



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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Fellow Marylanders:

When the *Baltimore Sun* asked Marylanders which is more important – the environment or job growth – three out of five people surveyed said the environment was more important. One out of five said job growth is more important than a clean and healthy environment. Are people getting what they want from our environmental efforts? A review of 20 years of air data collected by the Maryland Department of the Environment suggests they are – and that we are making progress in our efforts to clean up the environment.

As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome. Enjoy this issue of *EnviroMatters*.

Sincerely,

Kendl P. Philbrick
Acting Secretary

20 YEARS OF DATA SHOW CLEANER AIR IN MARYLAND

The nation has spent decades and billions of dollars to clean up the environment. Industry and consumers have borne the cost of strict laws governing emissions. What have we accomplished? How clean is Maryland's air?

The Maryland Department of the Environment has been collecting data on air quality for two decades, and one of the first things I did when I assumed responsibility for the department was to ask for an evaluation of that data. The results were very positive:

- Airborne lead is now virtually nonexistent because lead has been eliminated from gasoline.
- Carbon monoxide levels are now within federal standards because of the use of oxygenated fuels.
- Course particulate matter, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide remain well below federal standards.
- And ozone levels, while still problematic, show encouraging trends. For example, where once Maryland could expect high levels of ozone every time the temperature went above 90 degrees, there is a clear indication in the trend data that hot days no longer automatically bring high-ozone "code red" conditions. The steady decrease in ozone levels is even more impressive when you consider that Maryland's population increased by almost 25 percent between 1980 and 1990, which means that the potential for pollution increased substantially.

There is no question that more remains to be done. Maryland's air pollution problems will never be completely solved until coal-fired power plants in states west and south of Maryland take steps to reduce emissions. The transport of ozone into Maryland from other states remains one of the most intractable problems in our effort to clean up the environment, and we are pressing for reductions in emissions at plants in the Ohio River Valley and elsewhere, both in court (with Maryland's participation in a lawsuit that would block changes in Environmental Protection Agency regulations) and in the political arena (Maryland is a leader among Northeast states working to enact stricter pollution laws in Congress).

Still, it is valuable to recognize the progress that has been made. Air is cleaner in Maryland and other states. And the substantial progress reinforces the idea that, working together, we can continue to remove airborne hazards from our environment.