)	-11%
May	147,330	220,994	208,521	293,923	(12,474)	-6%
June	147,288	220,933	194,882	293,841	(26,051)	-12%
July	132,391	198,587	194,175	264,120	(4,412)	-2%
August	172,261	258,392	199,644	343,661	(58,748)	-23%
September	135,905	203,857	-	271,130	(203,857)	-100%
					-	
Total YTD	1,290,639	2,262,223	2,029,933	3,008,757	(232,290)	

WASTEWATER

The Authority's facilities collect, treat and discharge nearly four (4) million gallons of wastewater per day. St. Croix accounts for approximately 1.6 million gallons per day, St. Thomas accounts for approximately 2.1 million gallons per day, and St. John accounts for approximately 130,000 gallons per day. Our wastewater infrastructure in St. Croix consists of approximately 120 miles of sewer lines; fifteen (15) pump stations, 1800 manholes and one (1) wastewater treatment plant. For the district of St. Thomas/St. John, there are approximately three hundred (300) miles of sewer lines; fifteen (15) pump stations, 2500 manholes and seven (7) wastewater treatment plants. Veolia operates the Harold A. Thompson and Pedro A. Francois Wastewater Treatment Plants on the islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix, and the contract expires in 2027. The construction and operation of these wastewater treatment plants has brought the GVI and the Authority close to fulfilling the thirty-year Consent Decree. The Authority started to identify staff in FY2022 and has hired a Wastewater Operations Manager to help oversee operations at both plants upon expiration of the contract. This will potentially result in annual savings of nearly \$4 million. We would like to remind the community and members of the viewing and listening audience to keep Fats, Oils and



Grease (FOGs) out of the sewer system. Disposing of FOGs down the drain or toilet causes problems in the sewer lines. Any form of grease when poured down the drain, mixes with fluid in the sewer lines, and clings to the walls of the sewer pipes. This creates a blockage over time, which eventually causes overflows of untreated sewage into the environment or into your home and these overflows are unpleasant and very expensive to clean up. Please wipe oily pans dry and dispose of small quantities of cooking oil into used closed containers and discard them into a trash can.

Federal Grants Division – *Wastewater*

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

FEMA continues to assist VIWMA with emergency repairs, maintenance upgrades and permanent repairs to the wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure throughout the Territory because of major damages sustained after the 2017 hurricanes. VIWMA continues to repair and maintain our wastewater treatment plants, pump stations and gravity sewer lines.

STX Wastewater: VIWMA submitted the prudent replacement cost estimate (Part D) in early May to FEMA. On June 1, 2023, FEMA completed the cost estimate and provided a revised award of \$1.25 billion. On July 26, 2023, the Authority along with Witt O'Brien conducted a joint peer review with FEMA to review the final aspects of prudent replacement. Based on this discussion, the prudent replacement revised cost will most likely increase beyond the \$1.25 billion. This project is on track to be obligated before the end of the calendar year. The VIWMA has created an Implementation Plan and Capacity Assessment to formulate the strategic and staffing plan to complete the replacement of all the sewer lines and upgrade pump/lift stations on St. Croix. FEMA has provided \$30 million in initial funding for the Architectural & Engineering (A&E), allowance in advance of the fixed cost subaward specifically for the preliminary A&E design for the replacement of the entire wastewater system on St.



Croix. This project has provided the Authority with a head-start on the development of a RFP, for a design contract, while also maintaining the ability to validate the ongoing scope of work that will be the basis of funding for the fixed cost offer. In essence, the advanced funding will provide the funding source for preliminary A&E support to develop a wastewater master plan and conceptual design of the St. Croix wastewater system. The VIWMA has divided the St. Croix sewer system into sixteen (16) components.

