

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

VIRGIN ISLANDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2025

1:00 P.M.

DARYL GRIFFITH, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

VIRGIN ISLANDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



Good day, Honorable Senator Marvin A. Blyden, Chairperson, and other Committee members of the 36th Legislature's Committee on Housing, Transportation, & Telecommunications and members of the viewing and listening audience. I am Daryl Griffith, The Interim Executive Director and CFO of the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority.

I appear today with the Authority's Director of Wastewater, Keith Smith, the Director of Solid Waste, Sheena Esannason, Chief Legal Officer, Florence Kahugu, Director of Enforcement, Anderson Poleon Sr., and the Director of Human Resources, Erika Callwood, to provide testimony on the VIWMA's short and long term goals, staffing updates, payroll challenges, vendor payments, tipping fees, wastewater treatment plants, pump stations operations and capacity, landfills within the territory, garbage collection, oil collection and other challenges facing the Authority.

The Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority currently has a staff of 170 employees; of those, 104 are unionized. The Authority has two unions that have been in negotiations for a couple of years but have finally concluded the negotiations, and the contracts are pending Board approval. The Authority has similar hiring difficulties as many other government agencies and is constantly recruiting. Waste Management has been searching for engineers to assist with important prudent replacement projects and recently hired one engineer on St. Croix. Additionally, two officers graduated from the most recent 2024-2025 Virgin Islands Police Academy. Although recruitment and retention have been difficult, another stumbling block is the lack of space in the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix District, there is a shortage of office space. The St. Croix building has an upstairs that needs approximately \$1.5 million to complete the buildout. On St. Thomas, an office complex is needed.



Wastewater Division's Testimony

The Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (VIWMA) is crucial in providing wastewater services, including collection, pumping, treatment, and disposal to approximately 60% of the Virgin Islands' residents. More than 4.5 million gallons of wastewater daily rushes through those pipes, heading toward the wastewater treatment plants on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. The collection system consists of gravity and pressure pipes of various sizes and several pump stations.

The wastewater infrastructure in the territory is aged and failing, presenting significant challenges for the Authority. The system is becoming increasingly expensive and difficult to operate and maintain daily. Recently, problems have multiplied due to hurricanes and tropical storms. The problem is caused by the stormwater drainage system being connected to the wastewater system. The system is bombarded with excessive grease, rags, and other small debris on a typical day. For example, chopper sewage pumps are designed to manage some level of trash and rags, anything 3 inches or less, but no pump in the world is designed to handle rock, especially the 7-8-inches or more stones received after severe flooding. The Authority lost six pump stations just after Tropical Storm Ernesto, 3 of which were critical stations. On St. Croix, two were lost just hours apart on the same day. Currently, we are still struggling with those stations, cleaning rocks and debris from the collection gravity system.

In 2024, the Authority launched the Wastewater Optimization Program. The program is a practical roadmap for achieving reliability, sustainability, and optimization of the wastewater infrastructure. Fortunately for the Territory, when a FEMA assessment was conducted of the Territory's sewage system after the 2017 hurricanes, it was concluded that repairs could not be done to stabilize the sewage 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). FEMA will pay 98% of this cost, which is Nine Hundred Eighty-Nine Million, Seven Hundred Forty-Seven Thousand, Four Hundred Thirty-Five Dollars and Eighteen Cents (\$989,747,435.18), and the Territory is responsible for the remaining 2%, which is \$20.2 million. The Authority has aggressively begun procuring the necessary equipment and services in the four months since these funds were obligated.

The procurements began with LBJ Sewershed in St. Croix. VIWMA contracted with Engineering Design Technologies (EDT) to provide professional architectural and engineering design for the LBJ Sewershed, the pump station responsible for most of the sewer leaks in Christiansted. This Sewershed is being redesigned and will be moved from its current location. The Authority has also purchased a bypass pump, which should arrive in the Territory in mid-March to assist with the LBJ system. We are also currently advertising the procurement for the purchase of all sewage pumps on St. Croix. This is broken down into thirteen (13) small pump stations and three (3) large ones.

STX Small Pump Stations
1. Barren Spot Pump Station
2. Bay Road Pump Station
3. Gallows Bay Pump Station
4. Williams Delight Pump Station
5. Humbug # 1 Pump Station
6. Humbug # 2 Pump Station
7. Concordia Pump Station
8. Old Barracks Pump Station
9. Pearl B. Larsen Pump Station
10. Ricardo Richards Pump Station
11. Coastal Pump Station
12. Campo Rico Pump Station
13. Mon Bijou Pump Station

The large pump stations being advertised in addition to LBJ are Figtree Pump Station and Lagoon. These



bids are due to the Authority by the end of February 2025. The pump arrival time after an order has been placed and payment made will take approximately 6 months because these pumps must be built. When they arrive, the VIWMA team will install the pumps at the pump stations.

