



## MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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October 22, 2003

Fellow Marylanders:

For the Department of the Environment, it is part of the daily routine: We go out into the field and conduct tests – some simple, some fairly sophisticated – that measure water quality. Those tests are often the starting point for policies and decisions that affect Marylanders.

But there's nothing routine about the same process when bright fourth-graders are handling the test tubes and taking the readings. It is the stuff of classroom work made both tangible and exciting. *pH* is not just an idea, but a reflection of the quality of the nearby environment. Mrs. Sherfey's fourth-graders didn't make any policies as a result of their experiment in water testing, but I would like to believe that the efforts of a dedicated teacher to educate them about the environment will pay dividends when they grow up and start making decisions about keeping Maryland clean and healthy.

Enjoy this issue of *EnviroMatters*.

Sincerely,

Kendl P. Philbrick  
Acting Secretary

## Water Monitoring Day Gives Students Hands-On Experience Testing Water Quality

Those of us who have stewardship of Maryland's land, air and water, whether our primary responsibility is agriculture, natural resources or environmental issues, are constantly aware of our obligation to future generations: When we hand responsibility to the next generation, the condition of our environment should be better than it was when we began our stewardship.

But what do we know of the next generation? Are they aware of the need to protect and improve our natural resources? Do they share our commitment to clean air and a healthy Chesapeake Bay? Visits to half a dozen Maryland schools - including Green Schools - last week by Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) staff provided answers to those questions. The answer is a resounding Yes!

The department invited schools to take part in World Water Monitoring Day. The event, sponsored by the America's Clean Water Foundation and the International Water Association, serves as a global educational platform for watershed leaders, educators and trained volunteers to help those who are less experienced better understand how the actions of individuals in a watershed can impact many others. The emphasis is on students - the next generation. In 2002, the inaugural year for National Water Monitoring Day, 558 participants sampled water at 83 Maryland sites. Nationwide, over 75,000 people took part.

MDE provided water testing kits so students who are learning about the environment can get hands-on experience using the same tools we use to measure water quality. There were enough tests - of dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH and clarity so that every student in the class could participate. Through MDE's website, classes could upload their data to a worldwide database at the World Monitoring Day homepage.

I visited Linton Springs Elementary School in Sykesville. The school is surrounded by nature, and nearby fields and woods have been turned into a laboratory where students can study the environment. In Mrs. Pam Sherfey's fourth-grade class, I met two dozen children whose knowledge of the environment, especially the Bay, was remarkable. For these boys and girls, the Bay is a considerable distance from their homes, but they are keenly aware of the impact of their actions on the Chesapeake. Colleagues at MDE who visited other schools in other parts of the state had the same experience, and it is evident that the generation that will take over stewardship of the state's natural resources will be well-prepared for that responsibility.

Moreover, these visits reinforced the value of MDE's outreach efforts, especially in schools. Enforcement of environmental laws and regulations is an essential part of our job, but there is a strong educational component to our mission, and World Water Monitoring Day will remain a high priority for the department in coming years.