

Small Steps Lead to Big Results NOWRA 2023

Lance Gregory
Division Director
Virginia Department of Health



Welcome to Virginia

What makes Virginia such a wonderful place?



Great onsite industry

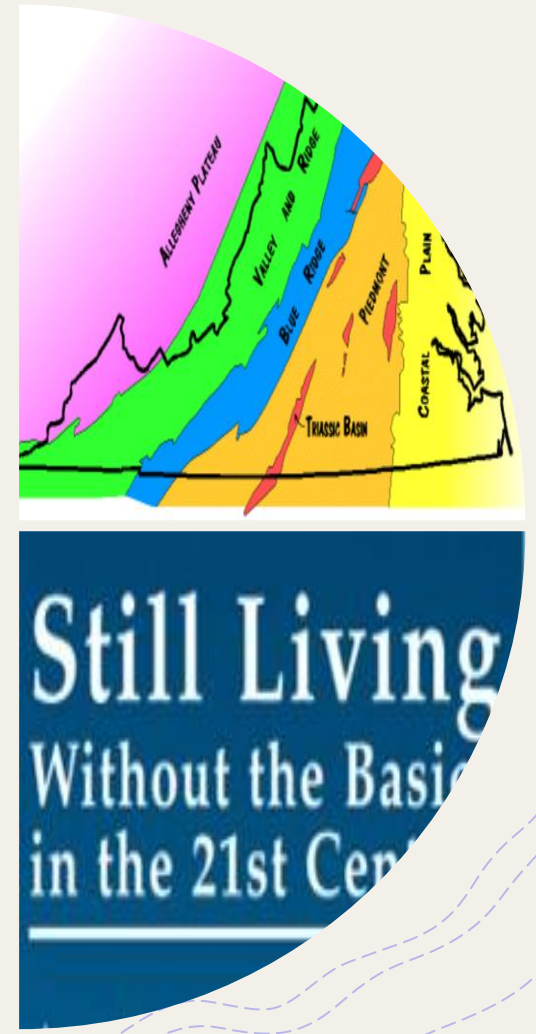
- + Licensed designers.
- + Licensed installers.
- + Licensed operators.
- + Environmental Health staff in every locality.
- + Industry organizations.



Virginia Onsite
Wastewater Recycling Association



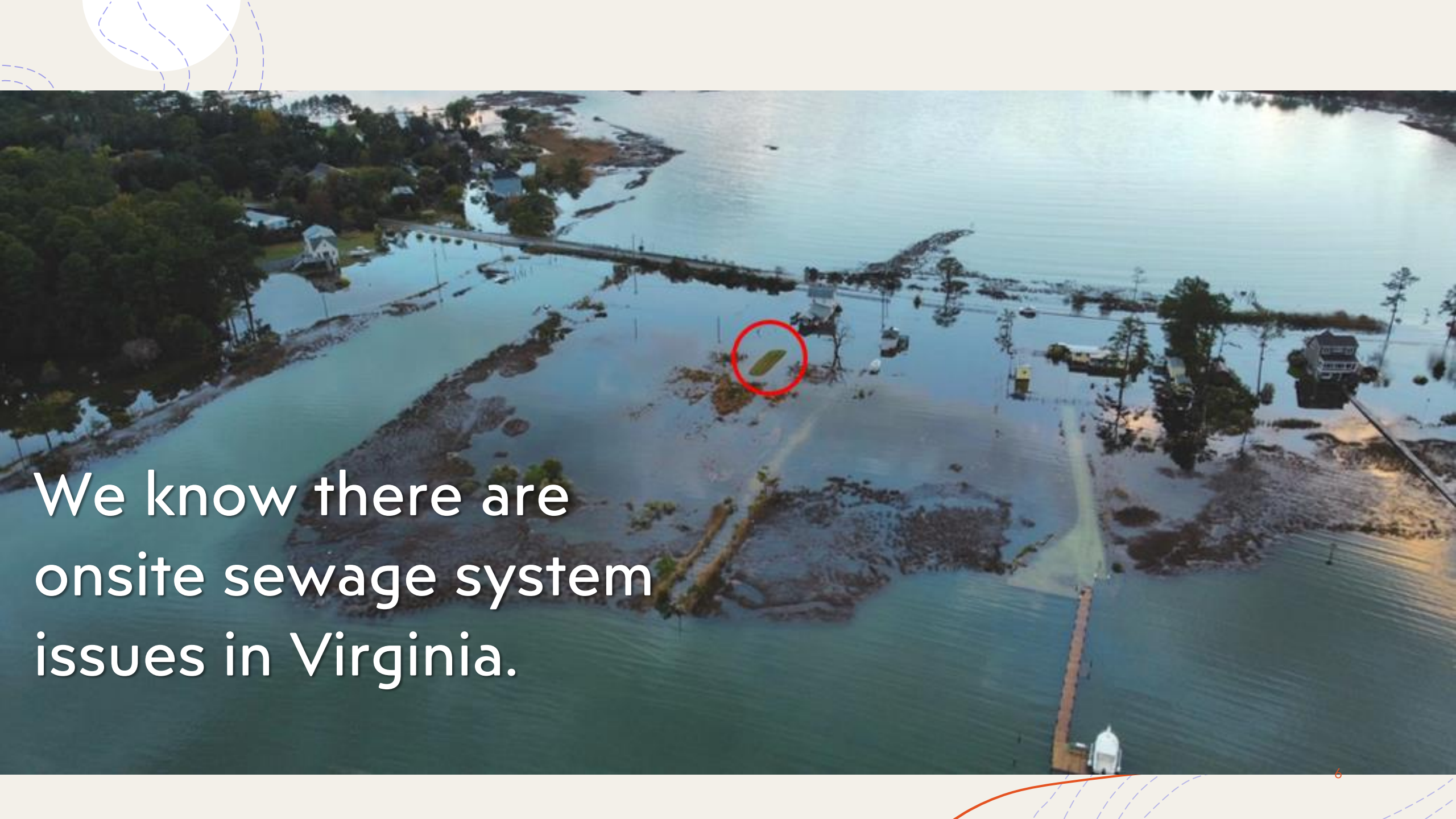
Unique state for
onsite sewage.





