

**1000 Friends of Maryland - Chesapeake Bay Foundation – Environment Maryland -
Maryland League of Conservation Voters**

OPPOSE - Senate Bill 153

**Reorganization of State Government – Consolidating the Department of the Environment into the
Department of Natural Resources**

Before the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 8, 2011

POSITION

The above groups recommend an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 153 from the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee. Senate Bill 153 proposes to abolish the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and consolidate certain of MDE's functions into the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This concept would jeopardize current efforts to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay, ensure clean air, protect our historical lands, and promote healthy communities. Additionally, it would create an administrative nightmare for those industries and businesses currently regulated by the Departments.

COMMENTS

While at first blush one may think that there is too much overlap between the Maryland Departments of the Environment and Natural Resources in reality these two agencies have distinct and important functions and those functions are best served by keeping the two agencies separate. MDE serves as the regulatory arm of protecting the environment while DNR's focuses more on the sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources and monitoring the health of our ecosystems. Having one large agency puts into question whether all the existing functions could be accomplished and would make it a challenge to accomplish these distinct tasks effectively, i.e. policing oyster & rockfish poachers or protecting groundwater from a hazardous waste spill.

Our primary concern with SB153 is that consolidating these two agencies into one would create an enormous distraction to the work that both agencies are currently undertaking to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland, along with the other Chesapeake Bay watershed States and the District of Columbia, are under a new "pollution diet" that requires Maryland to follow-through with its Watershed Implementation Plan submitted and approved by EPA. Maryland has committed to have in place all the tools necessary to meet its portion of the pollution diet by 2020 and to do so will require an "all hands on deck" approach. If one were to attempt to consolidate MDE into DNR right now, the employees at both agencies would be focused on this transition as opposed to the work at hand to meet our Watershed Implementation goals. At this critical moment in Bay clean-up efforts we do not want the main task of the day to be "where is my new desk" but instead want it to be "what do I need to do today to protect Maryland's environment and natural resources."

CONCLUSION

For the above reasons, we recommend an unfavorable report on SB 153 from the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee. For further information, please contact Alison Prost at 410-268-8816.