

**TESTIMONY FOR THE 36TH LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE  
ON HEALTH, HOSPITALS AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**VIRGIN ISLANDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**

**MONDAY, JULY 7, 2025**

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**INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CHIEF**

**FINANCIAL OFFICER**

1 Good day, Honorable Senator Ray Fonseca, Chairperson, and other Committee  
2 members of the 36<sup>th</sup> Legislature's Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human  
3 Services, and members of the viewing and listening audience. I am Daryl Griffith, the  
4 Interim Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer of the Virgin Islands Waste  
5 Management Authority.

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7 The Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (VIWMA) plays a crucial role in  
8 providing wastewater services, including collection, pumping, treatment, and  
9 disposal to approximately 60% of the Virgin Islands' residents. More than 4.5  
10 million gallons of wastewater flow through the sewage pipes daily, heading toward  
11 the wastewater treatment plants on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. The collection  
12 system comprises gravity and pressure pipes of various sizes, as well as several pump  
13 stations.

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15 The wastewater infrastructure in the territory is aged and failing, presenting  
16 significant challenges for the Authority. The system is becoming increasingly  
17 expensive and difficult to operate and maintain daily. Recently, problems have  
18 multiplied due to hurricanes and tropical storms.

## Challenges with the system

The territory's wastewater infrastructure is operated and maintained by the Wastewater Division of VIWMA and is comprised of three (3) sections.

1. **Sewer Collection System** – from the point where a customer's sewer line (lateral) is connected to a main sewer line and runs by gravity through pipes and manholes until it arrives at the pump stations.

Unfortunately, the collection system is arguably the oldest section of the sewer infrastructure, comprising clay, concrete, and cast-iron piping that still make up more than two-thirds of the system. Currently, there are over 10 locations in the territory deemed catastrophic failures (failures where sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) affects the territory's residents, environment, and the cost of repairs exceeds \$100,000.00).

These older, clay pipes are also more susceptible to cracking, blockage, and groundwater infiltration. In some cases, upon excavation, the Authority finds only soil and a faint outline indicating where the pipe once lay. In other cases, the top of the pipe collapsed inward, trapping stone and soil, which caused a blockage. One such severe case is the 42-inch gravity main and 24-inch force main on Veterans Drive, Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas. Failure on that line is not only worsening but expanding. The failure is restricting flows east of the Cancryn pump station. The Authority has contracted with a contractor to create a bypass underneath the walkway by Banco Popular, STT to avoid sewage flowing into the ocean while

simultaneously making the scope of work for approximately 800 feet of 42inch sewer gravity line and 60 feet of 24-inch force main, estimated cost of repairs is over 2 million dollars.

The Gut Sewer system is another concerning area in Charlotte Amalie. After tropical storm Ernesto, the Savan Gut sewer system was inundated with dirt and stone compacted into the maintenance holes and pipes, restricting sewer flow in over 1,500 feet of line. The Authority is currently working on a scope of work for the RFP to remove debris, allowing for the repair of the sewer line.

The Authority, through the Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR), has also issued a draft contract to a selected contractor for the North Central area of St. Croix. This contract is in collaboration with WAPA, DPW, and ODR. This contract is to design and build services for the underground pipes that cover North Central St. Croix. The contract is an Architectural and Engineering Construction Agreement to provide Progressive Design-Build services for the assessment, architectural and engineering designs, and construction, covering Mon Bijou, Barren Spot, Humbug 1 & 2, and Fig Tree. It comprises over 171,000 linear feet of sewer lines ranging from 4 to 24 inches in diameter, approximately 710 manholes, 1,800 service laterals, and 25,000 linear feet of sewer force main.

For the Southwest portion of St. Croix underground work, the Authority, through

60 ODR, plans to issue an RFP on July 15, 2025.

61 For St. Thomas, the Authority in collaboration with ODR and the other mentioned  
62 entities has issued an RFP that covers the eastern portion of the island and encompasses  
63 the Bovoni Pump/Mangrove Nadir Pump Stations, Upper/Lower Tutu Valley Pump  
64 Station, Mangrove Lagoon/Turpentine Run Advance Wastewater Treatment Plant  
65 (AWWTP) and the Vessup Wastewater Treatment Plant (VWWTP).

