2012 Annual Report

Recapping our work in 2012 for our members
Dear Environment Maryland members,

This has been a year of extremes—both for our weather and our political process. The good news is that this year also included some pivotal progress for the environment.

As members of Congress voted almost daily to dismantle environmental protections, Environment Maryland helped convince President Obama to move forward with historic new policies to reduce global warming pollution from the two biggest sources—cars and power plants.

And in Annapolis, we helped achieve groundbreaking progress for the Chesapeake Bay by adopting new policies to reduce both urban and agricultural runoff into Bay waters.

As long as Maryland remains reliant on fossil fuels and as long as the Chesapeake Bay suffers vast dead zones every summer, our work will continue. But we’re making important progress. Thank you for your support and allowing us to keep fighting for a greener, cleaner Maryland.

Sincerely,

Tommy Landers
Director
Making History

Working together with our sister groups across the country, we helped win action in Maryland and 13 other states to reduce global warming pollution from cars and trucks by improving gas mileage. This state-level action paved the way for the largest single step the U.S. has ever taken to tackle global warming. This past year, the historic national clean cars standard was finalized.

Slashing carbon pollution

Cars and trucks are among the largest sources of climate change pollution in Maryland and throughout the country. So one of the most important things we can do to stave off the worst impacts of global warming is to improve the efficiency of our cars.

Once the 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025 standard is fully implemented, our annual oil use will be cut by an amount equal to what we currently import from Saudi Arabia and Iraq each year. That will reduce our carbon footprint by 280 million metric tons of pollution and reduce our oil dependence by 23 billion gallons of gas per year.

More than 11,500 Marylanders could purchase plug-in vehicles in the next three years. This would reduce Maryland's global warming pollution by 16,293 tons. And if the cars were powered by renewable energy such as solar, the global warming pollution savings would jump to nearly 50,000 tons.

Environment Maryland’s Sam Feigenbaum releases our latest report on electric vehicles, “Charging Forward: The Emergence of Electric Vehicles and Their Role in Reducing Oil Consumption.”
Restoring the Bay

It’s impossible to overstate the importance of the Chesapeake Bay for Maryland. And yet, pollution still sullies its waters year after year. The good news is that we made critical progress this year to reduce the largest sources of pollution from urban and agricultural runoff.

Progress in restoring a cherished waterway

Poorly built urban infrastructure can end up sending polluted water rushing into streams and creeks and eventually into the Bay. Meanwhile, over-fertilized crop fields and inappropriately managed livestock manure are the largest sources of pollution in the Bay.

Environment Maryland supported a pair of bills passed by the Maryland General Assembly that will give local governments the necessary resources to bring their wastewater treatment plants up to date, and to ensure that infrastructure is better able to absorb rainwater and avoid polluting runoff.

Meanwhile, agriculture continues to be Maryland’s largest single source of pollution to the Chesapeake Bay and throughout the region. Cow manure and poultry litter account for much of this pollution, which can also contaminate local waterways and groundwater supplies.

This summer, Environment Maryland supported new rules proposed by Gov. Martin O’Malley to reduce the impact of farms on the Bay. The rules will prohibit application of manure on fields during the winter, and they will establish standards for vegetative buffer zones between farm fields and waterways.
Holding agribusiness polluters accountable

While this year’s new rules and laws represent critical progress in restoring the Bay, Environment Maryland remains committed to holding corporate agribusiness polluters accountable for their pollution. Unfortunately for the Bay, corporate agribusinesses like Perdue are still able to completely absolve themselves of responsibility for pollution from their animals’ manure.

To help inform Marylanders about the issue, our canvassers spoke with more than 27,000 residents across the state. We also collected more than 4,500 signatures in support of holding corporate agribusiness accountable for polluting the Bay.

Every year, poultry companies raise nearly 300 million chickens in Maryland, producing an estimated 600 million pounds of chicken manure. Environment Maryland released a report, “An Unsustainable Path,” detailing the impact that poorly managed poultry waste has on our environment.

We released our report at the M&T Bank Stadium, highlighting how Maryland’s poultry operations generate enough manure every year to cover up the field with a pile twice as high as the stadium. The event was covered by every major TV network in Baltimore.

Clean Water Advocate Megan Cronin, who oversaw our summer citizen outreach efforts for the Chesapeake Bay.
Global Warming Solutions

We are already seeing the effects of global warming here in Maryland, from heat waves to severe storms and heavy precipitation. But luckily, there is a way forward on global warming. This year, we educated Marylanders about global warming as we worked to reduce carbon emissions and bring about a clean energy economy.