Projects	Priority	Estimated A & E Cost	Approved \$30 Million A & E
LBJ	1	\$ 10,861,000.00	\$ 10,861,000.00
Mon Bijou	2	\$ 1,992,000.00	\$ 1,992,000.00
Lagoon Street	3	\$ 4,551,000.00	\$ 4,551,000.00
Bay Road	3	\$ 1,793,000.00	\$ 1,793,000.00
Humbug II	4	\$ 788,000.00	\$ 788,000.00
Humbug I	4	\$ 916,000.00	\$ 916,000.00
Gallows Bay	5	\$ 2,454,000.00	\$ 2,454,000.00
Concordia	6	\$ 999,000.00	\$ 999,000.00
Campo Rico	7	\$ 2,140,000.00	\$ 2,140,000.00
Barren Spot	8	\$ 3,762,000.00	\$ 3,762,000.00
William Delight	9	\$ 5,318,000.00	\$ -
Pearl Larsen	10	\$ 414,000.00	\$ -
Ricardo Richard	11	\$ 192,000.00	\$ -
Old Barracks	12	\$ 715,000.00	\$ -
Fig Tree	13	\$ 8,355,000.00	\$ -
Anguilla (upstream sewers only, WWTP not included)	16	\$ 18,129,000.00	\$ -
VIWMA Master Plan	TBD - Pending Approval	\$ 2,500,000.00	\$ -
Totals		\$ 65,879,000.00	\$ 30,256,000.00
* Completed RFP - Out for Bid			
* RFP in Process - Engineering			

The LBJ Sewershed Infrastructure project has received four (4) proposals. The Authority completed oral interviews last month for LBJ and will award the project at the next scheduled Board meeting. Currently, the Mon Bijou Sewershed is being advertised and will issue addendum 2 to the RFP this month based on feedback from the respondents, which will extend the submission deadline. The Engineering department is reviewing the Lagoon Street Sewershed and Bay Road Sewershed RFP comments provided by the Office of Disaster Recovery before advertising.

STT/STJ Wastewater: The mapping of non-compliance event locations has been completed, and when the wastewater infrastructure inventory is complete, the package will be submitted to FEMA as supporting



documentation for the prudent replacement request. The Authority expects to have this completed and sent to FEMA by the end of this year.

USEPA – Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) through the Department of Public Works and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources provides funding to the States and Territory for the construction of public wastewater treatment projects. These projects, which constitute a significant contribution to the nation's water infrastructure, include sewage treatment plants, pumping stations, collection and intercept sewers, rehabilitation of sewage systems, and the control of combined sewer overflows.

VIWMA has received funding for FY 2015 through 2022 totaling \$34,287,162.00 for pump station upgrades, sewer lines repair, wastewater treatment plant upgrades and specialty equipment.

Current VIWMA CWSRF Major Projects:

- Christiansted Sewer System Rehabilitation – The Christiansted Town Wastewater Collection System in St. Croix is comprised of over 33,000 linear feet of sewer lines ranging from 4 inches to 12 inches. These sewer lines primarily run along the route of the streets, where they collect and transport sewage via gravity from the businesses and homes to the Christiansted Interceptor and ultimately to the LBJ Pump Station in Christiansted. This system requires rehabilitation and repair to certain sections to help extend the useful life of the system due to age and general wear and tear. This project will improve the water quality of the Christiansted Harbor. Marco St. Croix was awarded this \$8 million project and started construction on May 15, 2023. The project is forecasted to be completed by May 2025.
- Krause Lagoon Rehabilitation – The Krause Lagoon Interceptor is a 24” and 30” diameter reinforced plastic material (RPM) line that transports sewage from LBJ force main and the



surrounding areas to the Figtree pump station in Christiansted, St. Croix. The NTP was issued to the contractor on July 18, 2023. This project will upgrade a portion of the sewer line and has an estimated budget of \$5,418,972.90.

- Mangrove Lagoon Wastewater Treatment Plant – Engineering is preparing the scope of work and cost estimate for project submission to DPNR and EPA for their review and approval. This project will include the Mangrove Lagoon roof replacement and numerous system upgrades and replacements to the plant. The cost of the project is currently estimated at \$6 million.

