

# VEHA Bulletin-Spring 2017



## Message from the President - David Fridley

Dear VEHA Members,

2016 marked the fiftieth year since the incorporation of the Virginia Environmental Health Association (then the Virginia Association of Public Health Sanitarians). In those fifty years, we have continuously worked to improve our service to the broad range of environmental health professionals in the Commonwealth.

Our activities have included professional education and training workshops covering a wide range of health topics—deliberately more broad than you may experience in your day-to-day professional life. As our field becomes increasingly dynamic and responds to unforeseen challenges to the public welfare, being knowledgeable about environmental health topics beyond your day-to-day work becomes more important all the time. What may seem peripheral one day—a new vector-borne disease, for example—may suddenly become a focus of public and environmental health efforts. Being prepared for what we’re not yet asked to do is an important role for these workshops.

We also try to bring to you the latest research and experience in your more familiar fields—food safety, soil science and water quality, emergency readiness, and our interaction with the epidemiologists, physicians, scientists, “first responders”, local governments and others with whom we work for community health. We look forward to continuing this professional development, including partnering with other public health associations in these workshops.

We look to your direct benefit in professional development in offering continuing education credit for licensed professionals, required contact hours for VDH employees, and recognition of outstanding practitioners in our field through awarding praise to the Environmental Health Professional of the Year, A. Clark Slaymaker Award, and National Environmental Health Association Certificate of Merit.

We try to keep ourselves involved in the regulatory process in our state, through representation in the Sewage Handling Advisory Committee and the Virginia Food Safety Task Force and active comment upon pending legislation affecting our profession.

We look to develop our next generation of environmental health professional through awarding scholarships each year to outstanding students in an accredited environmental health programs and encouraging them to maintain their standard of excellence as they enter their environmental careers.

And we have opportunities for you to participate in VEHA, as members of our activity committees—you’ll be hearing more about these in future *Bulletins*. Please consider giving your time to our organization, to enrich our ability to offer our best professional services to you.

I’m very honored to have been selected as your new Association president and I promise to keep you all informed about our efforts to strengthen VEHA and its outreach to you in your professional community. Your new Board has a sense of enthusiasm and purpose that makes me expect the best.

David Fridley,  
VEHA President



*David Fridley, VEHA President with Jay Conta, Soil Scientist at the 2016 VEHA Spring Conference held at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.*

## Scholarships & Awards

### VP of Professional Advancement - Rachel Stradling

**VEHA Educational Scholarship:** Each spring VEHA solicits undergraduate and graduate students in the Environmental Health field of study to submit their applications for the annual VEHA Educational Scholarship. This scholarship is currently funded at \$500.00 and is awarded to the most qualified applicant(s) at the Spring Educational Conference. Application deadline is March 31, 2017. To apply, visit VEHA's Scholarships-Awards page, [www.virginiaeha.org/scholarshipsawards](http://www.virginiaeha.org/scholarshipsawards).

Congratulations to **Nick Sink** and **Christa Madison**, VEHA's student scholarship award winners for 2016! Mr. Sink is studying environmental science at Ferrum College. Ms. Madison is a recent graduate from Cave Spring High School and will be attending George Mason University in the fall to study environmental science.

**Certificates of Merit:** Every NEHA state affiliate is invited to designate an individual and/or a team of its members to receive a Certificate of Merit, thereby nationally recognizing one of their own for outstanding contributions to the profession of environmental health. Recipients are recognized during NEHA's Annual Education Conference awards program and in the Journal of Environmental Health. This is an opportunity for special recognition of one of our own members in front of a national audience. **Nominations must be received by June 1, 2017.** To apply, visit VEHA's Scholarships-Awards page, [www.virginiaeha.org/scholarshipsawards](http://www.virginiaeha.org/scholarshipsawards).

**Environmental Health Professional of the Year:** The nominee for the Environmental Health (EH) Professional of the Year award must be an EH Professional currently engaged in the practice of Environmental Health who has made outstanding contributions to the EH Profession, and the EH Programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Nominees must be current VEHA members and should exemplify the values, quality of work, and ethical integrity held in high regard by the EH profession. Sponsors who make the nomination must also be current VEHA members. This award is presented each year at VEHA's Fall Educational Conference. **To nominate a deserving EH Professional, submit your nomination form by September 30, 2017.** The nomination form can be found on VEHA's Scholarships-Awards page, [www.virginiaeha.org/scholarshipsawards](http://www.virginiaeha.org/scholarshipsawards).

