

## VIMS earns top award for wastewater management

(May 17, 2012) The Virginia Institute of Marine Science has received a prestigious award in recognition of exemplary performance in managing wastewater on its 40-acre shoreline campus in Gloucester Point.

VIMS received a Diamond Excellence Award from the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) for 12 consecutive years of perfect compliance with its wastewater permit. The award, HRSD's highest, was bestowed during a ceremony in Norfolk on April 26th.

Created by public referendum in 1940, HRSD protects public health and the waters of Hampton Roads by treating wastewater effectively. It now serves 1.6 million people in 17 cities and counties throughout southeast Virginia.

During the ceremony, HRSD General Manager Ted Henifin said "We commend each of these businesses and industries for their demonstrated commitment to environmental excellence."

The Awards program further states "The businesses we honor today are among the true heroes of Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts... The benefits of their investment in protecting public health and area waterways [are] a region in which oysters thrive, aquatic grasses grow, fish are plentiful, and beaches are beautiful."

Receiving the award for VIMS were Safety Director Tom Grose and Maintenance Supervisor Mark Rogers. They, along with Project Engineer Mike Kershner, work with staff in VIMS' Safety Office, Facilities Management Department, Vessels Center, and other units campuswide to ensure that the Institute does not dispose of any chemicals, heavy metals, hazardous wastes, or oils in its wastewater.

Kershner says "We're proud to receive this award, which recognizes the hard work and careful attention put in by staff, faculty, and students all across VIMS to manage our wastewater stream."

Dr. John Wells, VIMS Dean and Director, says the award "recognizes and honors VIMS staff for their painstaking efforts to manage our wastewater in an environmentally sound manner. As a scientific leader in efforts to restore and protect Chesapeake Bay, we take our own responsibilities in wastewater management very seriously."



*From L: Mr. Tom Grose, Director of Safety and Environmental Programs at VIMS, and Mr. Mark Rogers, VIMS Maintenance Supervisor, accept the Diamond Excellence Award during the Hampton Roads Sanitation District's annual Awards Ceremony. Photo courtesy of Nancy Munnikhuisen-HRSD.*

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VIMS, whose 400+ faculty, staff, and students occupy 89 research and administrative buildings encompassing 389,264 square feet, acquired its “small generator” permit from HRSD in 1995. VIMS received Gold awards for annual compliance from 2000 to 2003, and in 2004 received a Platinum Award for 5 years of full compliance with no violations. VIMS received Platinum Achievement awards for compliance each year from 2005 to 2010.

The HRSD award system bestows gold awards for annual compliance with an organization’s wastewater permit, platinum awards for 5 consecutive years of compliance, diamond awards for 10 consecutive years of perfect compliance, and diamond excellence awards for more than 10 years of perfect compliance.

Kershner says the award recognizes VIMS for having “no spills, maintaining our pH level at 5 or above, maintaining our station, certifying our sewage meter, and submitting the proper paperwork within the deadlines.”

“If we continue to have no violations,” he says, “VIMS will continue to receive Diamond Achievement awards.” Any organization that incurs a violation has to start the process all over again.

Other 2011 Diamond Excellence awards went to Yorktown Power Station, Chisman Site (13 years); Chesapeake Regional Medical Center and Industrial Resource Technologies, Inc. (12 years each); and Hampton/NASA Steam Plant, NASA Langley Research Center, and Valley Proteins, Inc. (11 years each). Two-dozen local firms received awards for perfect compliance for 5 to 10 consecutive years.