# TOWN OF CHILHOWIE

Mayor: Gary L. Heninger
Council: Billy L. Clear
Shannon Donnelly
J. Brent Foster
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Town Manager: Brian Martin
Clerk-Treasurer: Felicia C. Eller
Police Chief: Andrew K. Moss
Director-Public Works: Tyler Keen
Fire /EMS Chief: C. David Haynes
Building Official: Jenna Prater
Wastewater Operations: Luke A. Lowe
Water Operations: Don Cole, II
Recreation/Special Events Coordinator: Stephen Fields
Buildings, Streets, & Grounds: Christopher Johnson
Legal: Cassell & Crewe, P.C.

**Town Manager's Report to Mayor and Town Council**
**July 9, 2026**

Good evening,

I hope this report finds you and your family doing well as we continue to move through a very hot and dry summer.

Here's a summary of what's going on in our town:

*Hurricane Helene Recovery*

It is with great pleasure that I let you know that all three of the aerial wastewater system river crossings have now been completed and are back in service! I am sure that each of you remember those first few days after Hurricane Helene when none of us knew how to even begin to proceed toward recovery, so after these long months of rebuilding, it truly feels like a weight being lifted off our community's shoulders as we finalize these last repairs.

I have submitted the town's signed Certificate of Substantial Completion and the remaining "clean up" items on the final punch list have now been completed. With the exception of a handful of small items, the construction phase of this project is now complete and your staff is moving as quickly as possible toward finalizing the entire project by wrapping up the administrative files and financial aspects of the project such as our interactions with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) on reimbursement transactions, close outs with DEQ, and working to pay off the town's Line of Credit that was thankfully extended to us by our community partners with the Bank of Chilhowie in those critical first weeks after Helene. Several of these actions will continue to move along over several months, but we can at last see light at the end of the tunnel.

At this point, I would like to again thank our engineering consultants at Hurt & Proffitt, our construction contractors with Portland Utilities Construction Company, everyone at FEMA, VDEM, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) who were so helpful throughout our recovery. I also want to extend my sincere gratitude to our outstanding elected officials, the town staff, and the volunteers who worked so hard and so well together as we have strived to rebuild our community's infrastructure!

Finally, I would once again like to thank everyone whose efforts contributed in our town's approval for the $2,281,678 grant through the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund (VCWRLF) that has made this project financially feasible for our town! As a reminder, Chilhowie was one of only three localities in the Commonwealth to receive this funding and we are by far the first to near project end.

*VDOT Communications*

Town staff continue to have regular email or phone communication with both our Chilhowie Residency and the Headquarters in Abingdon. We continue to advocate for solutions to address pedestrian safety at the Exit 35 interchange as well as other areas in our community.

You may have already seen that the new crosswalk signs for the two crosswalks at Chilhowie Middle School and Chilhowie High School are now installed. In talks with the principals of both schools last year, increased safety at these crossings was stated as one of their priorities they hoped to address. The combination of their concerns and those expressed by you as elected officials prompted the initial conversations with VDOT, and I am hopeful that this new and more visible signage will improve pedestrian safety. In addition to the signage being taller and brighter, there is lighting than can be activated by pedestrians when crossing. This is a great example of a very beneficial project coming to fruition when local leaders and state agencies work together to benefit our community!

As a reminder, VDOT has scheduled construction to begin on the Interstate bridges at mile marker 34 in early 2027. Construction is slated for 30 months.

*Industrial User Monitoring and Reporting of PFAS*

As I brought to your attention last month, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has recently released notice that as a result of new legislation from the 2026 General Assembly session, now codified in the Code of Virginia as Chapters 709 and 710 of the 2026 Acts of the Assembly, that all publicly owned treatment works (POTW) are mandated to require quarterly monitoring and reporting for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) by specified categories of industrial users that are a source of indirect discharge to the POTW. This mandate will add to the workload of town managers and operators of wastewater treatment plants as we notify and begin coordination with industries located in our communities. Initial notifications from localities to industrial partners must take place no later than July 31, 2026.

