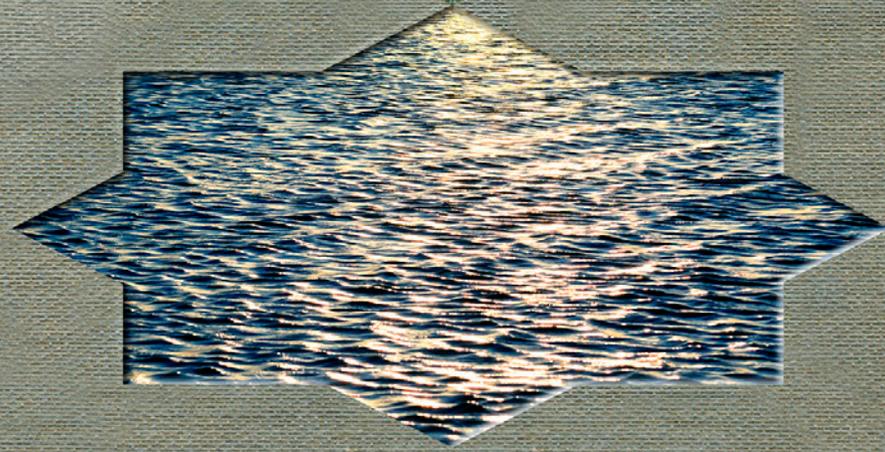


ENSURING FUTURE GENERATIONS INHERIT

Clean Waterways

HRSD's First 75 Years

BY TONY LILLIS



Visionary citizens of the region,
on November 5, 1940,
passed the referendum that established
the Hampton Roads Sanitation District,
a political subdivision of the
Commonwealth of Virginia.



As it prepares to commemorate
the 75th anniversary of its creation,
HRSD is paying tribute to those with the
courage to vote to eliminate sewage pollution
in the tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay by
publishing the story of their legacy. We hope
that by understanding HRSD's contributions to
the health of area waterways and the economy of
Coastal Virginia, those we serve will appreciate
their role in "Living the Legacy."



FEBRUARY 2015



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Ambition & Necessity

Set the Stage for Growth

At the dawn of the 1960s, ambition and necessity set the stage for the Hampton Roads Sanitation District.

New enabling legislation introduced by Delegate Lewis A. McMurrin, Jr. of Newport News, if passed by the General Assembly, would allow HRSD to unveil an expansive new vision for future development.

The bill would eliminate the \$10 million bonding limit, allowing

HRSD to meet rapidly increasing needs

for new trunk lines and treatment facilities. It would also allow HRSD to refinance its current obligations by issuing new bonds.

Chapter

THE 1960s

Financially, HRSD was more than \$8 million in debt, including \$4.5 million of the original \$6.5 million bond issue, plus \$3 million due the federal government for the Army Base Plant. They also owed \$750,000 for lease-purchase agreements, a form of loan, for sewage lines installed by localities, then purchased by HRSD.

The new legislation would consolidate a multitude of laws, rules and financial regulations under the banner of one law. Though no debt limit would be imposed, HRSD would be subject to oversight by the State Corporation Commission (SCC), like any other utility.

The Virginian-Pilot ran a January 5, 1960, headline declaring the proposed legislation's ultimate intent:

Sewer Body Seeks Financial Liberation

with proposed legislation “to cut away its shackles.” Without this legislation, they wrote, HRSD would continue to be stymied by a “lack of financial authority” and faced with “perennial construction and improvement dead ends.”

HRSD Commissioner G. A. Treacle of Norfolk County declared that without greater financial authority, HRSD “can accomplish nothing more.”

“By pinching pennies and drastic economies in operation, the sanitation needs of the district have been met. However, with the rapidly exploding population and industrial characteristics now at our doorsteps, there will be no further need for the (HRSD) commission if Mr. McMurrans’ bill is not adopted by the General Assembly, because we simply will not be able to do the job.”

The bill was ardently supported by a *Daily Press* editorial, “Solution to a Serious Problem,” noting that the current bonding limit was handicapping the commission and that if no action was taken, HRSD would be “many years behind schedule filling basic needs.” They implored that the legislation must pass. “Rapid expansion of residential areas has outraced development of sanitation facilities.”

The bill was introduced in mid-January with 14 co-sponsors and passed the House of Delegates unanimously. Ten days later, it was passed in the Senate, and Gov. J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., later signed it into law.

A \$25 Million Master Plan

Soon after, HRSD commissioned the New York consulting firm Buck, Seifert & Jost in the amount of \$22,250 to prepare a new Master Plan, which was issued in late May 1960. It envisioned six new plants to handle the expected increase of almost 625,000 new residents over the next 40 years.

Five years earlier, the same firm had issued a far less ambitious \$5 million Master Plan, which outlined pressing needs and strategies. Now, with unlimited bonding authority, the firm recommended a whopping \$25 million Master Plan looking ahead to the Year 2000.

The plan would expand its 101-square mile service area another 293 square miles and add six new sewage disposal and treatment plants or “systems” in anticipation of an additional 624,200 people over the next four decades.

