Ambition & Necessity

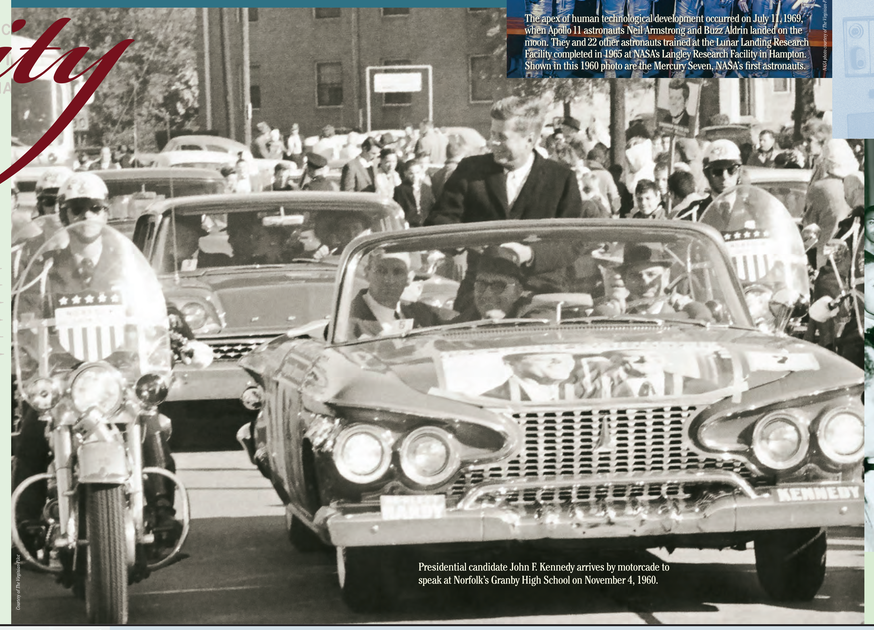
Set the Stage for Growth

1960s

Twenty years after HRSD's founding, new enabling legislation enacted by the General Assembly provided HRSD unlimited bonding authority, which allowed it to meet increasingly urgent needs for an expanding population. In 1960, an ambitious $25 million Master Plan was unveiled looking ahead to the Year 2000.

It called for six more plants, or "systems," which would require planning and coordination from each community. The top priority was construction of the James River Plant *(left)*, the area's first secondary treatment plant, to be located at the base of the Warwick River.

The apex of human technological development occurred on July 11, 1969, when Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon. They and 22 other astronauts trained at the Lunar Landing Research Facility completed in 1965 at NASA's Langley Research Facility in Hampton. Shown in this 1960 photo are the Mercury Seven, NASA's first astronauts.



Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy arrives by motorcade to speak at Norfolk's Granby High School on November 4, 1960.

"Technical innovations changed how people lived while music changed how people thought. All the while, the Cold War continued to wage."

— **Don Keko**
American History Examiner

Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at Hampton Institute, his mother's alma mater, in 1962. He would deliver his *I Have a Dream* speech one year later, a defining moment of the American Civil Rights Movement and the 1960s.

By the late 1960s, an era of protest and activism, the public was proving its willingness to support anti-pollution efforts:

"We don't have to justify pollution abatement now. Ten years ago, we couldn't have imagined a $17 million program, ultimately $35 million, getting the widespread support we have in the district."

— **Frank H. Miller**
General Manager and Chief Engineer, HRSD

Gov. Mills E. Godwin, Jr., left, and G.A. Treakle, vice chairman of the Hampton Roads Sanitation District Commission, watch as Mrs. J. Clyde Morris, wife of the commission chairman, cuts the ribbon to open the James River Sewage Treatment Plant on June 7, 1967.

The James River Plant served the rapidly growing northern sections of Newport News up to Lee Hall, and south to Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, as well as the growing communities of Poquoson and York County. Heavy commercialization of the Grafton District fueled plans for an extension of service along the Route 17 corridor.

On the Southside, the suburbanization of Princess Anne County spotlighted issues with faulty septic systems and privately run sewage treatment centers. There were similar issues in Norfolk County. The resort town of Virginia Beach was also increasingly unable to handle large summer tourist crowds, which were burdening its aging treatment plant and impacting the Lynnhaven River and Linkhorn Bay.

"One of our favorite hecklers made the remark a few days ago that this would be the most commotion ever made over the opening of a glorified septic tank. If so, it is the biggest, the most beautiful and the most expensive one the world has ever known."

— **Frank H. Miller,** *General Manager and Chief Engineer, HRSD*

February 14, 1961 The Patrick Henry Plant was acquired from the Army as a temporary treatment facility until the new James River Plant was built.

1962 The Washington and Deep Creek (Lagoon) Treatment Plants opened in Norfolk County.

1963 Princess Anne County and the town of Virginia Beach merged to become the City of Virginia Beach.

Norfolk County became the City of Chesapeake.

With their new status as independent cities, both Virginia Beach and Chesapeake became members of the Hampton Roads Sanitation District.

1964 The Western Branch Treatment Plant, in Chesapeake, opened.

1966 Agreement was reached for extension of the James River Plant system into York County and Poquoson.

June 7, 1967 The James River Plant was dedicated.

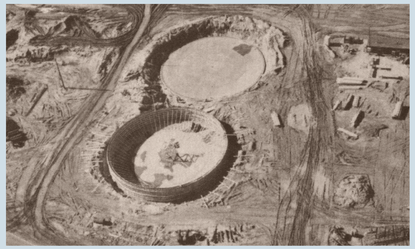
1968 HRSD was serving 800,000 people over 1,250 square miles.

February 1969 The Chesapeake-Elizabeth Plant was declared to be fully operational.

"Virginians who this week firmly protested Richmond's plan to dump solid sewage into the James River for 110 days while a sewage treatment plant is repaired and expanded dramatized an evolution in public attitudes toward protection of natural resources. Residents here and elsewhere are matching, in some cases surpassing, official agencies in insisting that pollution of the planet is intolerable."

– ***The Virginian-Pilot* Editorial** *October 3, 1969*

Construction of the Chesapeake-Elizabeth Plant *(below)* near Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base took longer than expected, but became critical to serving parts of Norfolk and the newly formed cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. Other smaller plants in Chesapeake, including Western Branch and Dozier's Point, were part of the network. On the horizon was a new plant located along the Atlantic Ocean.



In January 1969, a formal agreement was announced for joint entry into HRSD by Williamsburg, James City County and the Bruton District in northern York County.

Then, in September, Anheuser-Busch, Inc. announced construction of a new $40 million manufacturing plant in the Kingsmill Neck area of Williamsburg, to be followed by an amusement park.

The new brewery, which was projected to use 3 million gallons of water a day, presented major challenges for HRSD, but also offered an opportunity for a partnership to treat industrial wastewater.

In fact, numerous sources of pollution presented major challenges. Along with industrial wastes, there was bilge water from naval and merchant ships. There was a proliferation of marinas, with clusters of 40-50 boats in small areas. There were oil spills and other environmental accidents. HRSD worked to address these issues. The advent of the Anheuser-Busch plant would mark a turn in HRSD's role in treating industrial wastewater, and set the stage for more advances in the abatement of pollution.

The HRSD network, which included 42 pump stations in 1966, continued to grow with the addition of facilities such as the Newtown Road Pump Station, photographed during construction in 1968.