The Maryland General Assembly closed the 2017 session with powerful affirmations of the importance of protecting Maryland’s people and environment. Maryland gained national acclaim for banning hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”), as well as limiting the over-use of antibiotics in agriculture. The legislature opened session by overriding Governor Hogan’s veto of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, and then renewed its commitment to the clean energy through several other successful legislative efforts. We reinforced our State’s protection of pollinators from dangerous pesticides. Many of these legislative victories included bipartisan support, demonstrating that the environment can bridge the partisan divide.

Not all of our important legislative priorities reached a successful end. We were disappointed that the House failed to pass a task force to examine the Forest Conservation Act and how to best protect our state’s tree canopy, but we look forward to working with the with House legislators assigned to examine this issue. Similarly, we hope that a workgroup exploring concerns of plastics in our waste stream will lead to landmark trash-reduction legislation next year.

Every successful enterprise in Annapolis relies on a partnership of legislators and advocates – both the advocates in the halls of the General Assembly, and engaged citizens like you. Your calls and e-mails joined with hundreds (sometimes thousands) of voices from every corner of the state. We simply could not do this work without you. Thank you for your hard work, and for putting your trust in us. We look forward to continuing to work with you to protect Maryland and our future.

**Environmental Legislative Priority Wins**

**Veto Override – Expanding Maryland’s Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard**

After Governor Hogan vetoed the 2016 Clean Energy Jobs Act - a bill that expanded our State’s commitment to purchasing renewable energy - we worked with our partners and legislative champions to successfully override the veto early in the 2017 legislative session. While we were disappointed that the override did not have the bipartisan support of the original vote, we are pleased that the General Assembly sent a clear message to the clean energy industry: Maryland is open for business, and we are leaders on combatting climate change.

**Statewide Ban on Non-Therapeutic Use of Antibiotics in Agriculture (HB 602/ SB 422)** *(ROBINSON/ PINSKY)*

Nationally, nearly 70% of human antibiotics are used for non-therapeutic purposes in raising livestock. This contributes to the dangerous epidemic of antibiotic-resistant infections, and threatens the health of our waterways as these antibiotics are washed into rivers, streams, and the Bay through agricultural runoff. This year, the Maryland General Assembly voted to conclusively end the practice of giving antibiotics to healthy animals – making us the second state in the nation to take this measure to protect our environment and public health.

**Statewide Ban on Fracking (HB 1325/ SB 740)** *(FRASER-HIDALGO/ ZIRKIN)*

In perhaps the most significant environmental victory of a successful legislative session, Maryland became the first state with gas deposits to enact a legislative ban on hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking.” A powerful grassroots effort bolstered legislative leadership, ultimately gaining the support of an overwhelming majority. The bill passed both chambers with strong bipartisan votes and Governor Hogan signed the bill. With this win, Maryland garnered national attention, as other states with gas deposits can follow our lead, showing that environmental and public health concerns can result in a strong policy victory.

**Keeping State Pollinator Habitats free of Pollinator Killing Pesticides (HB 830/ SB 386)** *(HEALEY, NATHAN-PULLIAM)*

This bill successfully closed the loophole which would have allowed state agencies to use neonicotinoids and other pesticides labeled harmful to pollinators in designated pollinator habitat areas. Maryland beekeepers have seen dramatic losses in recent years, annually losing as many as 60% of their hives. In March 2017, one species of bumble bee was added to the federal Endangered Species list. The Maryland General Assembly has shown national leadership by passing legislation to protect this vital link in the health of our environment and food chain by providing pollinators with safe habitats.
Statewide Ban on Styrofoam Food Service Products (HB 229/SB 186)  
(Lierman/ Kagan)
Polystyrene Foam (Styrofoam) is pervasive at take-out counters and convenience stores around the country – and in waterways, where it makes up as much as 40% of the trash pulled out of our rivers and streams. Although it gained significant, bipartisan support in both chambers, a bill to ban Styrofoam food service products (plates, cups, and clam-shell take-out containers) failed to pass out of Committee in either the House or Senate. The House Committee will be taking up the issue in summer study, hoping to find a way to move forward with legislation limiting plastics pollution in Maryland’s waters.

Statewide Requirement for Best Available Technology Septic Systems (HB 281/ SB 266)  
(Lafferty/ Carter-Conway)
In 2012 the Maryland Department of the Environment issued regulations requiring all new and replacement septic systems in the State include Best Available Technology (BAT), which prevents nitrogen from seeping into our waterways. In 2016, Governor Hogan rolled back the regulations to their statutory minimum of requiring BAT only in the designated Critical Areas closest to the Bay. During the 2017 session, we looked to put a statewide BAT requirement into statute but the effort ultimately failed. The House Committee will designate a summer study workgroup to look at questions of nitrogen pollution and environmental regulation.

Task Force on the Forest Conservation Act Offset Policy (HB 599/ SB 365)  
(Healey/ Pinsky)
Although the 2013 General Assembly passed legislation to make “no net loss” of forests a statewide goal, the current Forest Conservation Act (FCA) requires only ¼ of an acre replanted for every acre of forest cleared. This bill would have created a task force dedicated to examining and updating the FCA with an eye to meeting the state-wide goal, but died in the House after passing the Senate with a strong majority. The House Committee will do a summer study looking at the issue of forests, broadly, as well as a host of other environmental concerns.

2017 Other Environmental Wins

Clean Cars Act (HB 406/ SB 317)  
(Administration)
This bill extends the tax credit available for electric vehicles to 2020 and increases the amount of money that can be spent on the credit each year. This bill was part of a package of environmental priorities outlined by Governor Hogan in January 2017.

Codification of the EmPower Energy Efficiency Program (HB 514/ SB 184)  
(Jameson/ Middleton)
In 2008, the Maryland General Assembly passed the EmPower Maryland Energy Efficiency Act, setting target reductions of 15% in per capita electricity consumption and peak demand by 2015 from a 2007 baseline. This bill codified the program and the efficiency goals and measures set after 2015. While the EmPower program is broadly popular, the bill ran into opposition. Ultimately, however, the legislation passed through both chambers. The Governor allowed the bill to go into law without his signature.

Protection of Maryland’s Oyster Sanctuaries (HB 924)  
(Gilchrist)
Oyster sanctuaries play a significant role in maintaining Maryland’s sustainable oyster fishery. Nevertheless, the Administration, pressed by waterman groups, proposed allowing limited harvesting within the boundaries of the oyster sanctuaries. This bill prohibits such actions until the Department of Natural Resources completes a study, mandated in 2016, on the state of the oyster population and sustainable harvesting levels. The bill saw strong opposition, however was ultimately successful in moving through both chambers. The Governor allowed the bill to go into law without his signature.

Balancing Local Control with State-Wide Interest for Large-Scale Energy Siting (HB 1350)  
(Rose)
HB 1350 clarifies the role of localities in siting large-scale energy projects. The final bill struck a balance between local and statewide interests as well as garnered the support of energy companies and open space advocates.
Maryland League of Conservation Voters (Maryland LCV) is a state-wide, nonpartisan organization that uses political action and education to protect our air, land and water. Maryland LCV endorses and elects pro-conservation candidates and holds elected officials accountable through our scorecards. A leading legislative watchdog in Annapolis, we have advocated for smart environmental policies for almost 40 years, working to make Maryland a healthy and prosperous place for families and communities. Maryland LCV protects public health by fighting for the Chesapeake Bay and local waters, preserving green spaces, promoting smarter growth and increasing Maryland’s investment in clean energy.