



Maryland

Department of the Environment

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

Ben Grumbles, Secretary
Horacio Tablada, Deputy Secretary

April 10, 2020

Ms. Kristin Reilly
Director
Choose Clean Water Coalition

Ms. Kim Coble
Executive Director
Maryland League of Conservation Voters

Mr. Deron Lovaas
Co-Director, Energy Efficiency for All
Natural Resources Defense Council

Ms. Susan Miller
Staff Attorney
Earthjustice

Mr. Steven Hershkowitz
Maryland Director
Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Mr. David Smedick
Senior Campaign Representative
Sierra Club

Ms. Alli Gold Roberts
Director, State Policy
Ceres

Dear Environmental Partners:

The Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE) mission is to protect and restore the environment for the health and well-being of all Marylanders. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryland citizens can rely on MDE to continue to demand clean air, land, and water, which are all essential in restoring the Chesapeake Bay, combating climate change, and reducing childhood lead poisoning.

Due to the additional demands of responding to the current crisis, the department understands there may be a need to exercise some discretion and flexibility in enforcement of environmental regulations during the state of emergency, but this will only be done on a limited, case-by-case basis. All regulated entities must make every effort to comply with their environmental obligations and responsibilities, take steps to minimize the effects of any noncompliance and act to return from noncompliance as quickly as possible once the emergency ends. These obligations include monitoring and reporting requirements, which are integral to public health and environmental protection.

Strong and transparent communications among MDE, regulated entities, and the public are essential to avoid problems and to protect human health and the environment. The department is committed to transparency and to responding to concerns or suggestions of businesses, citizens, communities, and organizations. Any regulated entities that know their pollution control systems are failing or are at increased risk of failing must notify MDE and any other federal, state and local entity as appropriate.

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MDE asks that regulated entities communicate any issue relating to staffing shortages or other crisis-related challenges in meeting environmental obligations, including monitoring, reporting and testing requirements.

Governor Hogan has made clear in his orders and actions that environmental and public health systems are essential and the infrastructure systems that support them, such as drinking water and wastewater systems, are critical. MDE will keep as many inspectors in the field as practicable to protect critical infrastructure and the health of Maryland residents.

MDE staff has been working closely to identify procedures and priorities, including using available technology to conduct virtual inspections and meetings to ensure public safety while maintaining environmental standards. Procedures are in place to ensure that staff follow U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommendations to keep themselves and others safe. MDE's emergency response team is fully staffed and responding as needed. MDE also continues to work with the Office of the Attorney General on enforcement actions and cases.

The department remains fully committed to requiring compliance with environmental obligations and requirements to protect the quality of our air, land, and water in our state and the broader Chesapeake Bay region.

Sincerely,

Ben Grumbles
Secretary

cc: Devon Dodson, Senior Policy Advisor