The first stage was the James River System, primarily serving northern Newport News, at an initial cost of \$3,718,000 and a total cost of \$7,419,000. The Elizabeth River System was next, and would serve southwest Princess Anne County and a part of east Norfolk County. The initial cost was projected at \$2,184,000, and ultimately \$5,357,000.

The third was the Chesapeake System to service the northern and central parts of Princess Anne County with “treated effluent to be discharged into Chesapeake Bay” near Little Creek. Its cost was \$2,994,000 to start, with a final cost of \$5,641,000.

The Atlantic System would serve the northern and eastern areas of Princess Anne County with treated effluent to be discharged through a long outfall into the Atlantic Ocean. Initial costs were projected at \$3,348,000, with \$4,518,000 long term.

The last two were the Western Branch System, serving the area west and northwest of Portsmouth at a total cost of \$1,481,000, and the Washington System to serve the small area of South Norfolk and northern area of Norfolk County at a total cost \$645,000.

The overall investment on the first stage of each program was \$8,379,000, roughly \$140 per capita. The plan was described the most comprehensive plan in Virginia and declared by Chairman J. C. Morris as “most impressive.”

But HRSD could not act alone. Such investment by HRSD required similar investments by each locality for lateral lines to feed the trunk line system, requiring extensive cooperative planning between each community and HRSD. On August 3, 1960, the cities of Norfolk, Hampton and Newport News and counties of Norfolk and Princess Anne all committed to meet service expansions required by the Master Plan.

The Baby Boom Population Explosion

In 1900, Newport News had 6,650 residents while Hampton had 16,168. In 1960, the U.S. Census showed Newport News had 112,832 residents and Hampton had 89,280. In 1960, consulting engineers Buck, Seifert and Jost projected that this population would more than double on the Peninsula over the next 40 years. Even more growth was anticipated on the Southside.

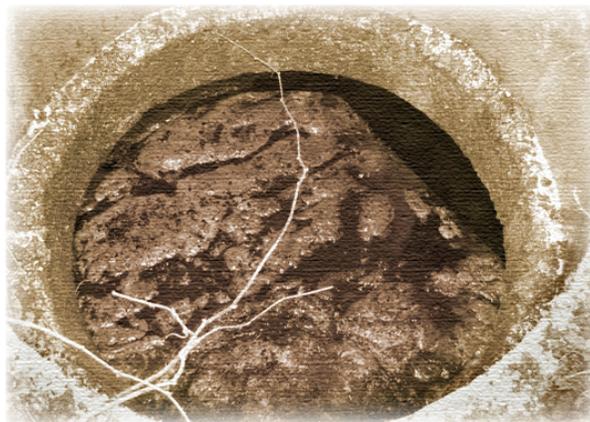
With Cold War defense spending and the baby boom continuing into the 1960s, the price tag for necessary construction came in at approximately \$22 million, with an additional \$17 million projected for later development. In the immediate term, HRSD undertook a \$15 million trunk sewer expansion program.

Other factors were also impacting the need for expansion. Tougher policies on loans and insurance requirements by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) also highlighted the need for more sewage facilities. On July 1, 1959, the FHA began turning down applications for mortgage insurance on homes in neighborhoods with septic tank problems.

Suddenly, some homeowners were “shocked” to learn they could not sell their homes without requiring new homeowners buy additional insurance coverage. For a time, loans would not be given to homes with septic systems.

Consequently, many people were unable to sell their homes or were forced to pay additional insurance. Development of new sewage facilities would eliminate the need for “controversial septic tanks” as well as for smaller more numerous private treatment plants.

The FHA strictly required that sewer septic systems work correctly and continuously, and that absorption fields not be wet or saturated which, due to soil and other issues, which was a serious problem in several neighborhood developments.



Moreover, a lack of facilities was hampering the growth beyond HRSD's present service limits, due in part to FHA frowning on the use of septic tanks. Few questioned the "unsatisfactory use of septic tanks" but they, in some cases, fed the growth where HRSD service did not reach. Ultimately, sewer extension was vital for growth, and many with septic tanks wanted to hook into city lines.

Localities were doing their part to help meet demand. In 1960, there was \$1,150,000 "loaned" to HRSD by cities to extend sewage facilities via lease-purchase agreements whereby the city paid for facilities, then HRSD purchased them. These acted as a form of financing that allowed HRSD to continue serving growing development.

There were two such agreements on the Lower Peninsula, including the Military Road-Martha Lee Drive extension for \$60,000 being built by the City of Hampton, and an older agreement with the former City of Warwick in the amount of \$157,000. Similar agreements were reached with each community in the district.

In January 1961, tie-ins began to sewer lines in the Lynnhaven section of Hampton while construction continued on Woodland-Fox Hill Road, on Armistead Avenue northwest extension (3,411 feet at \$28,000). By the end of the year, virtually all development in the City of Hampton had access to HRSD lines, but Newport News struggled to keep up with development.

Harpersville Road experienced difficulties when the contractor went bankrupt. By 1964, plans were underway for extension of service to Harris Creek Road in Hampton, and the Oyster Point interceptor line in Newport News.