Congratulations to **Tom Saxton** for winning the 2016 Environmental Health Professional of the Year Award! Tom, an Environmental Health Specialist with the Virginia Department of Health, was nominated by multiple coworkers and colleagues for his dedication to VDH's onsite program and his support and enthusiasm for sharing his vast knowledge in soil evaluation.



**A. Clark Slaymaker Award:** A. Clark Slaymaker was a Virginia Department of Health employee from 1943 to 1970. He ended his career as the EH Manager (then called Chief Sanitarian) in Alexandria, Virginia. In 1966 he won NEHA's prestigious Walter S. Mangold award, the **ONLY** VDH employee ever to do so. This award was created to recognize an individual, association, corporation, or organization that is not actively engaged in the field of environmental health but has made outstanding contributions and supported the EH Profession and the EH programs in VA. The individual(s) who wish to submit a

nomination for this award must be a current member of VEHA however, it is not necessary for the nominee to be a member. **The deadline for nomination is September 30, 2016.** The nomination form can be found on VEHA's Scholarships-Awards page, [www.virginiaeha.org/scholarshipsawards](http://www.virginiaeha.org/scholarshipsawards).

VEHA's 2016 selection for the A. Clark Slaymaker Award was **Dr. Julia Murphy** who is a Veterinarian II with the Office of Epidemiology in VDH. Dr. Murphy was nominated by Reed Cranford and Eric Myers, two of the many environmental health staff across Virginia who rely greatly on her support, knowledge, and expertise in the rabies field. She is the public health professional that most EH staff will reach out to first for guidance when handling a difficult and complex rabies investigation. Her warm, patient, and even humorous personality helps to put people at ease even when dealing with sensitive and challenging issues. As with many other aspects of public health, it would be impossible to list all the human lives and domestic animals that have been protected through her work.



## Capitol Area Update

### Amy Pemberton, Delegate

For many years, VA DEQ has been concerned about the depletion of the groundwater supply in eastern Virginia, which is primarily due to several permitted large water withdrawals. This concern resulted in the designation of the Eastern Virginia Groundwater Management area. An Advisory Committee was established in 2015 to assist the State Water Commission and the Department of Environmental Quality in developing, revising, and implementing a management strategy for groundwater in the Eastern Virginia Groundwater Management Area. One of their tasks is to take a look at the interaction between the DEQ's groundwater management programs, and local and regional water supply plans within the Eastern Virginia Groundwater Management Area for purposes of determining water demand and possible solutions for meeting that demand.

The Potomac aquifer is the largest and deepest aquifer in eastern Virginia and its primary groundwater supply. It spans across the majority of the Atlantic Coastal Plain Aquifer System. The Potomac aquifer is several thousand feet thick and contains hundreds of trillions of gallons of pressurized water. Homes and industries in eastern Virginia remove approximately 155 million gallons of groundwater from the Potomac aquifer every day. If groundwater users in eastern Virginia were to stop using this resource today, it would take **tens of thousands of years** for the Potomac aquifer to return to its original state. This level of depletion is thought to be linked to the problems of land subsidence along the coast, and salt water intrusion we have seen into the aquifer.

In September 2016, Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) announced the launch of the Sustainable Water Initiative for Tomorrow (SWIFT), an innovative water purification initiative in eastern Virginia designed to ensure a sustainable source of groundwater while addressing environmental challenges such as Chesapeake Bay restoration, sea level rise and saltwater intrusion. This is a multi-year initiative that will take already highly treated wastewater that would otherwise be discharged into the Elizabeth, James or York rivers and purify it through additional rounds of advanced water treatment to produce drinking-quality water. The purified water will then be treated to match the existing groundwater chemistry and added to the Potomac Aquifer at a rate of up to 120 million gallons per day.