The Authority is currently preparing scopes of work for other EPA projects, and the Authority is continuously working with DPNR, who is assisting us with funding that helps in the upgrades, maintenance, and rehabilitation of this wastewater treatment plant along with others.

American Rescue Plan Act - ARPA

President Biden’s Rescue Plan through the V.I. Office of Management and Budget provided funding under the Clean Water: Centralized Wastewater Collection and Conveyance. VIWMA was approved \$10,594,500.00 to support approved Wastewater Infrastructure Projects for repairs and maintenance of the wastewater treatment system for the St. Thomas/St. John District; Harold G. Thompson Wastewater Treatment Plant was awarded \$310,000.00, Donoe Road Sewer Infrastructure Rehabilitation Design was awarded \$10,000,000.00 and George Simmonds Wastewater Treatment Plant Replacement was awarded \$284,500.00, and thus far has received 25% (\$2,648,625). The Authority is in the process of finalizing the scope of work for these projects.

GERS HAZARDOUS DUTY PAY

The Authority continues to work with the GERS to determine eligibility for VIWMA employees as it relates to Hazardous Duty Retirement status. As you may be aware, the VI Code outlines specific criteria that must be met to qualify (i.e., eligible employee working with chlorine, sewage, or carcinogens, Peace



Officer as defined in Title 5, Section 3561). We have done our internal assessment based on the applicable definitions outlined in the Code and have since submitted those employees' names who fit the GERS criteria for inclusion. The next step in the process is to estimate calculations to determine what this potential change would mean financially to both the employee and the Authority. Factors that impact this process include the employee's salary, years of service, age, bargaining unit, etc. Preliminary information and guidance from the GERS demonstrate that the change may not be beneficial in all cases.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Created a Dashboard which will provide real-time information for all wastewater facilities throughout the Territory.
- Biobot WW testing – collaborating with VIDOH to continue providing COVID-19 data for the GVI by testing wastewater at 5 locations and the testing has expanded to include Respiratory Panel: Influenza A&B, and RSV; High Risk Substance Panel: Nicotine, Cocaine, Methamphetamine, and Fentanyl.
- Established a collaborative working relationship with the DOJ and other local and Federal agencies.
- Tipping Fee revenue – \$3.32 million (January 10, 2022 – September 30, 2023).

CHALLENGES

While the Authority has made great strides over the last year, significant challenges remaining include:

- Aging facilities and infrastructure: VIWMA's wastewater infrastructure is over 50 years old and most of the system has outlived its useful life. FEMA's approved prudent replacement for STX and future approval for STT/STJ will help address this. Unlined landfills, which will be replaced by modern, subtitle D facilities.
- Lack of heavy equipment (i.e., excavators, bulldozers, compactors, etc.).



- Insufficient budget appropriations to cover basic operational costs: The true annual costs to operate the Authority are approximately \$50 million.

SUMMARY

The goal of the Authority and the Executive Team is to oversee our solid waste and wastewater operations in a more proactive/maintenance-based manner. However, we must have the appropriate funding available to support this vision. The grants and other available funding sources we discussed will and have assisted us with improvements. Additionally, we are taking the necessary steps toward the goal of self-sufficiency by charging solid waste tipping fees and a plan for proposed wastewater fees for septage haulers along with residential solid waste fees will be submitted this fiscal year, so the Authority can continue creating additional revenue streams.

I close by sincerely thanking the Authority's hard-working staff for their dedication and commitment to not only their day-to-day jobs, but in supporting the future vision of the Authority. I would also like to thank the Bryan/Roach Administration and the members of the 35th Legislature for their support as we continue to address the U.S. Virgin Islands issues public health and safety issues related to solid waste and wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal. This concludes my testimony, and my Team and I remain available to address any questions.

Thank you.