The *Patrick Henry* Plant

Meanwhile, there were still ever-pressing needs. Negotiations with the Army continued over the status of the Patrick Henry Plant, which many wanted pressed back into service at full capacity to handle growth for the northern part of Newport News. Newport News City Council voted unanimously to work out an agreement with HRSD aimed at extending sewer lines to help promote "orderly growth and expansion."

The city agreed to provide \$180,000 to activate the plant and provide \$20,000 annually to help subsidize it. They also agreed to pay \$150,000 to build another outfall line to the Warwick River. It was projected that the Patrick Henry Plant would take care of approximately 25,000 people, which would provide urgently needed service for growing residential and commercial development. It would be turned over by the Army in the future at no charge, and was projected to be a temporary facility.

Newport News City Manager J. C. Biggins said that an agreement with HRSD on the Patrick Henry Plant would prevent further difficulties with the FHA, which was refusing to finance homes without a sewer hookup.

By June 23, 1960, the Department of the Army put an "excess" label on the plant, pending approval of the House Armed Services Committee and General Services Administration to help clear its way to HRSD by a projected August 15 deadline. But delays ensued.

Final transfer of the Patrick Henry Plant finally occurred on February 14, 1961, in the Charlottesville office of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). The title was received for \$50,000 and included a 48-acre property for which Newport News budgeted \$330,000 for improvements.

Raymond L. Dale was named director of the plant. Upon assuming control, HRSD sought bids for chlorination with \$31,000 budgeted for general rehab of the plant. Representative Thomas N. Downing received credit for HRSD getting title to the plant after several delays. By March 5, 1961, it was announced the plant was ready for service with projections to handle a population of up to 50,000.

Portsmouth Sues **HRSD Over Jurisdiction**

In the meantime, Portsmouth had recently annexed 10 square miles of Norfolk County, and was suing HRSD claiming jurisdiction for sewage treatment facilities that served Cradock, Hodges Manor, Rollingwood, Simonsdale, Mayflower Park and Highland Park.

HRSD had sought to freeze its boundaries to December 31, 1959, a day prior to Portsmouth annexing part of Norfolk County a day later. Portsmouth contended that costs would go down for its customers. Subsequently, the General Assembly voted to remove those areas recently annexed by Portsmouth from HRSD.

On March 23, 1961, HRSD agreed to sell 8,300 feet of sewer lines to Portsmouth for \$69,523 upon review and approval of their consulting engineers. These lines were located within the city after annexation of part of Norfolk County.

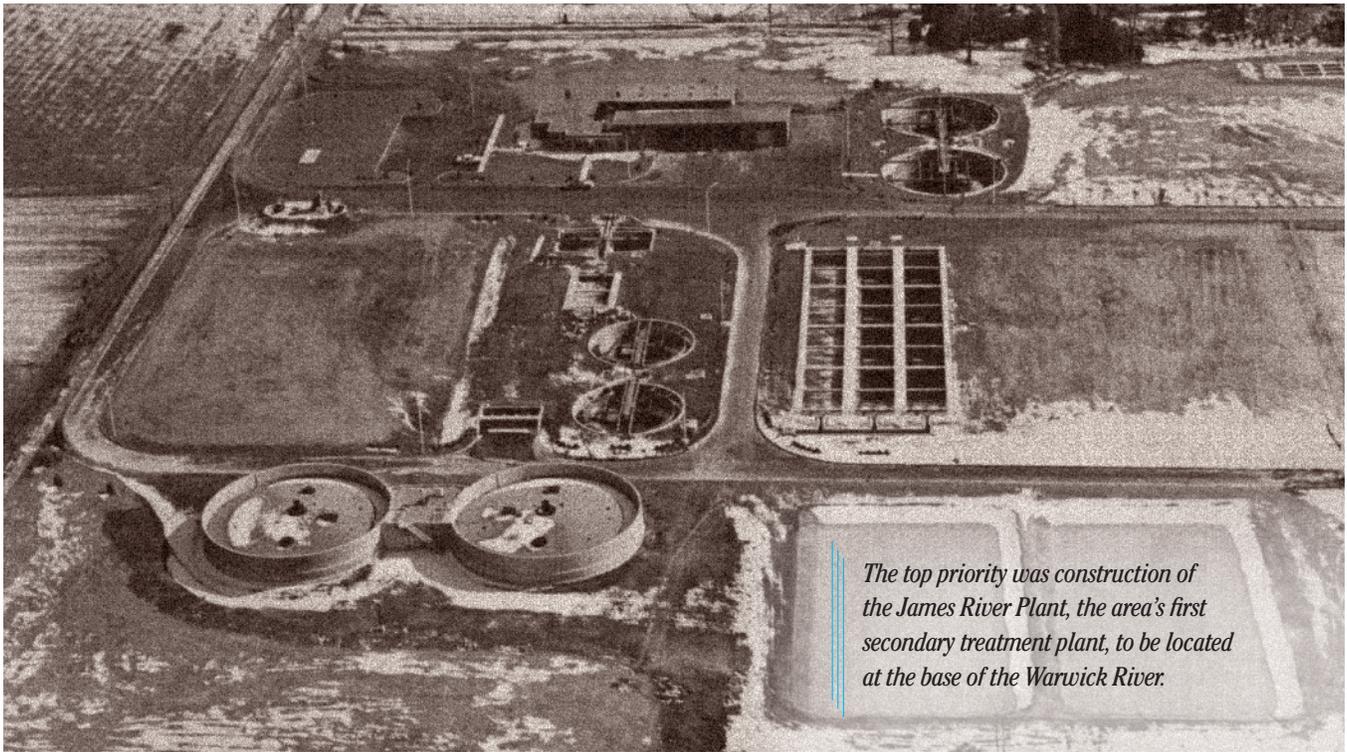
These lines had a daily capacity of 500,000 gallons, but currently were using 350,000. But that approval was denied, and on May 10, 1961, Portsmouth City Council voted to sue HRSD on their refusal to sell the sewer mains in Cradock.

