

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

ENVIROMATTERS June 23, 2006

Designating Environmental Benefits Districts – Giving Back to Our Communities

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) gives back to the community. We're not just regulators, we do our part in allocating resources and providing our local jurisdictions with information and education. These efforts promote clean environments, recycling programs and address health and safety issues in under privileged communities.

Maximizing Program Potential

The Environmental Benefits District (EBD) concept acknowledges the many programs needed to protect and revitalize communities. Where many programs exist, in some cases, they are not focused or coordinated. This is where EBD helps. We provide the geographic focus and needs identification to make these programs more successful.

On June 17, we dedicated the Carroll Archer Streets Tot Lot - a culmination of year-long work by partnering to reconstruct the once-rundown neighborhood playground. Funded with \$75,000 from the Maryland Used Tire Cleanup and Recycling Fund, MDE's contribution was the rubberized safety surface manufactured from tire chips and recycled rubber to provide a protective cushion for the children. The opening of our first tot lot was a pivotal testimony to how various state agencies, community associations, and neighborhood volunteers can collaborate to reach Governor Ehrlich's goal in making Maryland a better place to live.

Designating Areas

Last year in Prince George's County, another EBD, MDE awarded \$70,000 in grants towards helping small business, such as dry cleaners and auto body shops, stay in compliance with air toxics emissions regulations. Another \$115,000 was designated to retrofit diesel engines of trucks and transit buses to reduce air toxic emissions in congested communities. MDE brownfield's assessments are

conducted on local designated EBD dumpsites to redevelop them into productive sites while protecting public health.

As part of the efforts underway in the South West Baltimore EBD, MDE provided \$75,000 to finance five ultra-urban best management practices and develop a "virtual theme park" in Watershed 263. This will help control the pollutant loading into the Chesapeake Bay tributaries from urban stormwater runoff and allow citizens and other stakeholders to track this project via the website.

In celebration of Earth Day, MDE co-hosted an educational workshop "Talkin' Trash" at our headquarters in South West Baltimore. It was designed to inform, inspire and create networking opportunities for individuals and organizations to recapture their neighborhoods. The workshop focused on how cities like Baltimore address curbside recycling and trash programs, who to call if there is a problem with illegal dumping, how to tackle rodent problems, and what to use as alternatives to toxic pesticides.

Much of our outreach activities offer fundamentals to children – our future decision-makers - regarding Environmental Justice by stressing waste reduction and inspiring them to take pride in their neighborhoods. We are after all, proud of everyone as Marylanders and want to maintain a good quality of life here. For more information on MDE's EBD program contact Dorothy Morrison at (410) 537-3086 or via e-mail at: dmorrison@mde.state.md.us

www.mde.state.md.us | 800.633.3101