We reported the real impacts of climate change

With its thousand miles of coastline, mostly along the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland is one of the states most vulnerable to climate change. Our state is already feeling the brunt of global warming’s impact, and Environment Maryland has worked to bring these impacts to light.

• We released our report, “What Offshore Wind Means for Maryland.” The report documents the impacts of climate change on regions in Maryland and discusses how clean energy, like offshore wind power, could reduce those impacts.

• We reported how the low-lying Eastern Shore could benefit from offshore wind’s contribution to curbing global warming and slowing sea level rise. Sea level is expected to rise by more than a foot in Maryland by 2050 and potentially by 3.4 feet by the end of the century, which could submerge hundreds of square miles of land.

• We also released, “When It Rains, It Pours,” reporting that extreme precipitation events now occur 55 percent more frequently in the mid-Atlantic region than in 1948, and that the most extreme storms in Maryland produce 14 percent more precipitation today.
Calling for action on global warming

The good news is that Maryland has a number of programs and policies in place to reduce our carbon emissions. The trick will be ensuring the success of those programs. This year, Environment Maryland worked to strengthen those that already exist and called for additional programs needed to reduce pollution.

When the state produced a draft plan to reduce carbon emissions statewide by at least 25 percent below 2006 levels by 2020, our research staff analyzed the draft plan and submitted comments to state agencies calling for more aggressive actions to promote energy efficiency and clean energy.

Environment Maryland fought to bolster core programs within the state’s global warming plan. We worked together with partners up and down the coast to recruit more than 215 organizations, businesses and individuals to sign on to a letter urging Gov. O’Malley to work to strengthen the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a critical program to reduce carbon emissions from power plants and invest in energy efficiency in Maryland.

In Maryland, extreme weather hits close to home

If you think we’ve seen more than our usual share of weird weather in and around Maryland lately, you’re right. Last year’s hurricanes were a perfect example. Every Maryland county was hit by at least one weather-related disaster from 2006-2011.

Not only are we seeing more extreme weather; climate scientists warn that if we keep polluting the way we are now, the next generation is likely to see even more floods, more dangerous smog pollution, more heat waves, and more intense hurricanes as the climate changes—with serious consequences for our health, our safety and our environment.

Learn about extreme weather’s local impact by checking out the interactive map on our website.

http://www.environmentmaryland.org/page/ame/map-recent-weather-related-disasters-maryland
Clean Air, Healthy Families

Maryland families should be able to breathe clean air, without worrying about life-threatening mercury pollution. After winning standards for mercury, soot and smog pollution emissions that could save 46,000 lives a year, we went to work defending them against rollback attempts from anti-environmentalists in Congress.

**Life saving standards defended**

Last year, we won a major victory for our air, as the Environmental Protection Agency moved forward with standards to reduce dangerous mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants. Our fight continued into 2012, as we worked to defend these standards against rollback attempts in the Senate.

- One in six women of childbearing age has enough mercury in her bloodstream to put her child at risk of health effects should she become pregnant.

- Mercury spewed into our air also makes its way into our water, contaminating rivers, lakes and streams in Maryland and nationwide.

- New standards will reduce mercury pollution from coal–fired power plants by 90 percent.

Environment Maryland helped organize enough political and public support for the standards that attempts to block them in the U.S. Senate were defeated.
Sustainable Farming

Our food should be grown in ways that minimize any impact on the environment or public health. Unfortunately, factory farms that pollute the Chesapeake Bay and endanger our health dominate today’s agriculture. Thankfully, across Maryland we’re seeing more local, sustainable farming. Environment Maryland went to work this year advocating for state policies that will promote sustainable farming.

Concrete steps toward healthier farming

This year, Environment Maryland won a victory against unhealthy food production practices by banning arsenic-laden additives from chicken feed in our state. We also continued our work to develop state polices that will help small sustainable farms flourish in Maryland.

Tests conducted by the Food and Drug Administration found arsenic in the chicken that regularly ends up on our kitchen tables. According to their findings, more than 55 percent of chicken sold in grocery stores—and all the chicken served in fast food restaurants—contained arsenic, a carcinogen linked to neurological disorders in children.

Environment Maryland organized nearly 20,000 online activists in support of a bill to ban arsenic in chicken feed, which passed the General Assembly. Steps like this help to protect public health and chip away at some of the most destructive practices of corporate agribusiness.
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Address service requested