Plans for *James River Plant* **Progress**

In mid-October 1961, HRSD confirmed its first priority was construction of the James River Plant. The commissioners approved a \$13.5 million building program with the plant scheduled for operation by early 1964. The \$5.9 million plant would initially be designed to process five million gallons daily (MGD) at a cost of \$1,543,000. Pumping stations were projected to cost \$170,000 with trunk sewer lines for stages one and two costing \$2,088,000. A search began for land on which to situate the new James River Plant.

The service area would include the western city limits to Hampton and all the area being served by the temporary Patrick Henry Plant. The James River Plant would have the capacity to upgrade to treat 15 million gallons daily, and be built in three stages of 5 million MGD to handle population growth. The plant was designed to help Boat Harbor handle a population of up to 400,000.

Anticipated revenue from expanding the district was projected to be \$2,670,000 by 1965, \$2,728,000 by 1966 and \$2,786,000 by 1967.



On February 3, 1962, it was announced that Newport News Councilmen William C. Bowen and Paul S. Ward would sit with City Manager Biggins to negotiate with HRSD for city prison farmland to be acquired for the plant. The 22 acres were purchased for \$38,200 in late February with closing in 90 days. In the meantime, engineering and site plans got underway.

Not surprisingly, there was strong resistance to the location from the York Waterman's Association (YWA), which feared that a plant on the Warwick River that would release effluent into the James River would adversely affect oyster harvests.

Beginning in March 1964, hearings were held that drew vocal turnouts estimated at over 250 people against the plant's location. Roy C. Insley, Jr., president of the group said they would use "every legal means to oppose the sewage plant," fearing that chlorine emptied into the river would kill fish and destroy the seed oyster beds. He said the proposed site was the "worst possible one that could have been selected."

The protest expanded to the Newport News City Council with the Virginia Watermen's Association (VWA) asking they join the protest against the plant. The group threatened to go to the governor to have the project stopped.

In April, as bids were about to be awarded, the YWA appealed to the State Water Control Board and local members of the House of Delegates to halt construction of the James River Plant.

But Frank Miller of HRSD noted that the SCWB was in "complete agreement on the site." Moreover, he said that without the plant, there would be greater pollution. He explained in a luncheon at the Peninsula Kiwanis Club that there would be two treatments before discharge.

The proposed outfall would be a 54-inch pipe extending 3,800 feet into the James River and that the treated sewage "should cause no significant depletion of oxygen in receiving waters, no deposit of settleable materials of any kind to the bottoms nearby and no bacterial build up." He said the plant would release effluent that had "a bacteriological quality superior to that of the receiving stream."

Miller indicated there was an urgent need for the plant, which over time would serve 475,000 to 700,000 people. More importantly, it would replace a series of smaller, private outfalls as population increased.

Still, the watermen urged delay. In late March 1964, the SCWB took under advisement whether the project should be postponed until completion of a \$300,000 study being made of the James River. HRSD argued that postponing construction ultimately would make the waters more polluted.

By late April 1964, final plans for the new plant, designed by Forrest Coile and Associates, were complete, with final site approvals still needed by the SWCB, along with reviews by other state and federal agencies.

On May 7, 1964, the VWA met with Governor Albertis S. Harrison to voice their concerns and to halt the project. But it was to no avail.

Rates go Up

Meanwhile, rates went up 40 percent effective January 1, 1962. But unlike a decade ago, the higher rates did not elicit any significant protests, with the *Daily Press* reporting that “thus far have accepted the need for extended service to be provided through a 40 percent increase in bills. Typical customers went from paying \$3.35 to \$4.69 quarterly.

“It’s a question of fees or taxes,” wrote the *Daily Press*, but “the job must be done.”

Said the *Ledger Star* in a February 22, 1962, “Progress has its price, and the bills now being mailed out by the Hampton Roads Sanitation District Commission are evidence of that.”

“In a sense the higher bill also represents the price of regional cooperation. Customers now receiving HRSDC service might wonder why they should worry about expanding the network to additional areas in Princess Anne and Norfolk counties and upper Newport News and Hampton. One answer is that the penalty for failing to cooperate – allowing the area’s waters to become natural sewers—is far too high a price to pay.”

