MARYLAND
MDE

Rolling Up Our Sleeves: The Maturation of Accountability in Maryland

It is a new era of accountability for past, present and future environmental concerns as we serve Maryland residents. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is moving forward with Governor Martin O'Malley's plan to work with greater efficiency while keeping our government open, transparent and accountable.

Reapplied Urgency to Chesapeake Bay Restoration

Currently there is a complex web of federal, state, local and private funding aimed at restoring the Bay. To bring better-coordinated and more comprehensive accountability to these efforts, MDE is joining other Bay Cabinet agencies to institute Governor O'Malley's BayStat program. This will ensure that funds are being directed appropriately. BayStat is a performance-based management system that will measure progress on all of our restoration efforts to improve the health of the Bay. It involves data sharing to promote cost savings, enhance revenue, improve the quality of county and municipal services, and measure results. BayStat will enable MDE to do a better job of communicating where and how MDE is spending money for restoration activities.

Funding Impacts MDE Success

MDE faces funding challenges. Like many environmental agencies, we are organized in part based on federal funding streams made available in the 1980s. Over the next six months, MDE will assess our priorities according to where the greatest public health and environmental needs are now, then realign our resources accordingly. MDE is studying variables like federal funding streams and dedicated funds, to reconcile or match them to our highest priority needs. These may require tough changes, but it is the only way to reach our goal – to ensure adequate funding for the work we are charged to do to protect public health and the environment.

Enforcement - the Core of MDE's Mission

As we move forward to implement important programs such as wastewater treatment plant Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR) upgrades, development of Total Maximum Daily Loads of our waters and the Healthy Air Act, we need to remember that regulated entities cannot compete on a level playing field without enforcement. Those who do not comply gain an unfair economic advantage over regulated entities that currently comply. We will focus on enforcement activities such as how many sites MDE inspects and closely monitor facilities where violations are likely to have the greatest impact on public health. While considering MDE's budget restraints and other issues, we will prioritize and communicate our enforcement activities more clearly.

Responsible Development

All environmental regulatory programs are affected by population growth and land development changes in Maryland. These have posed challenges that are creating additional loads on the system that we need to accommodate with appropriate planning. MDE's goal is to permit development in an environmentally-friendly, balanced and sustainable way. We work with the Maryland Department of Planning and local governments to help communities develop and plan for growth in a manner that promotes open space, ensures proper infrastructure including adequate water and sewer capacity, and protects the critical areas essential to Bay restoration. Governor O'Malley will hold regulatory agencies like MDE accountable to the process, and we will work responsibly with regional partners to ultimately protect the quality of life for all Marylanders.

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