

2026 Economic Impact Study SWIFT and Regionalization



Clean Water. Smart Investment.

Clean water protects our health and our environment. It connects everyone in Hampton Roads, sustaining life as we know it.

Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) works behind the scenes, planning, partnering and investing wisely to protect our waterways while keeping costs as low as possible. Through an innovative “One Water” philosophy and its Sustainable Water Initiative for Tomorrow (SWIFT), HRSD brings communities together as one region to tackle shared challenges like aging infrastructure, increasing environmental regulations, and the rising costs of inaction.

To learn more about HRSD’s regional approach and the many environmental benefits of SWIFT, visit www.HRSD.com.

Phase One Study Findings:

Impact on Regional Water and Financial Stewardship

Old Dominion University’s (ODU) independent economic analysis confirms that HRSD’s regional and innovation-driven approach works – delivering clean waterways, reducing future costs, and benefiting our broader economy.

1. Regional planning saves money.

Planning and building wastewater systems and addressing sanitary sewer overflows as one region avoids duplication and reduces long-term costs.

- More than **\$5 billion** in long-term costs were avoided through regional cooperation and SWIFT
- About **\$1.4 billion** in infrastructure costs were avoided by planning regionally instead of separately

2. SWIFT reduces risk and avoids higher costs later.

By investing in advanced solutions early, HRSD avoided more expensive compliance options.

- **\$3.7 billion** in regulatory compliance costs were avoided compared to alternative approaches
- An additional **\$321 million** was saved through lower-interest federally and state subsidized financing made possible by long-term planning
- Without this work in coordination and innovation, wastewater treatment rates would be **47% higher**

These costs are avoided, not just delayed or passed on.

3. The benefits extend beyond wastewater systems to our entire economy.

“Investments in clean water also support broader economic stability and growth well beyond water quality alone, including:

- Nearly **28,500** jobs supported across Virginia
- About **\$3.6 billion** added to the state’s economy
- More than **\$4.2 billion** generated in industry output

**One region.
One wastewater system.
Shared responsibility.**

\$5+ Billion
saved through
regional
cooperation
and SWIFT

47%
rate increase
avoided

\$3.6 Billion
added to
the state's
economy

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CLEAN

Wastewater is cleaned to drinking-water quality.



REFILL

Clean water is safely returned underground to refill groundwater.



PROTECT

Rivers, the Bay, and ground-water are protected for the future.

What this Study Confirms:

Three Core Tenets

Taken together, the study confirms three core tenets about HRSD's approach:



Planning ahead costs less than reacting later.

Early, coordinated investment avoids more expensive fixes down the road.



Investing once is better than paying repeatedly.

Long-lasting systems reduce the need for constant repairs and upgrades.



Long-term affordability matters more than short-term savings.

Managing costs over time protects households and communities from sharper increases later.

These conclusions reinforce the value of regional cooperation and long-term thinking.



Why This Matters for the Next 50 Years

The decisions we make today affect water quality, reliability, and costs for decades.

- Planning ahead and working together helps prevent problems before they become emergencies.
- Regional coordination reduces duplication and avoids costly fixes that disrupt service.
- Long-term investment builds systems that can handle growth and changing conditions.

Most importantly, it reflects a shared responsibility to the next generation. Thoughtful planning today helps ensure clean, reliable water resources for generations to come.

Clean. Reliable. For generations.

What's Next

The ODU economic impact analysis is part of a broader effort to understand and plan for the region's long-term water future.

Additional research is underway to examine the value of groundwater replenishment and the role it plays in protecting water supplies for future generations. Together, these efforts help guide smart decisions that protect water quality and manage costs over time.

Learn More

Scan the QR code to read the full Economic Impact Analysis or learn more about how HRSD is protecting the region's water future.