The Authority also has an RFP out through the Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR) called Bundle 4 in collaboration with WAPA, DPW, and ODR. This RFP is for the design and build services for the underground pipes that cover North Central St. Croix. The Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (VIWMA), in partnership with the Office of Disaster and Recovery (ODR), is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) from submitters capable of entering into an Architectural & Engineering and Construction Agreement to provide Progressive Design-Build services for the assessment and Architectural & Engineering Designs and Construction of Mon Bijou, Baron Spot, Humbug 1 & 2 and Fig Tree.

The VIWMA, in partnership with ODR and the successful submitter, shall enter into a mutually binding full-service Agreement. The sanitary sewer collection systems included in this RFP encompass the north-central portion of the island to the south-central area of the island. It comprises over 171,000 linear feet of sewer lines ranging from 4 to 24 inches in diameter, approximately 710 manholes, 1800 service laterals, and 25,000 linear feet of sewer force main. The Authority is working on Bundle 6 with ODR to encompass the rest of St. Croix.

On the Boardwalk in St. Croix, VIWMA installed a 10-inch PVC pipe from a manhole located at a restaurant's site to a pipe installed under the Christiansted Boardwalk. The leaking pipe created a hazard to the environment and public health. The Authority installed a plug in the inlet to prevent sewage/wastewater from flowing into the sea. The Authority is currently working to devise a permanent solution to this problem.



Next, we will discuss 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). FEMA will pay 98% of this cost, which is Two Billion, One Hundred Forty-Four Million, Eight Hundred Eighty and Eighty-Two Thousand, Eight Hundred Thirty-Five Dollars and Fifty-Seven Cents (\$2,144,882,835.57), and the Territory is responsible for the remaining 2%, which is \$43.7 million. The Authority has started creating the Scope of Work for the RFP to purchase the pumps for the St. Thomas Pump Stations and the Scope for the repair and rebuild of the pump stations. Below is the list of the STT pump stations.

STT Pump Stations
1. Airport Pump Station
2. Amco/Bournefeild Pump Station
3. Bovoni Pump Station
4. Brassview Pump Station
5. Cancryn Pump Station
6. Long Bay Pump Station
7. Lower Tutu Pump Station
8. NaNa Gut Pump Station
9. Nadir Pump Station
10. Subbase Pump Station
11. Upper Tutu Pump Station

Concerning the current emergency with the Cancryn pump station, the Authority purchased three (3) new pumps and fittings, and delivery is expected in early March 2025.

The Authority is also working with ODR on Bundle 5 for St. Thomas to advertise the RFP for the underground work.

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) with a Federal Share of 98%, which is \$81.9 Million that FEMA will pay, and the Territory is responsible for the remaining 2%, which is \$1.6 million. The pump stations, pumps, wastewater treatment plants, and underground piping will also be worked on in STJ. Below is the list of the pump stations.

STJ Pump Stations
1. Cruz Bay Ejector Pump Station
2. George Simmons Pump Station
3. Pond Mouth Pump Station
4. Power Boyd Pump Station

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.

It takes time to build better, and as we can see, the system is not waiting. The question is, how will we maintain the newly built system? The answer is a 100% allocation of the sewer funds to the VIWMA. The Authority is capped at \$1 million for these funds when over \$ 2 million was generated last year, and with the additional properties added to the system; the amount collected will exceed \$4M. The Authority needs these funds to maintain the sewer system now and in the future.

I will now move on to the Solid Waste Division of Waste Management. The Bovoni landfill is near capacity, and the Authority is currently seeking to acquire property around the landfill to increase its size. The Authority is working with Oasis to complete and submit a CDBG-MIT application for the Bovoni landfill expansion.

