

POTOMAC WATERSHED ROUNDTABLE

12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 905, Fairfax, VA 22035
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ROUNDTABLE OFFICERS

*Penelope Gross, Chair
Fairfax County
Board of Supervisors*

*Martin Nohe, 1st Vice Chair
Prince William County
Board of Supervisors*

*Harry Atherton, 2nd Vice Chair
Agricultural & Forestry
Stakeholder Member*

ROUNDTABLE MEMBERS

Local Governments

*Arlington County
Fairfax County
Fauquier County
King George County
Loudoun County
Northumberland County
Prince William County
Stafford County
Westmoreland County
City of Alexandria
City of Fairfax
City of Falls Church
City of Manassas
City of Manassas Park
Town of Colonial Beach*

Soil & Water Conservation Districts

*John Marshall
Loudoun
Northern Neck
Northern Virginia
Prince William
Tri-County/ City*

Planning District Commissions

General Assembly

*Two members each from the
following stakeholder groups:*

*Agriculture and Forestry
Development, Construction
and Real Estate
Environmental
Fishing and Boating
Waste Management and
Recycling
Water & Wastewater Utilities
Citizens of the Watershed*

January 26, 2011

Honorable (name)
House of Delegates/ Virginia Senate
(address)
Richmond, VA

Dear Delegate/Senator:

The Potomac Watershed Roundtable is a regional government-citizen forum, founded in 2000, to promote collaboration and cooperation on environmental issues, especially water quality, among the various local governments and stakeholder interest groups within the Virginia side of the middle and lower Potomac watershed. Included in our membership are nine counties, six towns and cities, six soil and water conservation districts, and nine stakeholder groups.

The Roundtable appreciates the work of the General Assembly to address environmental issues. This year, rather than formulating a specific legislative program for presentation to the General Assembly, we want to highlight some issues that have significant impacts on water quality, especially in light of Virginia's approved Watershed Improvement Plan (WIP) for the recently-announced Chesapeake Bay TMDL. The Roundtable supports General Assembly funding for the Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF) as required by statute, and would like to see additional monies added. The Roundtable also supports new funding for the Revolving Loan Fund and additional state funding to address new stormwater requirements in urban, suburban, and rural areas served by the Roundtable. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not estimate stormwater retrofit costs as part of the TMDL, but the state estimate for urban stormwater costs is \$200 million per year, a figure that the Roundtable believes is low.

In past years, we have testified and advocated, successfully, for necessary updates to the Virginia erosion and sediment control handbook. More recently, Senator Patsy Ticer carried our legislative initiative on nitrogen-reducing septic systems, an important component to meet the Commonwealth's commitment to restore the Chesapeake Bay. The Roundtable is concerned about proposed onsite sewage regulations that would prohibit local authorities from restricting the use of alternative on-site sewage disposal systems (also known as engineered designs or AOSS). The proposed regulations would require local jurisdictions to issue permits for AOSS that have not been subjected to adequate field testing to ensure their reliability under actual use conditions. Such systems may be counter-productive to reducing pollutants in the Chesapeake Bay, and the Roundtable would like to see local health departments retain their existing authority to establish criteria for those AOSS that may be permitted. The existing arrangement has been effective in consistently reducing the level of pollution in the Bay, and the Roundtable believes that removing local authority to limit the use of unproven technology would negate all those years of progress.

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Another critical need this year is legislation regarding the use of lawn care fertilizer products, as this is a very effective way to reduce pollutant loadings in our local streams and rivers and, ultimately in the Chesapeake Bay. Such legislation should require the use of No Phosphorus fertilizer and 9/10 Slow Release Nitrogen (SRN) on established (one year or older) lawns unless soil testing demonstrates a need for phosphorus and non-SRN. Senator Ticer assisted us a few years ago in a retail fertilizer labeling effort. While that legislation did not reach the floor, we believe that Virginia would be more successful in meeting with goals of the WIP with this new approach on fertilizer.

The challenges facing the Commonwealth and its citizens are significant, and the members of the Potomac Watershed Roundtable look forward to working with you and other members of the General Assembly to advance water quality and environmental improvements for the benefit of all Virginians.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Penelope A. Gross
Chairman, Potomac Watershed Roundtable
Member, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors