

## *MDE Year in Review: 2008*

As we begin a New Year, prepare for the legislative session, and take on new challenges, it is important to reflect on our collective achievements. The Department of the Environment's work in 2008 not only demonstrates the talents of our hard-working staff, but reflects *your* work, the participation of so many stakeholders, advocates, regulated entities, citizens, and other State employees working together to protect public health and our environment. It was also a year of many environmental firsts.

The year may be remembered as particularly noteworthy when it comes to climate change. Maryland's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative came to full fruition as two auctions of carbon allowances raised \$34.3 million to fund energy conservation programs, lower electricity bills, and put us well on the way to reductions of greenhouse emissions from electricity production. The Maryland Climate Change Commission's Climate Action Plan provided our "road map" of 42 options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to the benefit of the economy and the environment, as

well as a Maryland-specific scientific assessment of how changing shorelines and weather patterns will affect our State and how we can adapt. Maryland also joined a lawsuit to affirm our right to implement the Clean Cars Act to limit vehicle emissions, reduce carbon and nitrogen pollution, and improve the air.

Many of you know a top priority here has been restoring our emphasis on enforcing laws already on the books. In fiscal year 2008, MDE's enforcement actions were up 34 percent, with a total of 2,699 enforcement actions, the highest number since reporting began. A total of \$3.9 million in penalties were paid in 2008, the highest ever in a single year. MDE settled a lawsuit against ExxonMobil Corporation for the 2006 gasoline spill that significantly impacted the Jacksonville community for \$4 million, making this the largest state environmental penalty ever levied by MDE.

With over 3,100 miles of shoreline and a growing population, cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and our waterways continues to be an ongoing battle. This year, MDE took strong action to reduce pollution from stormwater runoff by

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revising the general stormwater permit for construction over one acre, committing to update erosion and sediment control technical standards, proposing a very progressive municipal stormwater permit for Montgomery County, and proposing regulations to implement the Stormwater Management Act of 2007. Urban and suburban runoff account for 13 percent of Maryland's nitrogen load to the Bay, and together these actions would cut urban stormwater nutrient loads by approximately 20 to 30 percent.

We also sought to limit pollution from large poultry operations. After nearly ten years of working to find a solution, with input from farmers and environmentalists, Maryland now has regulations and a discharge permit controlling 50 percent of our poultry litter.

We kicked our septic upgrade program into full gear, spreading the word to the public through radio ads, news stories, and good-old-fashioned word of mouth. Your Bay Restoration Fund pays for upgrades to septic systems that reduce the system's nitrogen pollution by half—particularly important along the State's shoreline. This year, three wastewater treatment plants were upgraded to use the best available technology, significantly reducing nitrogen and phosphorus from these facilities. The preferred practice for shoreline stabilization

received a big boost when an MDE bill to require "Living Shorelines" where feasible was signed by Governor O'Malley.

MDE took innovative steps to make sure Maryland can be flexible, grow where necessary, and still stay under the Chesapeake Bay nutrient load cap. The Point Source Trading Policy developed by several agencies and a large network of stakeholders provides another tool for staying under the cap.

As we do more and more to reduce nitrogen from all sources, the opportunities for reductions are getting smaller but are no less important. The easy reductions are done. Future reductions will be even more difficult, but we know we all share a sense of urgency about the Bay. Together, it can be done.

Looking at the critical issue of water supply, and with the leadership of Maryland's own Dr. M. Gordon "Reds" Wolman of the Johns Hopkins University, the Governor's Advisory Committee on the Management and Protection of the State's Water Resources, MDE released its final report, "Water for Maryland's Future." The report details a comprehensive strategy to ensure we meet the current and projected demand for water through 2030. MDE is now focused on identifying the funding necessary to conduct the recommended technical studies to better understand our

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water capacity and undertake the comprehensive state-wide water supply planning initiatives recommended by the Committee.

Protecting the health of Marylanders is at the heart of MDE's mission. As MDE continues to work toward our goal to eliminate childhood lead exposure by 2010, we took numerous actions to ensure property owners comply with State laws.

MDE also established new requirements for the disposal of coal combustion by-products, including fly ash, and announced plans to propose regulations for recycling this material in 2009. While the Environmental Protection Agency has been work-

ing on a proposal to regulate the disposal and use of coal combustion byproducts since 2000, in the interest of public health, MDE forged ahead with State regulations.

Reducing the amount of waste we create and that ends up in landfills is an ongoing priority for Marylanders, as evidenced by the tremendous number of e-mails and letters we receive on the subject. We, as residents, through our county programs, set a new state record in Maryland with a 47.5 percent waste diversion rate!

This brief list of 2008 highlights demonstrates Maryland is Smart, Green and Growing. There is much more work to come. We look forward to working with you in 2009.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shari T. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Shari T. Wilson  
Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment

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