As is typical of them, your operators of the Chilhowie Wastewater Treatment Plant are ahead of the curve on this and have already drafted a plan of how they intend to meet with our local industries to initiate the first steps of this new reporting process.

I will continue to keep you updated on this matter as we lean into this new requirement related to PFAS, more commonly referred to as "forever plastics".

*Wastewater Treatment Plant Permitting Renewal*

As a reminder, Chilhowie's current permit expired in May. I received the town's draft permit reissuance late last week. The town is required to publish public notice, which I have attached to this report, for two consecutive weeks. After that, I will report this to DEQ and the final permit should be issued shortly thereafter.

I once again would like to commend the town's outstanding staff, as well as our partners at Hurt & Proffitt for undertaking this re-permitting process as this is the first time doing so since the town's transition away from land application of biosolids and also the first since the increased scrutiny on localities related to forever chemicals (PFAS/PFOS).

*Bonham House Repairs and Renovations*

Two months ago, I brought to your attention that there are several maintenance issues and repairs needed at the Bonham House. To update you, the replacement of the rubberized roofing is now complete. The town staff is now working to repair the extremely deteriorated stucco/concrete siding on the semi-rotunda above the building's front door. This step is proving to be more tedious than originally planned due to the age of the underlying materials and its curved surface. Once completed, this will hopefully completely take care of the water leak issues that have frustrated all parties involved for quite some time.

Additionally, a problematic leak that has proven hard to locate in another area of the roof has finally been tracked down and your Buildings and Grounds staff have re-sealed the area which will hopefully rectify this leak as well.

As you're aware, over the past eight months, the town has replaced both outside HVAC units at the buildings as well as rebuilding a section of the front porch that had become rotted and unsafe. The staff has also repaired on several occasions the chairlift elevator on the side of the building.

Materials quotes have been collected by your town staff for the ADA-Compliant accessibility ramp that we intend to construct so that we can remove the increasingly problematic chair lift. Smyth County has expressed their willingness to share in these costs and I plan to approach the other two Smyth towns as well.

*Mount Rogers Regional Cigarette Tax Board*

I plan to represent Chilhowie at the next meeting of the Mount Rogers Regional Cigarette Tax Board, which is scheduled for July 22nd. In addition to regular business, we plan to discuss possible options to propose for future General Assembly consideration to modernize taxation for non-tobacco nicotine products (vapes). With no taxation legislation yet in place, Chilhowie along with our regional neighbors continue to push our state legislators to come up with a workable plan to have such legislation passed by the General Assembly.

*Virginia Drought Status*

As you are aware, Virginia continues to be in a severe drought. I have attached a copy of the most recent National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Drought Update, which shows that our region is not alone in this trying time. Until considerable precipitation is received, there is little relief for localities. That being said, I encourage everyone to be mindful of their water consumption and conserve as much as possible. While not yet to a critical state, as the water tables continue to fall, I am concerned about the health of our town springs and our ability to provide current outflow levels if the drought persists.

*Smyth County Tourism Association*

Amanda Livingston has scheduled, in conjunction with Friends of Southwest Virginia, a tourism focus group meeting on July 16th. The meeting will be held at Chilhowie Town Hall in the upstairs community room. I will represent Chilhowie so please feel free to provide me your thoughts and ideas ahead of time.

*FY 2027 Congressionally Directed Spending Application*

As you're aware, I applied for $385,626 in Congressionally Directed Spending to help purchase a new police car, dump truck, and assistance with the new ambulance that is on order and currently awaiting assembly. Unfortunately, Chilhowie's request was not funded this cycle. However, I plan to apply for funding next year as well.

*VAPDC Fund Finding Seminar*

On June 17th, I attended a seminar hosted by the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC) to hear from several state and Federal funding agencies about changes to funding applications as well as other issues from Richmond and Washington DC that may impact localities as they pursue publicly funded projects in the future.

*Questions*

As always, I welcome any questions about the status of the town's busy activities. Thank you as always for all you do for our town!

Respectfully Submitted,

J. Brian Martin
Town Manager

PUBLIC NOTICE – ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT

**PURPOSE OF NOTICE:** To seek public comment on a draft permit from the Department of Environmental Quality that will allow the release of treated wastewater into a water body in Smyth County, Virginia.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:** First public notice issue date **(to be entered by the newspaper)**. The comment period lasts for 30 days from this date.

**PERMIT NAME:** Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit – Wastewater, issued by DEQ pursuant to applicable water laws and regulations.

**APPLICANT NAME, ADDRESS AND PERMIT NUMBER :**

NAME; Mr. Brian Martin, Town Manager, Town of Chilhowie
ADDRESS: 325 East Lee Highway, P.O. Box 5012, Chilhowie, VA 24319
PERMIT NO.: VA0026379

**FACILITY NAME AND LOCATION:**

NAME; Town of Chilhowie Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant
LOCATION: 211 Shop Road, Exit 35, off I-81, Chilhowie, VA 24319

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Mr. Brian Martin, Town Manager. Town of Chilhowie, has applied for reissuance of the permit for the publicly owned Town of Chilhowie Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant.. The applicant proposes to release treated sewage wastewater into a water body at the rate of 0.999 million gallons per day (MGD) The permittee shall conduct all biosolids (sewage sludge) use and disposal activities in accordance with the sludge management plan approved with the reissuance of this permit. The sludge (biosolids) management plan consists of periodically pumping the dewatered sludge to either: (1) Transporting to and disposal of the stabilized sludge to the Ham Sanitary Landfill in Petersburg, West Virginia; (2) Mercer County Landfill in Princton. West Virginia.

The applicant proposes to release the treated sewage wastewater into Middle Fork Holston River, in the Holston River Watershed. A watershed is the land area drained by a river and its incoming streams. The permit will limit the following pollutants to amounts that protect water quality: bacteria, nutrients, organic matter, physical and chemical properties, and solids. The permit also includes special conditions regarding compliance reporting, sludge management, and other requirements and special conditions.

**HOW TO COMMENT AND/OR REQUEST A PUBLIC HEARING**: DEQ accepts comments and requests for public hearing by hand delivery, e-mail, or postal mail. All comments and requests must be in writing and be received by DEQ during the comment period. DEQ must receive hand-delivery and postal mail by close of business and email comments by 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. Submittals must include the names, mailing addresses or e-mail addresses of the commenter/requester and of all the persons represented by the commenter/requester. A request for a public hearing must also include; (1) The reason why a public hearing is requested. (2) A brief, informal statement regarding the nature and extent of the requester or of those represented by the requester, including how and to what extent such interest would be directly and adversely affected by the permit. (3) Specific references, where possible, to terms and conditions of the permit and suggested revisions. A public hearing may be held, including another comment period, if public response is significant, based on individual requests for a public hearing, and there are substantial, disputed issues relevant to the permit.