Virginia Beach

Plans to Join HRSD

By January 1962, serious problems were evident in the small town of Virginia Beach, which at that time consisted of just the resort strip. The “overloaded” Virginia Beach treatment center on Laskin Road was aging and unable keep up with demand, and worse, was polluting the Lynnhaven River and Linkhorn Bay with “inadequately treated” sewage. A *Virginia Beach Sun* headline on January 26, read “Beach Sewer Plant Fouls Linkhorn Bay.”

The State Water Control Board found that “severe pollution presently exists in the vicinity of Virginia Beach Boulevard.” Moreover, “expensive subdivisions,” including Alanton, Bay Colony and Bird Neck Point were being adversely affected. The Virginia Beach plant, built in 1938 and enlarged in 1951, now presented major challenges to the health of the Lynnhaven River. The plant was processing 2.2 MGD when it was designed for only 1.5 MGD. It became so severe that the SCWB halted sewer tie-ins due to overloading.

There were also significant challenges with private treatment plants, which along with the Laskin Road facility, were overwhelming the Lynnhaven River with nutrients, threatening the sea life. Private utility companies, which were extensions of the neighborhood developments, were not considered efficient or effective, and over time brought complaints to the SCC that their rates had more than doubled.

In early February 1962, it was reported that HRSD was considering taking over the private treatment plants in Princess Anne County that discharged into the Lynnhaven River.

By mid-February 1962, there was consideration of the City of Virginia Beach “from Knott’s Island to Fort Story” be included in the HRSD as of January 1, 1963, when Virginia Beach and Princess Anne County merged into the City of Virginia Beach and Norfolk County and South Norfolk became the City of Chesapeake.

On February 28, 1962, it was announced that the new City of Virginia Beach would formally request to join HRSD, seeing advantages to consolidating sewerage service.

Then on March 1, 1962, HRSD ordered a study of financial and engineering considerations to merging its services with Princess Anne County and Virginia Beach. Meanwhile, Princess Anne County was seeking to have the southern half of the county included in HRSD.

The *Virginia Beach Beacon* on February 7, 1964 headlined: “Phenomenal growth continues in Virginia Beach.”

“The tremendous increase in the number of housing developments in the northern half of Princess Anne County in the last decade has complicated the pollution problem of Lynnhaven and its tributaries, which includes Linkhorn.”

Chesapeake-Elizabeth

Sewer System Gets Underway

The new HRSD master plan offered \$5.6 million for the Chesapeake-Elizabeth System to serve northern and central Princess Anne County, where there was heavy growth.

Unfortunately, there were delays and setbacks in securing the 23-acre site, but by February 27, 1964, *The Virginian-Pilot* announced that plans for the sewage treatment plant at Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base would be ready by June for review by the State Health Department and the Navy. Issues arose as to the length of the outfall into the Chesapeake Bay, with the Navy recommending a 3,500-foot outfall into 26 feet of water. Originally it was planned for 3,000 feet.

By spring 1964, efforts were underway to “speed work” on the \$6.5 million Chesapeake-Elizabeth sewer system, but delays continued to push opening back. A variety of reasons contributed to the delay including labor strikes.

The city was under pressure from developers regarding delays of the sewage system, and planning its own construction of the lateral lines. Delays in the project were frustrating to Virginia Beach City Manager W. Russell Hatchett and City Councilman James G. Darden.

“The council is concerned and deeply interested in getting—as the saying goes—the show on the road as soon as possible,” said Hatchett. “We do know that the lack of sewer facilities in our city has caused us the loss of developments which we should have had.”



Caption to come!

Meanwhile, two major sewage projects got underway in 1966. The first was a 30-inch main connector built by HRSD from its pumping station on Victor Road near Hilltop down Laskin Road three miles to tie in to the Virginia Beach pumping station at Holly Road and 29th Street. The second was a network of service lines to tie into the HRSD connector line to serve the Birdneck Road area at a city cost of \$250,000.

In the new City of Chesapeake, six sanitation districts in “formerly rural areas” were approved by residents, and bonds were sold to pay for sewer installation in their neighborhoods. However, costs dramatically increased and in January 1964, it was reported that the Deep Creek and Western Branch projects experienced financial overruns of \$875,268.

As part of its Master Plan, two smaller plants were constructed: the Western Branch System, which served the areas west and northwest of Portsmouth, and the Washington System at Dozier’s Corner, serving parts of South Norfolk. In 1964, HRSD paid Norfolk County \$393,585.69 for the former Norfolk County’s cost in building the Washington Sewer System.

In addition, the *Ledger Star* reported in May 1966 that Virginia Beach was considering purchasing the private sewage systems in Aragona Village, Pocahantas Village, Princess Anne Plaza, Windsor Woods and King’s Grant, all private systems built within the last 10 years. Going forward, the city required developers to hook into the HRSD system.

In Virginia Beach, in conjunction with the Chesapeake-Elizabeth System, a central trunk line along Independence Boulevard from Haygood Road to Shore Drive and an extension of the main trunk line along Shore Drive to Great Neck Road were completed in 1969.

