

April 25, 2006

ENVIRO MATTERS

2006 Legislative Session Wraps with Highest Number of Bills

The 2006 Maryland General Assembly session produced another successful year for the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). While there were a number of bills introduced this year that impact MDE, by far the legislation that dominated our focus was the Healthy Air Act. Designed to curb emissions from local power plants, the Act places limits on pollutants to protect public health and improve the Chesapeake Bay.

Clean Power Rule

In November, Governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., announced the Clean Power Rule, a multipollutant regulation that mandates significant reductions in emission levels of three pollutants from Maryland's power plants. The reduction in nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, and mercury outlined in the Governor's rule will help Maryland meet federally mandated air attainment standards.

In January 2006, the General Assembly followed suit by introducing multipollutant legislation also aimed at reducing pollution from the State's largest coal fired power plants. In addition to the pollutants targeted in the Clean Power Rule, the Healthy Air Act added carbon dioxide to the list of pollutants to be reduced. MDE's Air and Radiation Management Administration Director, Tad Aburn, worked tirelessly with the General Assembly to craft legislation that strikes a delicate balance between cleaning Maryland's air and protecting our citizens from potential brownouts or blackouts. We were pleased that the final legislative product was close to the Governor's Clean Power Rule. Now that the Governor has signed the Healthy Air Act, we are incorporating its provisions, where necessary, into the Clean Power Rule.

HB1141 Land Use - Local Government Planning

Other important legislation that affected the department included HB 1141 Land Use – Local Government Planning. This bill will require local governments to more closely examine water and sewer resources when planning their growth. HB 1141 seeks to remedy the problem of over-development with inadequate water supply and wastewater capacity.

SB 125 Falsifying Documents to Show Compliance

MDE sponsored SB 125 which makes it a misdemeanor to knowingly falsify, alter, or cause another to alter any permit, license or certificate issued or required by the department. The bill also prohibits knowingly possessing, displaying, or submitting an altered permit, license or certificate to another person or to MDE. Under this bill, the criminal penalty for a conviction carries up to two years in jail or up to \$50,000 fine.

Even with the highest number of bills introduced in 20 years and the political wrangling of an election year, MDE fared very well in our quest to protect, restore and improve Maryland's environment.



Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor
Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor



Kend P. Philbrick, Secretary
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