Tell Congress: Let EPA protect our water

Biggest clean water victory in a decade
The Obama administration is closing loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left 2 million miles of our nation's streams open to pollution. But some in Congress are determined to block the rule to restore the Clean Water Act to full strength.

This summer, as polluters and their congressional allies turn up the pressure, Environment Maryland and our national federation are doubling down to build the support to convince our elected officials to stand up for the health of the Chesapeake Bay, and all America’s waterways.

Polluters’ allies aim to block EPA
In February, a joint hearing between the Senate and the House was widely viewed as setting the stage to block the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) proposal. But with the help of our coalition and members, we provided photos of waterways at risk of pollution so that our elected officials could show their colleagues what this fight is all about. And, thanks in part to our advocacy, Sen. Ben Cardin and Rep. Elijah Cummings stood up for the EPA’s proposal in a joint hearing intended to push a vote to kill the rule.

This summer, we’re also working to pass policies in Maryland to reduce industrial agriculture pollution into the Chesapeake Bay. We’re putting the pressure on to win a new rule to reduce phosphorous pollution runoff from agribusiness, and make sure its as strong as possible.

Report finds $53 million spent lobbying
Some of the biggest polluters are spending millions to make their voices heard louder. New research from Environment Maryland suggests that some companies are pouring millions of dollars into lobbying and campaign contributions. The report, “Polluting Politics,” found that the 10 most polluting companies in 2012 spent more than $53 million on lobbying in 2014 and contributed more than $9.4 million to candidates for federal office during the 2014 election cycle.

“It’s time for Congress to listen to citizens, not the polluters,” said Ally Fields, clean water advocate. “Let the EPA finish the job to protect our waterways.”

Pollution by the numbers

<table>
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<th>50 percent</th>
<th>206 million</th>
<th>$53 million</th>
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<tr>
<td>More than half the country’s lakes, rivers and streams aren’t safe for swimming or drinking.</td>
<td>Pounds of toxic pollution that industrial facilities reported dumping in our waterways in 2012.</td>
<td>Money spent lobbying by the 10 parent companies that reported the most toxic dumping.</td>
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Learn more about polluters’ attempts to block clean water protections at www.EnvironmentMaryland.org.
To our members

The past few months have brought some incredible victories for the environment, from President Obama’s veto of a bill forcing approval of the Keystone XL pipeline, to the Maryland Legislature passing a bill to promote community solar energy.

Of course, we still have our work cut out for us. With a Congress that officially denied the science behind global warming and dirty energy companies that continue to pollute and threaten our environment, it’s more important than ever that we speak out for Maryland’s air, water and open spaces.

In the coming months, Environment Maryland will talk to people across the state, gather thousands of petitions and mobilize local support to protect the Chesapeake Bay, reduce global warming pollution, and grow solar power in our communities.

It’s only through our members, like you, that we can do so. Thanks for making it all possible.

Sincerely,

Christy Leavitt
Environment Maryland

Recent action

Keystone veto a victory for the environment

In a huge win for the environment, the much-debated bill forcing approval of the Keystone XL pipeline met its demise this March, when it failed to gain enough votes to override President Obama’s veto. The fate of the controversial tar sands pipeline now rests with the president and the State Department, which must authorize the pipeline’s route across the Canadian border.

According to the State Department, building Keystone XL would add 26 million metric tons of carbon pollution to our atmosphere each year, the equivalent of putting another 5.7 million cars on the road.

Environment Maryland and our allies worked to stop the pipeline by sending more than 8,600 petitions to senators urging them to oppose Keystone, and phonebanking, marching and lobbying to show the president and others the massive public support for a veto. We will continue to mobilize the public to make sure the president doesn’t approve this dirty, dangerous project.

4 million urge President Obama to save the bees

In March, Environment Maryland along with a coalition of beekeepers, farmers, business owners and other environmental and food safety advocates rallied in front of the White House and delivered more than 4 million petition signatures calling on the Obama administration to put forth strong protections for bees and other pollinators.

Environment Maryland and our allies urged President Obama and the Environmental Protection Agency to take swift action to protect bees from a dangerous class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids.

These pesticides are linked to rapid bee decline, and in turn, threaten our food supply. With more than 90 percent of foods dependent on bees for survival, it’s imperative that we protect bees from this toxic threat.
Cities leading the country forward on solar

With another solar panel or project installed every 3 minutes last year, solar jobs growing faster than the economy, and plummeting costs, we’re harnessing more energy from the sun and getting closer to leaving climate-altering dirty energy behind. Many major cities, including Baltimore, are playing a key role in meeting our energy and environmental challenges, according to “Shining Cities,” a new report released by Environment Maryland Research & Policy Center.

Baltimore ranked #6 in region

As population centers, urban areas can have an important influence on the way we power our grids across the country. The report found that, at the end of 2014, 20 cities—representing just 0.1 percent of U.S. land area—accounted for 6.5 percent of the total installed solar in the country. In total, the United States has enough solar electric capacity to power 3.5 million homes, and that number is growing.

Baltimore ranked #6 among the Mid-Atlantic region’s solar leaders for total solar installed, and ranked 34th nationally. Programs that make solar power more accessible to the broader community will continue to help build the city’s solar industry.

Making solar accessible to all

Environment Maryland successfully worked to pass a bill to do just that this legislative session. The Community Solar bill, HB1087, will allow Maryland residents to invest in community-scale solar energy projects, such as solar arrays on roofs of community centers, and local land. Residents can then offset a portion of their electric bill from the energy generated.

This year, with the combined effort of environmental organizations, the solar industry, widespread public support across Maryland for solar energy, and Delegate Luke Clippinger’s leadership, we were able to create the right combination of forces to pass this innovative piece of solar legislation.

Many Maryland citizens—including low-income citizens, people with shaded houses, and people who live in apartments—can’t access solar or afford its upfront costs. Allowing more people a way to get solar energy could greatly expand the amount of renewable energy in Maryland. Similar legislation has been passed in Washington, D.C., and Delaware with huge benefits, including job growth and lower-cost solar projects, which provide affordable access to local, green energy.

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Big utilities resistant to change

The roles of local governments are especially critical in states like Maryland. However, solar is facing opposition at the state level. With solar power on the rise, utility companies are campaigning intensely to increase fees for rooftop solar, which they see as a direct threat to their business model.

“With prices going down and concern about global warming going up, solar power is growing rapidly in our state,” said Environment Maryland’s Talya Tavor. “We need state leaders to continue to embrace the policies that allow solar to shine.”

For the full “Shining Cities” report, go to: www.EnvironmnetMarylandCenter.org
Young Americans to inherit harsher climate

As a result of global warming fueled by pollution from power plants, Americans today live in a different climate than their parents and grandparents experienced—and without urgent action to clean up this pollution, our children will grow up in a more dangerous world.

“Dangerous Inheritance,” a report released by Environment Maryland Research & Policy Center, found that the warming that has occurred over the past four decades has increased the risk of severe storms, heat-related illness, floods, drought, crop failure, wildfires and infrastructure damage. So far, temperatures in America this decade are 1.6 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than in the 1970s.

Finalizing the Clean Power Plan to limit pollution from power plants is the strongest action we can take to help solve global warming.