



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony G. Brown
Lieutenant Governor

Shari T. Wilson
Secretary

Robert M. Summers, Ph.D.
Deputy Secretary

February 3, 2009

The Honorable Joan Carter Conway, Chairperson
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21403

Re: Letter of Concern, Senate Bill 47: Environment - Permitting Process - Notice Requirements

Dear Senator Conway and Committee Members:

SB 47: Environment - Permitting Process – Notice Requirements would require the Department of the Environment to send notice by mail to the addresses of residential property owners within a two-mile radius of a proposed permit site during the application process. This applies to permits subject to “contested case” provisions. These are essentially all major permits, and under current state law a party may legally challenge a proposed permit in these areas. They are: air emissions, landfills, incinerators, water discharge, sewage sludge storage, facilities to transport, store, or dispose of hazardous waste or low level nuclear waste. Community notification is a crucial issue and we applaud Senator Harrington for his efforts to improve community notification.

The Department currently has two major IT projects underway to significantly improve public access to information electronically. These two projects, a web site upgrade and a consolidated electronic database known as EEMS (Enterprise Environmental Management System) will vastly improve the information available. These projects will begin to come on-line in 2010. In the interim, I have asked our staff to identify any ways we can provide better notification electronically until these two new projects are fully implemented.

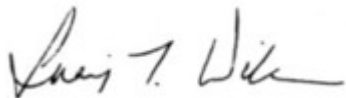
We support the intent of SB47 but are concerned that individual mailings are not the most efficient or cost effective method of notification. At the same time, the Department also acknowledges that a certain segment of the population is not reached through online notification. The Department is looking at ways to streamline the notification process to reach even more residents.



Toward this end, the Department would like to work with Senator Harrington to determine the most effective way to reach and inform residents of new permit applications within their community.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues as you review SB 47. Please contact me or Heather Barthel, Director of Legislation and Policy, at 410-260-6301 if you would like to discuss any of these issues further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Shari T. Wilson".

Shari T. Wilson
Secretary

Cc: Heather Barthel