It was not until February 1969 that the Chesapeake-Elizabeth Plant finally reached full operation. And with opening of the new plant, several private utility operations that had been discharging wastes, including Aragona Utilities, Pembroke Utilities and Holland Utilities, were tied into the new system, as was Oceana Naval Air Station. Still, other private utility companies including County Utilities, Kempsville Utilities and Tidewater Utilities refused to be tied in.

HRSD faced opposition in its attempts to stop private utility expansion, and the Kempsville Utilities Corporation received permission from the SWCB to add treatment plant facilities for 3,800 sewer connections serving 6,000 residents. HRSD opposed enlargement saying the Elizabeth River was unable to handle any more effluent.

The Peninsula in the Mid-1960s

Meanwhile, the Grafton area in York County experienced significant growth during the mid-1960s, creating urgent demands for facilities to serve the burgeoning commercial district along Route 17. Further development depended on public sewage facilities. A committee of businessmen and local officials met with J. Clyde Morris and Frank Miller of HRSD in early December 1965 to discuss strategies for providing “urgently needed” facilities.

Presentations were made outlining the layout of public water facilities along Route 17, and to the Naval Weapons Station and Coast Guard Training Center. Subsequently, R. Stuart Royer

and Associates of Richmond conducted a study of expansion up and around Route 17, and plans proceeded to extend HRSD lines 17 miles.

They projected the cost at \$1.75 million for a facility that would eventually handle up to 20 MGD. The initial collection system would extend from York High School to the Newport News city limits at Tabb and eventually feed the planned James River Plant. Meanwhile, the current plan would link from Oriana Road to the Patrick Henry Plant.

In early 1966, the York County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in favor of joining HRSD. They had begun to consider joining two years earlier when members of the York County Property Owners Protective Association brought two members of the Board of Supervisors to visit HRSD general manager Frank Miller in Norfolk. They also met with the Navy officials on surplus sewage facilities they could acquire.

Poquoson had been considering joining HRSD since 1964. In 1967, the town approved a \$2.75 million bond issue and signed an agreement with York County for inclusion in the system. Meanwhile, York County voters approved a \$6.5 million bond issue for construction of its collection system.

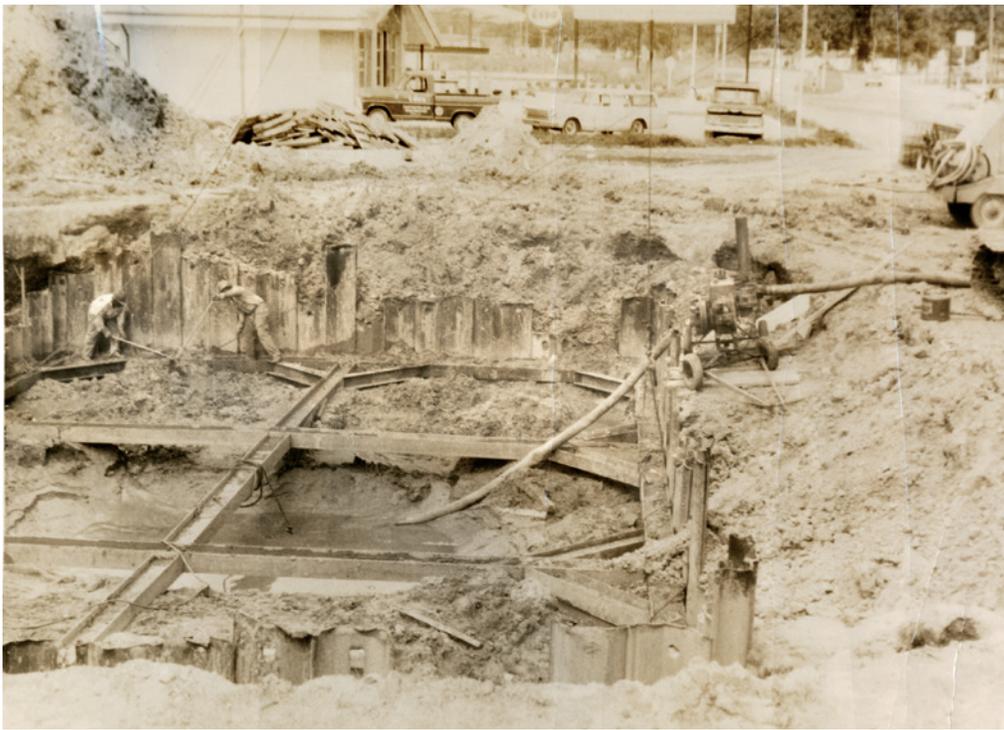
Battles continued, however, to get everyone to support joining the public system. In May 1966, opposition arose to a proposed apartment building with a “sewage lagoon” that would have discharged into creeks and streams leading to the York River in Poquoson.

The *Late Sixties*

The James River Plant was dedicated on June 7, 1967. It was HRSD’s fourth plant, and the first providing secondary treatment.



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 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.