HRSD is proposing seven injection sites located in six localities. They have set up a demonstration site in Seaford VA, running models to evaluate potential impacts once the project is complete and operational. Based on their research, they have projected that the treated wastewater could extend as far as 3 miles from the injection site within a 50-100 year time frame. The pilot site will be located in Suffolk, VA.

The Office of Environmental Health Services of VDH is actively involved in the preparatory phase of this project. Local health districts in the localities affected by the SWIFT project have been tasked with creating a complete inventory of all private water wells within a 3 mile radius of the proposed injection sites. On November 18, 2016, representatives of the local health departments and OEHS were invited to tour the demonstration site in Seaford, VA, and to imbibe in a drink of the treated wastewater!

## Northern Area Update

### Bryant Wooden, Delegate

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It has been great over the past year to serve as the Northern Area Regional Delegate for VEHA. I have been able to participate in the VEHA conference call meetings where business is discussed and carried out. Previously, I also served on the VEHA Board as the Capitol Area Delegate during the 2014-2015 term. I have attended the Spring and Fall VEHA Educational Conferences in which I was able to help with morning set-up, along with assisting with logistics during the afternoon food safety sessions. I have also encouraged colleagues from the Northern Virginia Region to attend our VEHA Educational Conferences to network and gain continuing education credits for their professional credentials.

One of the recent public health issues over the last year in the Northern Area Region and much of the country has been the Zika virus; in which health officials have worked together to make individuals and communities aware of the concerns. Since spring is knocking at the door we need to stay to date with best management practices and recommendations that the CDC issues in regards to the Zika virus. It is a great opportunity to work with the VEHA organization as we all continue to spread knowledge and understanding of public health.

## VEHA News & Save the Dates

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**Spring Educational Conference – April 3, 2017.** See the agenda posted on the VEHA website's "Educational Sessions" page, <http://virginiaeha.org/educational-sessions>

### **NEHA Annual Educational Conference (AEC) Conference 2017**

Grand Rapids, MI – July 10-13

[www.neha.org/aec/about-aec](http://www.neha.org/aec/about-aec)

**Fall Educational Conference –** Be watching your email and the website for more information.

## Stories From the Front Lines of Southwest VA

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### **“You Just Never Know” By Cecil Sink, EHS**

I woke from a sound sleep this morning, to a text message alert.

Fearing the worst (I have two grown children who are on their own, I worry), I sat straight up, and read the message: “Do men have to wear beard nets when working with food?”

It’s 6:00 AM. Who ARE you anyway?

“Yes ma’am, beards are covered under the Health Code for hair restraints.”

My life is strange, and my text messages from strangers are stranger.

So you are never not a Health Inspector when you’re a Health Inspector, and sometimes when you’re not a Health Inspector, you’re still a Health Inspector.

One summer’s Friday evening a few years ago, after work, I rode my motorcycle to town to watch a friend’s daughter play softball. Afterward, I stopped in at a local steakhouse for dinner.

I ate at the bar. I don’t drink and drive/ride, although like a character in my upcoming book, I’ve been known to “have a toddy” at hog killin’s. I just like to eat at the bar when it’s just me.

There’s no waiting to be seated and I don’t take up a whole table just for me. It’s courtesy.

So, I’m sitting there in my jeans, sleeveless t shirt with tattoos showing, riding jacket and helmet beside me, and my do-rag on. I didn’t really look like the Health Inspector.

I’m eating my wings and sipping my not-a-toddy, and I notice one of the bartenders (there were two, a male and female, it’s a Friday evening) rinsing a blender pitcher in the handsink.

That’s a code violation, albeit a rather minor one.

Enter the shift manager. She points out the error to the bartender, explains the rationale, and then says “if the Health Inspector saw you do that, we’d get written up”.

Well now, “high five” Miss, that’s perfect.

Exit manager, enter bartender number two.

This young man walks over and says “there’s not gonna be a Health Inspector in here at seven o’clock on a Friday”.

Wrong!

I beckoned the lady bartender over and told her; “Hey, I’m the Health Inspector” and showed her my ID.

She immediately called the young man and told him the same.

Of course, having been called out, his response was “Where are you a Health Inspector?”  
“Right here my friend; this is an establishment under my caseload. I am YOUR Health Inspector.”

You just never know, you know?