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68 2. **Sewer Transmission** – The Authority currently operates and maintains thirty-one  
69 (31) pump stations throughout the territory. Over time, many have far exceeded their  
70 life expectancies. The Authority has taken a two-pronged approach to the pump  
71 station issue, implementing both an early action and long-term action program. As  
72 part of the early action program on St. Croix, twenty-six (26) 20hp sewerage chopper  
73 pumps, control panels, pipes, various fittings, and other equipment were purchased  
74 for all small stations (81.25% of St Croix pump stations). The exact process is in  
75 progress for all small pump stations on the islands of St. Thomas and St. John.

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77 To address the LBJ pump station, two pumps were purchased: One bypass pump that  
78 is currently installed and an in-house pump that is expected to arrive in 2.5 months.

79 For the Figtree pump station, the Authority is currently evaluating submittals from

an RFP for the replacement of all pumps and equipment, including spares. The long-term goal, territory-wide, is to repair and, when necessary, demolish and construct new stations with an emphasis on modernization and standardization. This would improve reliability and reduce the maintenance costs. The VIWMA currently has 31 pump stations, and no two are alike.

**3. Wastewater Treatment** - The Wastewater treatment facilities treat the sewage before it can be released into the environment. Waste Management Authority has eight (8) Wastewater Treatment Facilities in the territory; all have been found with some non-compliance by the EPA. It is increasingly challenging to maintain the required effluent quality for many in need of complete replacement and other upgrades. The plants not only suffer with age but also bear scars of previous hurricanes. Like the collection and transmission systems, the Authority has been reacting to a multitude of trouble calls, wrestling with the high cost of emergency purchases, and increased employee overtime. Facilities that once benefited from automated systems are no longer functional. It is especially apparent for facilities like Bordeaux, Mangrove, and Vessup WWTP on St. Thomas, as well as Cruz Bay and George Simmions WWTP on St. John.

As a result of all these factors, in 2024, the Authority launched the *Wastewater*

*Optimization Program.* The program is a practical roadmap for achieving reliability, sustainability, and optimization of wastewater infrastructure. Fortunately for the Territory, a FEMA assessment of the Territory's sewage system conducted after the 2017 hurricanes concluded that repairs could not be made to stabilize the system. FEMA concluded that the entire system had to be prudently replaced. Starting with **St. Croix**, on October 25, 2024, FEMA obligated PW 1404 with a net cost of One Billion, Nine Million, Nine Hundred Forty-Six Thousand, Three Hundred Sixty-Two Dollars and Forty-Three Cents (\$1,009,946,362.43). For **St. Thomas** on January 17, 2025, FEMA obligated PW 100216 with a net cost of Two Billion, One Hundred Eighty-Eight Million, Six Hundred Fifty-Five Thousand, Nine Hundred Fifty-Four Dollars and Sixty-Six Cents (\$2,188,655,954.66). **St. John** has also been approved for FEMA Wastewater funds. FEMA obligated PW 100219 on January 17, 2025, for a net cost of Eighty-Three Million, Five Hundred Eighty-Nine Thousand, One Hundred Seventy-Nine Dollars and Twenty-Six Cents (\$83,589,179.26). The Authority has aggressively begun procuring the necessary equipment and services since these funds were obligated.

In the years to come, the territory's sewer infrastructure should finally see the promise of real change. Still, we should all be aware that this type of infrastructure change is complex and involved because of the enormous amount of planning, engineering, construction, and the immense number of moving parts.

120 It takes time to build better, and as we can see, the system is not waiting. The  
121 health and beauty of the Virgin Islands are always on the minds of the employees of  
122 the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority.

123 I would like to take this time to thank both the Solid Waste and Wastewater teams at  
124 the Waste Management Authority. We have seen significant improvements in garbage  
125 collection and wastewater management. To all the hard-working men and women of  
126 the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority, thank you for your hard work.

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128 This concludes my testimony, the Authority appreciates the Senate's oversight, and  
129 my team and I stand ready to answer any questions that you may have.

130 Thank you.

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