In April 1968, HRSD inaugurated waste treatment service to Langley Field with a ceremony at the new main pumping station. Also that month, development of a public sewage system “took a giant leap” when HRSD offered to officially include Poquoson upon completion of its collection system within the next two years.

In early May 1968, a \$617,150 grant was approved for Poquoson by the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration to help finance a new sewage system in town. Another \$1 million grant was attained from HUD to finance the \$3.3 million cost, along with the \$2.75 million bonds approved by the town the previous year.

The local real estate group endorsed Poquoson’s plans, as the FHA was not providing loans for homes with septic tanks. Public facilities allowed for FHA loans, making homes more affordable.

By May 29, 1968, a contract was approved by Poquoson with HRSD “to govern inclusion of the town in the HRSD sewage system. A week later the Poquoson Town Council approved a \$1.5 million in municipal bonds to help finance construction of the first stage of lines to connect with the HRSD system.

The sewage disposal system helped stabilize the housing economy and allowed better interest rates on home loans. The new collection system cost subscribers a dollar a month, and allowed the town of 6,000 residents to expand. The town was projected to grow from 4,800 residents in 1964 to 12,700 by 1985, more than doubling in size. Tabb was projected to more than double, and Grafton to triple its population. Yorktown was projected to grow by 174 percent.

Meanwhile, the Newport News City Council provided land valued at \$22,000 to HRSD for land fronting 275 feet of Terminal Avenue for expansion of the Boat Harbor Plant.

Progress continued when in May 1968, the Peninsula Regional Planning Commission approved four new sewer projects, which HRSD submitted for federal assistance: the Bethel Interceptor at a total cost of \$120,000 with \$39,000 sought in federal aid; the Poquoson interceptor at \$520,000 total cost, with a \$171,000 grant; Sinclair Langley Circle interceptors at \$430,000 total cost, with \$141,900 federal aid; and Boat Harbor settling tanks, \$533,000 with a \$182,490 grant.

Other Forms of *Pollution*

The Water Quality Act of 1965 required states to issue water quality standards for interstate waters, and authorized the newly-created Federal Water Pollution Control Administration to set standards where states failed to do so, including industrial wastes.

Many sources of pollution were a problem. Prevention of pollution from ships and boats, control of storm floodwaters and supervision of new development were even “more important” in many instances than mere treatment of water, said Frank Miller. There was a problem particularly with the increase of marinas, each with concentrations of 40-50 boats in a small area, as the population grew.

There was particular aggravation with naval and merchant ships that for decades had continued to dump bilge water in the Hampton Roads waters. HRSD had no authority, and could not control, the actions of vessels in federal waters. Greater enforcement was deemed necessary.

There were several factors that helped gain public support for water pollution abatement, one of which was the “postwar surge of hard detergents” that created “great foaming masses” in rivers, streams and “even from home faucets.” In response to concerns about water, the soap industry began to develop soft detergents.

By the late 1960s, an era of pronounced political and environmental activism, the public proved willing to support anti-pollution efforts. “We don’t have to justify pollution abatement now,” said Frank Miller, HRSD general manager and chief engineer. “Ten years ago, we couldn’t have imagined a \$17 million program, ultimately \$35 million, getting the widespread support we have in the district.”

An editorial in *The Virginian-Pilot* on October 3, 1969, also noted the public shift for action:

“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.”