Who else thinks their state has a great onsite industry?

Who else knows their state has many people in need?



We know there are onsite sewage system issues in Virginia.



It's okay to admit that we know there are wastewater infrastructure needs.

How do we fix it?

How do we address those needs?

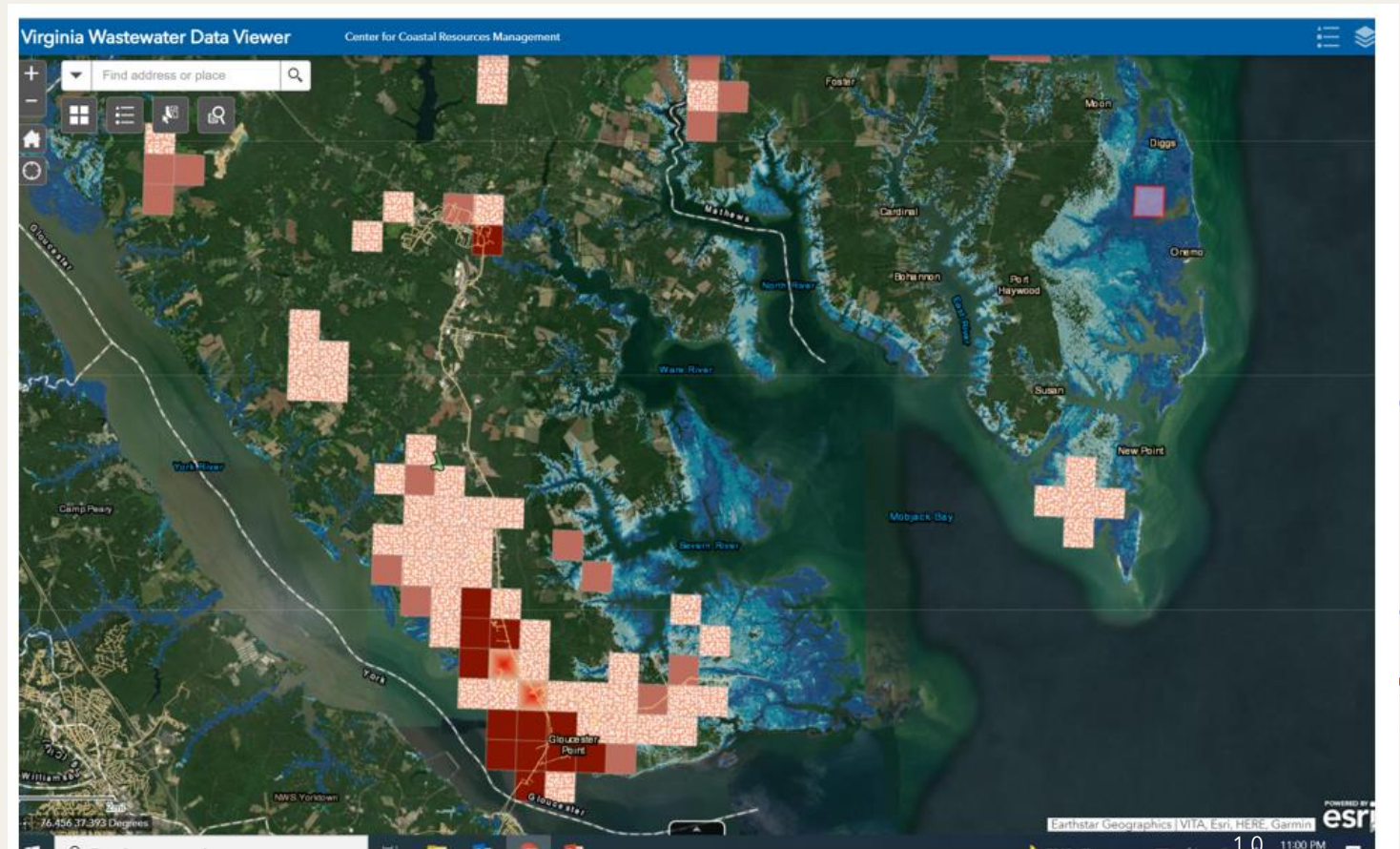


The First Step.

- NOWRA 2015
- Develop a simple term to define the issue.
- Wastewater Islands



Addressing the need caught on.



August 2018	December 2018	March 2019	July 2019	October & December 2019
Initial meeting with Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources	Award \$500,000 grant from Virginia Environmental Endowment & Smithfield Foundation	Ask to speak at the Environment Virginia Symposium	Joint letter of agreement creating the Wastewater Infrastructure Working Group (WWIWG)	WWIWG meetings. Need for VDH staff identified.

Steps start to speed up.

General Assembly Starts to Get Involved

2020 General Assembly

- + Funding provided for a Wastewater Infrastructure Manager
- + COVID hits.
- + Funding pulled back temporarily.

2021 - SB 1396

- + Extends WWIWG to 2030, with reporting.
- + Requires needs assessment.
- + Allows Indemnification Fund to be used for septic repair grants and loans.
- + Consider the impacts of climate change on onsite sewage systems.

SB 1396 – Commonwealth Policy

§ **62.1-223.1**. *State policy as to community and onsite wastewater treatment.*

*It is the **policy of the Commonwealth to prioritize universal access to wastewater treatment that protects public health and the environment and supports local economic growth and stability.