

PLANNING, CONSERVATION KEY TO LONG-TERM WATER SUPPLY

Maryland's population will increase by a million people within the next 25 years. Our average daily water consumption will hit 1.7 billion gallons a day. Will we have enough water?

The answer is Yes - provided that we take the advice of a blue-ribbon panel that studied the state's water supply and recommended steps to ensure that we don't run out as our population grows by a million people by 2030. Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. appointed the committee, which was chaired by Dr. M. Gordon "Reds" Wolman, at the request of legislators concerned after the 2002 drought.

The committee's recommendations:

- An on-going, comprehensive evaluation of watersheds and aquifers that supply water to Marylanders. This would be a continuation of the advisory committee's work.
- Improved management of aquifers statewide and development of a comprehensive multi-aquifer model for the coastal plain (Southern Maryland, Anne Arundel County, eastern Baltimore, Harford and Cecil counties, and the Eastern Shore), where levels have declined significantly in the past 20 years. This would serve as the basis for ground water management decisions regarding well permits and local sewer and water plans.
- Continued funding of observation wells and stream gauges and expansion of the network when possible. Governor Ehrlich has already restored the funds to the Fiscal 2005 budget.
- Creation of a permanent advisory committee to periodically evaluate implementation of the committee's recommendations.
- Improved coordination between Maryland and Virginia regarding water allocations from the Potomac River.
- Increased state support - both financial and technical - for local water and sewer planning.
- Development of an aggressive educational outreach program to inform the public about water supply issues and the importance of conservation.

Key to protecting our water supply is a continued commitment to conservation of this precious resource. To read the report, go to

<http://www.mde.state.md.us/ResearchCenter/Publications/index.asp>