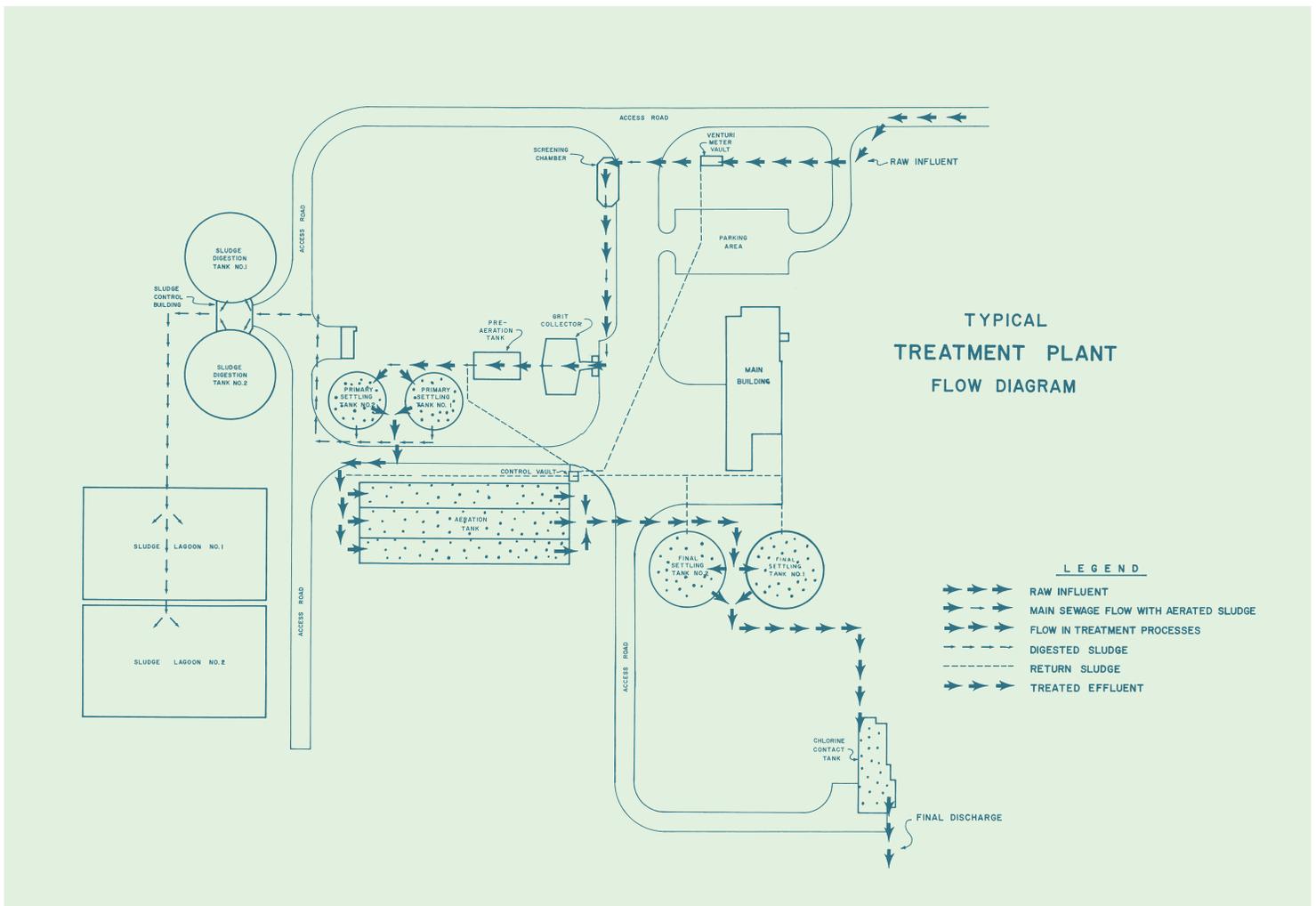
Even still, as the federal government began requiring states to raise their standards for water quality, it was resisted in Richmond. The SWCB refused to accept the antipollution measures by the federal government at first, though by December 1969, the state agreed to accept stricter stream standards and to increase enforcement.

Some were “bitterly opposed” to the higher standards from the Department of the Interior, which threatened to impose its own standards unless the state improved. A. H. Paessler of the SWCB said it would cost \$100 million for cities and industries to meet the standards in addition to other requirements. The SCWB refused to comply. Even HRSD resisted the federal standards, saying they were not necessary. Miller said it would cost \$10 million to have secondary sewage treatment facilities at the four plants that lacked them.

Under a formula adopted by the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration, federal funds could be used to pay up to 55 percent of cost for any one project if the state put up 25 percent. If the state did not pay 25 percent, the federal government would only contribute 33 percent.

Virginia was threatened with losing substantial federal funds for sewage treatment plants if the state did not provide 25 percent matching construction grants. Congress was expected to pass \$1 billion in grants, nearly five times the previous appropriation. The state matching grant of 25 percent assured a 55 percent grant in federal aid, of which Virginia was eligible for \$17 million. Otherwise, the federal government provided only 33 percent.

Senator William Spong, who had become involved in water issues, was a strong advocate for maximizing the federal dollars available to the state. Others, however, were concerned about federal overreach. In the end, Spong was able to muster the will and support.



Williamsburg Plant for Anheuser-Busch Planned

A “regional approach” with Williamsburg, James City County and York County would allow for easier federal funding. Two new plants were recommended, including one on the James River near Kingsmill and one near Goodwin Neck in York County.

In January 1969, a formal agreement was reached for joint entry into HRSD by Williamsburg, James City County and the Bruton section of York County, at a projected \$9.1 million cost. Of that, \$1.5 million was for facilities to be developed by the localities, and \$7.6 million by HRSD. Joining together was more conducive to securing government loans.

Then in September, Anheuser-Busch, Inc. officially announced plans for construction of a new \$40 million manufacturing plant and amusement park in the Kingsmill Neck area of Williamsburg. The plant was scheduled to open July 1971.

HRSD had already announced plans to extend service to James City County in a \$10.6 million project. A facility such as the one Anheuser-Busch was planning would have a significant impact on HRSD. The brewery would use about three million gallons of water a day, and other breweries had shown there were unique challenges to managing its wastewater. Threats to marine life in the James River required special planning regarding treatment of wastes from the Busch plant.

HRSD was counting on the state to pay 25 percent and the federal government 55 percent. To help pick up the slack and move their own project forward, Anheuser-Busch offered to pay engineering costs on the HRSD plant.

Engineering work on the plant got underway in September. On October 23, 1969, the *Daily Press* reported that plans for a new treatment plant “took a giant step forward” with negotiations scheduled to begin on land acquisition on 30 acres of land owned by the Rockefeller family, who was actively involved in the restoration of Williamsburg.