** To further this policy, the Commonwealth endorses (i) public education about the importance of adequate wastewater treatment; (ii) collaboration among local, state, and federal government entities, including consistent collaboration and coordination of grant requirements and timelines; (iii) the prioritized, focused, and innovative use of state and federal funding to address needs determined pursuant to § **62.1-223.3**; (iv) a preference for community-based and regional projects as opposed to cumulative and repetitive site-by-site individual solutions; (v) the use of integrated solutions across sewer and onsite wastewater treatment systems; and (vi) the incorporation of the effects of climate change into wastewater treatment regulatory and funding programs.*

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

August 2021

- + General Assembly provided VDH \$11.5 million for septic and well repairs.
- + 200% or below federal poverty guidelines.
- + \$75 million to Department of Environmental Quality for septic, straight pipe, and sewer collection system repairs.

SWAP Program 2022

- + Over 300 applications received in only 7 months; over \$7 million in projects.
- + \$1.8 million awarded to local partners.

Program provides safe water and septic to Virginians, but now it's out of funding

RADIO IQ | By Mallory Noe-Payne
Published October 26, 2022 at 9:45 PM EDT



▶ LISTEN • 4:15



Mallory Noe-Payne / RadioIQ

Sherry Angell walking on her family's property past the spring-fed system that has provided water to her house for more than 60 years.

[Program provides safe water and septic to Virginians, but now it's out of funding | WVTF](#)



Other States



NOWRA



You

Virginia is not alone.

Anyone can be the leader to take that first step.

