

Support SB898

Compels Upgrades to Combined Sewer Overflow outfalls in Potomac River Watershed
Senator Richard Stuart & Senator Scott Surovell

Reasons to support SB898:

Compels any locality in the Potomac River watershed to bring combined sewer overflow (CSO) outfalls that currently discharge untreated wastewater directly into tributaries of the Potomac River during heavy rainfalls into compliance with federal standards. City of Alexandria is the only locality with a CSO in the Potomac watershed. Amended legislation sets a deadline of July 1, 2025 for the CSO outfalls to be in compliance with EPA policy.

Originally, the bill had more stringent deadlines and penalties for failures to meet the deadlines. The current 2025 deadline is a compromise to afford Alexandria enough time to feasibly make repairs while also recognizing the urgency of remedying the discharges.

Overview

Combined sewer systems are designed to collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe. Most of the time, combined sewer systems transport all of their wastewater to a sewage treatment plant, where it is treated and then discharged to a water body. During periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt, however, the wastewater volume in a combined sewer system can exceed the capacity of the sewer system or treatment plant. For this reason, combined sewer systems overflow occasionally and discharge excess wastewater directly to nearby streams, rivers, or other water bodies. These overflows, called combined sewer overflows (CSOs), contain not only storm water but also untreated human and industrial waste, toxic materials, and debris. Virginia has three CSOs, in Alexandria, Lynchburg, and Richmond.

<https://www3.epa.gov/region1/eco/uep/cso.html#communities>.



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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker. VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.