The Bovoni landfill is inundated with used oil containers. The Authority’s bins and landfills have been the dumping site for used cooking oil from restaurants. The VIWMA team collects illegally dumped used



cooking and Motor Oil from around the bin sites at least four times a week. In STT, we see most illegally dumped cooking oil at Raphune Hill, Cancryn Site, and Solberg. However, all the sites have illegally dumped oil. As such, the landfill is inundated with used cooking oil. Almost 90% of the oil at Bovoni is disposed of unlawfully. In an effort to remove the oil from Bovoni, the Authority executed a contract for the disposal of oil on December 30, 2024, and the contractor started the process this February. The VIWMA has also ordered 7 – 500-gallon containers for Bovoni to store used oil as they come in the landfill so the dangerous situation of hundreds of gallons of used oil stacked in the landfill does not occur again. Restaurants must use a permitted hauler to dispose of cooking oil. Territorial “permitted” haulers are Environmental Waste Solutions, NOR Trucking, LLC, Remac Waste, Island Grease and Oil, and Cruzan Environmental Services. The VIWMA Enforcement Division is policing the restaurants to reduce the amount of used oil that makes its way to the landfill. When Inspectors visit a business, they examine essential components to determine compliance. They are looking for proportionately sized grease traps based on food service, preparation, disposal needs, proper installation, easy accessibility, regularly scheduled maintenance records, and cleaning and disposal practices documentation.

The used tire situation is another glaring issue at both Bovoni and Anguilla landfills. The Authority has over 400,000 used tires in Anguilla and an equivalent amount at Bovoni. Over 250,000 tires are estimated to be littered in the bushes throughout the Territory, which brings the total number of tires needing to be disposed of to over 1 million tires. Businesses must store tires in an enclosed area and not expose them to the elements and provide proof of disposal practices such as hauling or shipping invoices and/or receipts.

The Senate passed Act 8370, which allowed VIWMA and IRB to charge tire fees. IRB charges \$1 for tires under 18 inches and \$2 for tires over 18 inches. IRB also charges excise tax for tires. IRB has generated over \$2 million in fees from these programs and has submitted the funds to the Department of Finance. Waste Management has received none of these funds. If possible, the Authority requests from the Senate that



the IRB funds be sent directly to Waste Management so that we can begin tackling this long-standing issue of used tires in the Territory.

Below is the Tipping Fee revenue generated by the Authority.

VI WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY Tipping Fee Revenue Report

Month	F2022 Actual Revenue	FY 2023 Actual Revenue	FY 2024 Actual Revenue	FY 2025 Actual Revenue	FY 2025 Projected Revenue
October	\$ 1,950.00	\$ 90,986.29	\$ 170,998.17	\$ 241,600.50	\$ 250,000.00
November	\$ -	\$ 176,539.07	\$ 176,178.93	\$ 197,916.04	\$ 250,000.00
December	\$ 900.00	\$ 139,751.13	\$ 190,867.04	\$ 229,159.18	\$ 250,000.00
January	\$ 102,621.09	\$ 194,548.89	\$ 251,440.83	\$ 262,756.06	\$ 312,500.00
February	\$ 143,731.57	\$ 196,108.29	\$ 244,903.68	\$ -	\$ 312,500.00
March	\$ 155,280.69	\$ 238,091.88	\$ 245,949.30	\$ -	\$ 312,500.00
April	\$ 150,979.97	\$ 203,666.18	\$ 224,341.00	\$ -	\$ 312,500.00
May	\$ 147,329.58	\$ 212,001.57	\$ 245,742.50	\$ -	\$ 312,500.00
June	\$ 147,288.48	\$ 201,658.64	\$ 235,636.61	\$ -	\$ 312,500.00
July	\$ 132,391.07	\$ 210,282.40	\$ 278,508.82	\$ -	\$ 312,500.00
August	\$ 172,261.33	\$ 219,968.70	\$ 262,427.79	\$ -	\$ 312,500.00
September	\$ 135,904.95	\$ 186,519.46	\$ 247,931.42	\$ -	\$ 312,500.00
Total YTD	\$ 1,290,638.73	\$ 2,270,122.50	\$ 2,774,926.09	\$ 931,431.78	\$ 3,562,500.00

The Authority has taken over garbage collection on St. Croix from Strawberry to Frederiksted. This was done because the Authority could not afford the rates submitted by the contractors on the 2023 RFP. All contractors submitted the same rate of \$30 per pick up for house-to-house garbage collection. It has been challenging for the Authority to manage this task. However, with the appointment of the new Solid Waste Director, Ms. Shena Esannason, we have seen a tremendous improvement in garbage collection on STX in the last month.



Convenience Centers Project Update (\$18,046,064.45)

Project Overview

The Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority (VIWMA) received Notices to Proceed for five of seven planned Convenience Centers under the CDBG-DR Grant - Tranche 2. This authorization allowed VIWMA to engage an engineering firm to complete environmental assessments and advertise Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for design-build firms to construct the centers.

