



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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Fellow Marylanders:

When we are encouraging people to visit Maryland or businesses to locate here, our location is a strong selling point. While we are close to everything, opportunities to “get away from everything” are always close by. But our location downwind from far-away power plants requires us to work hard to keep our air and water clean.

This issue of *EnviroMatters* offers a brief look at the conditions that affect our environment. As always, your comments and ideas are welcome.

Sincerely,

Kendl P. Philbrick
Acting Secretary

Concern About Out-of-State Pollution Sources Drives Maryland's Decision to Join Lawsuit

Maryland has joined a lawsuit challenging a change in federal regulations that could have the effect of making it more difficult for the state to achieve the clean air standards mandated by federal law - and indeed could actually increase air and water pollution in Maryland. At issue is the New Source Review (NSR) program, part of the Federal Clean Air Act. NSR requires the installation of pollution controls if upgrades to power plants can be expected to produce more pollutants. The Environmental Protection Agency has changed the requirement to allow plants to replace and upgrade equipment without adding controls.

Maryland and the other states that sued the EPA are "downwind" of major coal-fired power plants in the South and the Midwest. Pollution generated by those plants is carried hundreds of miles by prevailing winds to Maryland and other states in the Northeast. The airborne pollutants degrade air quality (they are a key cause of the "code red" days we experience in the summer) and increase the amount of harmful nitrogen in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

The effects are serious: In 2002, Maryland was in violation of federal standards for ozone on 17 days, more than any other Mid-Atlantic state from New York to North Carolina. The amount of fine particulates (which are associated with respiratory ailments) in our air is routinely higher than in other states.

This pollution does not originate in Maryland. In fact, Baltimore produces fewer volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions than Washington, Philadelphia or New York. And nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions in Maryland are lower than in most states in the region. In other words, the majority of the pollution in our air comes from beyond our borders.

To meet federal clean air standards - and, more important, to ensure that Marylanders breath clean, healthy air - requires a combination of strict controls on Maryland power plants, regional efforts to reduce ozone, and protection from pollutants that come from other states. With the change in the New Source Review regulations, Maryland loses an important protection against pollution from out-of-state sources.