



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1800 Washington Boulevard • Baltimore MD 21230

410-537-3000 • 1-800-633-6101

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony G. Brown
Lieutenant Governor

Shari T. Wilson
Secretary

Robert M. Summers, Ph.D.
Deputy Secretary

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Fellow Marylanders:

Welcome to *EnviroMatters* – MDE's hot topics monthly e-pub, covering our agency's position on policy issues and initiatives to protect and enhance public health, our environment and the treasured Chesapeake Bay.

MDE was formed in 1987 when key environmental programs and agencies were joined under one roof. The success of MDE is attributable to our people. As we begin our 21st year of service to our beautiful state, we honor the unsung heroes of our Department. We appreciate the technical, administrative and professional expertise of our staff who have dedicated their careers to serving Maryland and sharing their talents. Please look for their stories in upcoming publications and on our website.

We're proud to celebrate 20 years of service and look forward to a brilliant future in fulfilling our mission to protect public health and restore the environment, while our state flourishes. As always, your comments and ideas are welcome.

Sincerely yours,

Shari T. Wilson
Secretary



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ENVIROMATTERS

March 27, 2007

Celebrating 20 Innovative Years of Protecting Public Health and the Environment

Historically, rivers, lakes, streams, and oceans were used for disposing waste and even carcasses until the late 19th century. Industries were often located near a water source to discard waste and pollutants. In the late 1800s, the oyster lobby in Maryland was so strong that it was responsible for insisting that the first sewage treatment actions be taken in Baltimore. We have come a long way.

When the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) was created in 1987, environmental programs were combined into one executive department to improve service and better serve our citizens. This year, MDE celebrates our 20th anniversary of protecting public health and preserving and restoring the air, land and water of our beautiful state.

Protecting Public Health and the Bay

Maryland's environmental and public health laws originated with protecting water purity and preventing disease outbreak. Responding to the industrial revolution, legislation broadened to address industrial waste and air pollution. MDE is tasked with protecting not only the health of Maryland residents, but also our delicate Chesapeake Bay watershed.

History

Since 1960, the General Assembly has continually responded to the need to address environmental pollution and uncontrolled development by creating numerous boards and advisory panels as well as establishing regulatory authority. State environmental programs are shaped by federal funding and mandates such as the Water Pollution Control Act and the Clean Air Act. The Departments of Natural Resources and Health and Mental Hygiene were responsible for enforcing laws and regulations pertaining to the environment. This included air and water quality, solid and toxic waste, sedimentation and stormwater runoff, and environmental health until 1987, when these programs formed MDE.

As programs were combined through the years to improve service, MDE began to serve a wider and wider variety of regulatory and programmatic disciplines with proven results.

MDE's Landmark Efforts

Our experts in protecting Maryland's air quality are the folks who pioneered the nationally recognized ozone color code warnings. In the last 20 years, the number of bad air quality days has dropped dramatically.

We lead the nation in requiring wastewater treatment plant technology to drastically reduce nitrogen loads to our treasured Chesapeake Bay. Implementing Enhanced Nutrient Removal technology is one of the most significant accomplishments in a quarter century.

Programs like Lead Poisoning Prevention lowered the number of children with elevated blood lead levels to a record low of 1.7 percent. Our goal is zero percent.

Last year, Maryland generated more than five million scrap tires. Of these, 70 percent were recycled or used as fuel in Maryland, and 30 percent were exported for recycling or disposal.

As a regulatory agency, annually, MDE visits about 44,000 facilities, performing over 103,500 inspections. We are responsible for regulating approximately 300,000 environmental occurrences.

Planning for Our Future

By 2030, Maryland's population is expected to grow by as much as 1.5 million. Meeting this challenge while continuing to reduce air pollution, ensure an adequate water supply, and restore the Bay will require citizens, local governments and the private sector to work collaboratively and make hard choices. If our past is any guide, Maryland is up to the task.

The body of scientific, technical, managerial, and administrative talent under one roof remains MDE's strength. This year marks the celebration of 20 years as an agency and the dedication of our employees – many who have served Maryland for over 30 years!

www.mde.state.md.us 800.633.6101