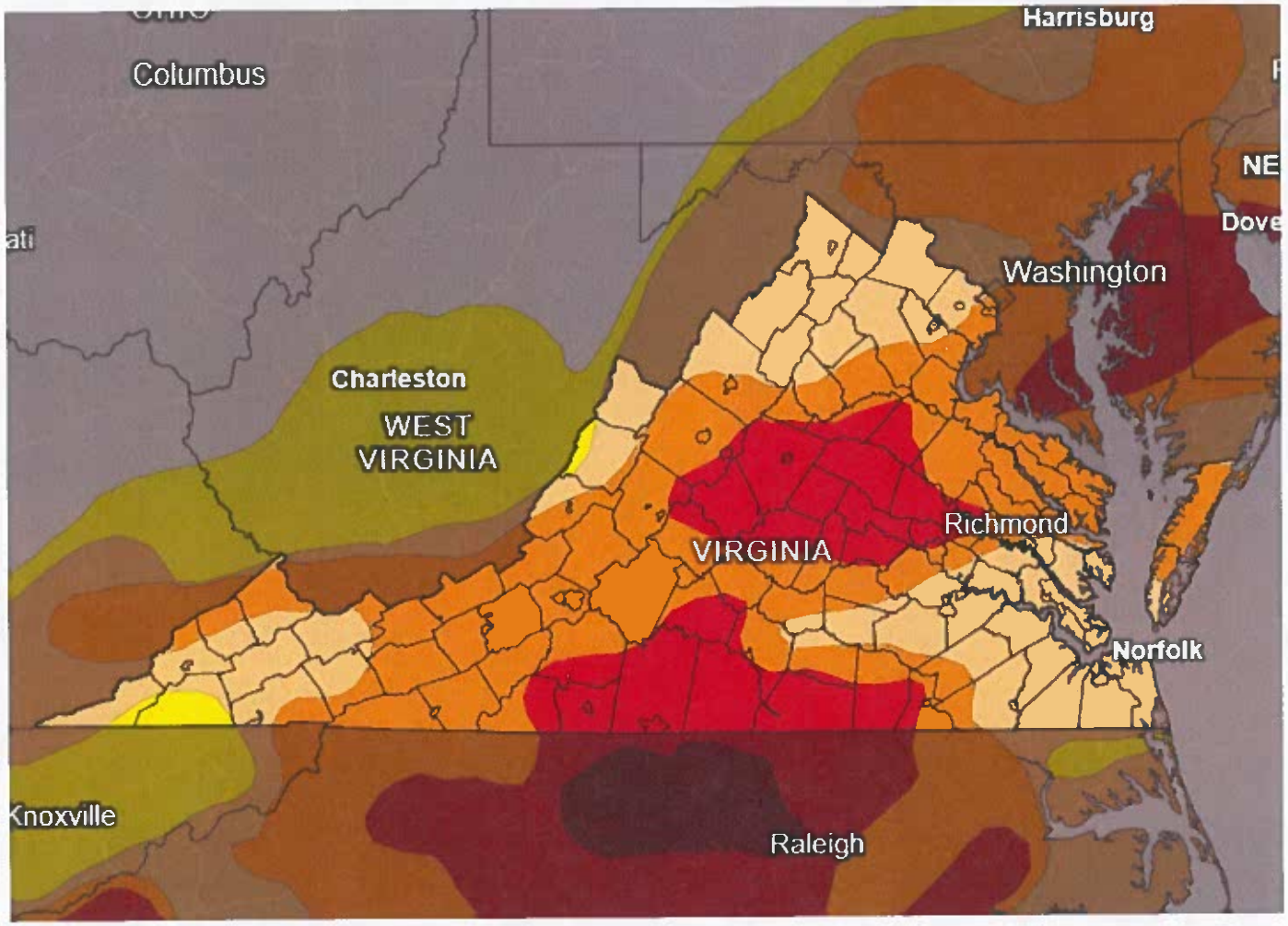
**CONTACT FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS, DOCUMENT REQUESTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Name: Fred M. Wyatt

**Address: DEQ, Southwest Regional Office, 355-A Deadmore Street, Abingdon, VA 24210; Phone: (276) 608-8498 or (276)-676-4800 E-mail: frederick.wyatt@deq.virginia.gov**

The public may review the draft permit and application at the DEQ office named above by appointment, or may request copies of the documents from the contact person listed above.

# U.S. Drought Monitor: Virginia




| Drought & Dryness Categories | % of VA |
|---|---|
| D0 – Abnormally Dry | 1.5% |
| D1 – Moderate Drought | 32.3% |
| D2 – Severe Drought | 43.5% |
| D3 – Extreme Drought | 22.8% |
| D4 – Exceptional Drought | 0.0% |
| Total Area in Drought (D1–D4) | 98.5% |

Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA, NASA
Data Valid: 06/30/26

**Drought.gov**