

## Wastewater Treatment

# Restoration of state's waters is urged

BY JOSEPH J. CROCE

**W**ater is a precious natural resource and is predicted to be a defining issue for the 21st century. Virginia is blessed with tremendous water resources extending from mountain streams to powerful rivers to the popular Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. These waters not only provide our drinking water, but they also support our transportation, industry, tourism, recreation and overall quality of life. Our waters are a great competitive advantage for Virginia in a global economy and are critical to our future prosperity.

Virginia has made significant investments in the effort to protect its water resources and ensure that future generations continue to enjoy healthy, abundant water resources. In the past five years alone, the commonwealth, local governments and private industry have invested more than \$1 billion in upgrading wastewater treatment that, once complete, will remove 15.33 million pounds per year of nitrogen and 0.84 million pounds per year of phosphorus from Virginia's tidal waters and the Chesapeake Bay. This is a major accomplishment and benefits all of Virginia's citizens and visitors.

Improving wastewater treatment represents a cost-effective, reliable and immediate means of protecting our waterways. While we have made important progress, the job is not complete, and additional pollution reductions are needed to restore our waters to full health. This work will require leadership from the commonwealth and a strong partnership with local communities. Fortunately, industries, local governments and citizens across Virginia stand ready to do their part in restoring the health and vitality of Virginia's waters.

Virginia's General Assembly established in statute a framework to share the costs of wastewater treatment upgrades at publicly owned wastewater facilities, recognizing the shared responsibilities and benefits of both the state and the locality for such projects. This structure has served the commonwealth, its localities and its environment well.

Under this framework, the state has invested \$483.5 million over the past five years, achieving significant improvements to water quality, as well as contributing jobs to the local economy. Over the next five years the commonwealth's share of projects needed by 2017 totals \$300 million.

Our coalition of leading representa-

tives of industry, local governments and citizen environmental groups urge Gov. Bob McDonnell to include in his two-year budget the authority to issue \$300 million in bonds to meet the commonwealth's obligation for its share of wastewater treatment projects.

These bonds will not all be needed immediately. They will be spread over five years but will provide assurance to the localities, which must initiate and implement these projects, that the commonwealth will be a reliable partner in this effort. This assurance will not only advance the completion of essential projects for improving Virginia's waters, but will also create local jobs, ameliorate utility rate increases on citizens and businesses, take advantage of the favorable bond market and provide available infrastructure capacity to help expand existing businesses or attract new ones. This commitment will also help ensure that Virginia maintains its leadership role in meeting its Chesapeake Bay cleanup commitments.

When one considers how much our waterways shaped our history, support our daily lives and will mean to our future, a commitment to fund \$300 million over five years is a wise and strategic investment. We hope the governor and

### Groups represented

Joseph Croce is writing on behalf of a coalition of organizations that have joined together to support the commonwealth in a strategic approach to investing in clean water. This coalition includes:

- ◆ Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- ◆ Virginia Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies
- ◆ Hampton Roads Sanitation District
- ◆ Hopewell Regional Waste Water Treatment Facility
- ◆ James River Association
- ◆ Virginiaforever
- ◆ Virginia Municipal League
- ◆ Virginia Association of Counties
- ◆ Virginia Municipal Stormwater Association
- ◆ Virginia First Cities

the General Assembly will continue this proven and effective mechanism for meeting Virginia's obligations and providing for the future prosperity of the commonwealth.

Joseph J. Croce is director of environmental health, safety & security for the Virginia Manufacturer's Association. Contact him at [jcroce@vamanufacturers.com](mailto:jcroce@vamanufacturers.com).