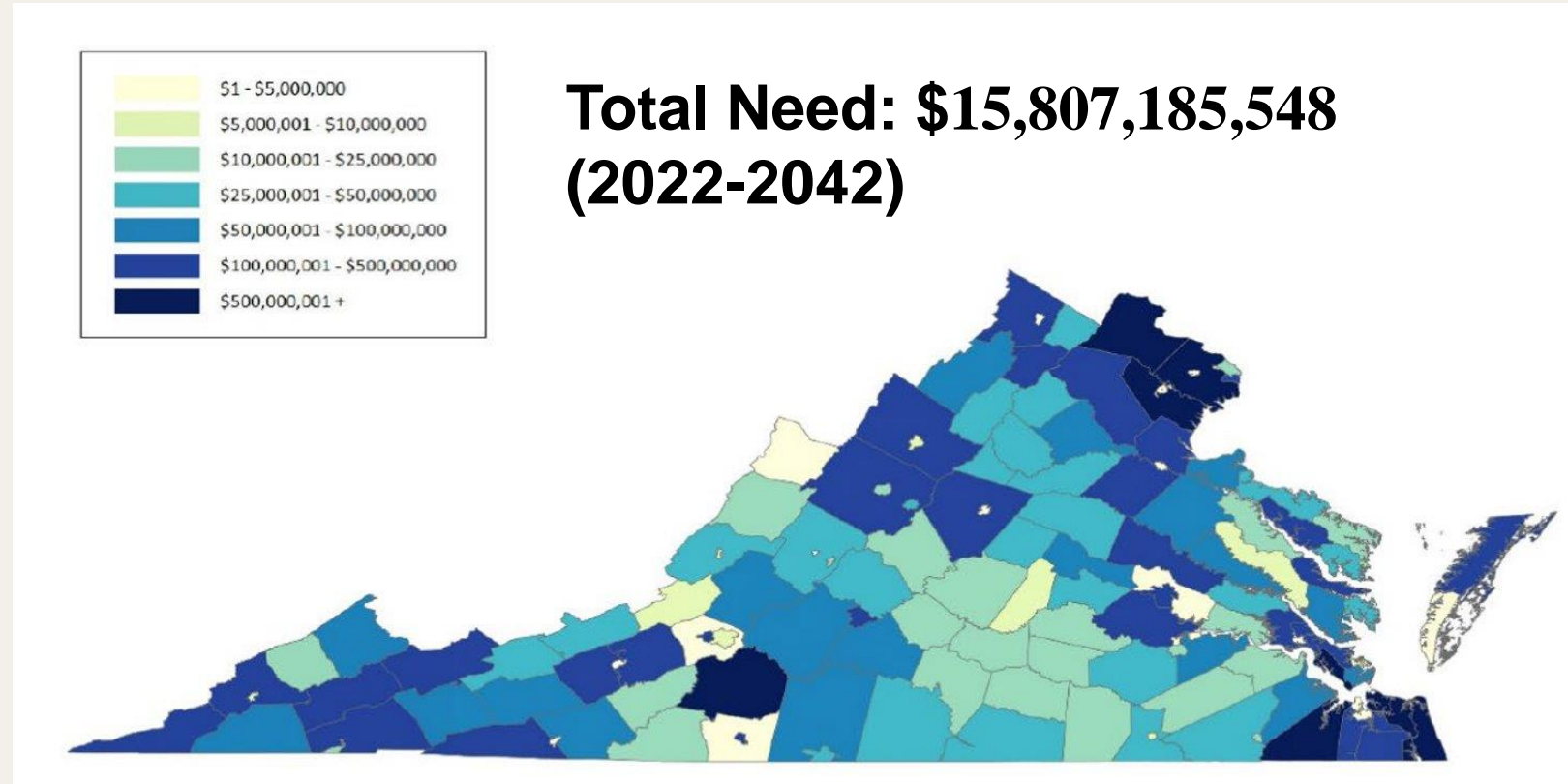
Example from rainwater harvesting
regulations.



Summary

You can be part of the change.

- Start small.
- Acknowledge the need.
- Dedicated staffing.
- Support those seeking to address the need.
- We have a long ways to go.



Source: Draft “Commonwealth of Virginia Wastewater Infrastructure Needs Assessment – 2023”



Thank You

+Lance Gregory

+Lance.Gregory@vdh.virginia.gov

+(804) 864-7491