Mon Bijou, Cotton Valley, and Concordia Convenience Centers (St. Croix)

The VIWMA received authority to Use Grant Funds (AUGF) from the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) to develop the Mon Bijou, Cotton Valley, and Concordia Convenience Centers on St. Croix. This approval enabled VIWMA to advertise, select, and contract a design-build firm for these centers. VIWMA is finalizing the contract to commence the design and construction phase.

Additionally, VIWMA collaborated with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Division of Coastal Zone Management (DPNR-CZM) to secure the approval of the Federal Consistency Determination (FCD). On January 7, 2025, the Coastal Zone Management Committee granted final approval.

Red Hook Convenience Center Project

The Red Hook Convenience Center application has been approved and is now undergoing environmental review. Since the proposed site is located within Flood Zone A and a 100-year floodplain, the project must complete an eight-step Environmental Review Process as required under [Executive Order 11988 and/or 11990] and HUD regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 Subpart C. This process evaluates the project's potential environmental impact and involves federal and local agencies, interest groups, and the public.



The Eight-Step Decision-Making Process includes:

1. Determine if the proposal is in a floodplain or wetland
2. Engage the public in the decision-making process (public notice)
3. Evaluate practical alternatives
4. Identify adverse and beneficial impacts
5. Develop mitigation measures for adverse impacts
6. Reassess alternatives
7. Announce and explain the final decision to the public (public notice)
8. Implement the project with appropriate mitigation measures

The entire environmental review process will take approximately 6 to 8 months.

Bournefeild and Susannaberg Transfer Station Upgrades

VIHFA has approved the Bournefeild and Susannaberg Transfer Station upgrade applications. VIHFA is currently preparing Project Agreements and the Notice to Proceed, which will allow for the initiation of environmental assessments. Meanwhile, VIWMA is working with DPNR to obtain Federal Consistency Determination (FCD) approval.

VIWMA remains committed to advancing these critical waste management projects, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations while improving waste disposal infrastructure across the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Authority has many more glaring issues that stem from one problem. The VIWMA does not generate enough revenue to cover its expenses. The Authority is currently underfunded by \$5 million. The Authority needs to generate revenue to fix the issues on the Solid Waste side. Below is the current cost for Territorial Garbage Collection Services.



Service St. Croix	Annual Fee
House to House Garbage Collection	\$ 3,546,129.00
Three Bin Sites Collection	\$ 1,300,000.00
One Convenience Center	\$ 300,000.00
Public Housing Garbage Collection	\$ 369,900.00
Government Agencies Garbage Collection	\$ 215,460.00
Schools Trash Collection	\$ 270,972.00
Green Waste Disposal	\$ 564,000.00
Total STX	\$ 6,566,461.00
Service St. Thomas	Annual Fee
House to House Garbage Collection	\$ 146,800.00
Bin Sites Collection	\$ 2,626,298.00
One Convenience Center	\$ 215,280.00
Public Housing Garbage Collection	\$ 137,236.00
Government Agencies Garbage Collection	\$ 66,352.00
Schools Trash Collection	\$ 185,262.00
Green Waste Disposal	\$ 600,000.00
Total STT	\$ 3,977,228.00
Service St. John	Annual Fee
Removal of Bins from STJ to Bovoni Landfill	\$ 1,966,167.00
Barge Services	\$ 812,136.00
Port Fees	\$ 35,000.00
Total STJ	\$ 2,813,303.00
Solid Waste Employees Salaries and Benefits Cost Territory Wide	\$ 6,265,172.00
Grand Total	\$ 19,622,164.00

The Authority will present to the PSC next month a plan to charge residents \$360 a year per person to help cover these costs and get the VIWMA out of the cycle of being unable to pay contractors for the work performed. The Virgin Islands is the only jurisdiction that does not charge for garbage collection.

The Authority will bring to the PSC a formal request for approval of a Solid Waste Garbage Collection Fee. The Garbage Collection Fee is designed to cover the cost of house-to-house, bin sites, convenience centers, public housing, government agencies, and schools' garbage collection. The Garbage Collection Fees are designed to cover the costs of solid waste garbage collection throughout the Territory.



The goal of the Authority is to oversee solid waste and wastewater operations in a more proactive/maintenance-based manner. However, we must develop the appropriate funding available to support this vision. We are taking the necessary steps toward the goal of self-sufficiency. The Authority is striving ahead to meet its goals and mission to protect the public health and to preserve the environment of the US Virgin Islands.

This concludes my testimony, the team and I remain available to address any questions.

Thank you.