

**Action Plan For Implementation of Recommendations
of the Governor's Advisory Committee on the
Management and Protection of the State's Water Resources**

The Committee's report listed seven major recommendations, representing a significant change in the direction of water management in Maryland. Full implementation of the recommendations will require a commitment of additional funding, and will take a continuing effort over several years. Utilizing existing resources, MDE has identified the following actions that are being undertaken to begin implementation of the seven listed recommendations:

1. Continue the Comprehensive Evaluation of Watersheds and Aquifers that are Significant Sources of Water Supply. Continue an Advisory Committee to Provide Guidance in Implementing the Recommendations.

- MDE has reorganized staff in the Water Supply Program to create a Water Policy and Security Division that is responsible for taking the lead in implementing the recommendations of the Committee and working on an ongoing basis with those members of the Committee that have agreed to continue in an advisory capacity to the Department.
 - To identify and prioritize the watersheds and aquifers to be evaluated as water supply resources.
 - Create a priority list of the top 20 watersheds that need to be evaluated, based on population served, vulnerability of source water, expected growth, or other pertinent factors.
 - Complete assessments for 1 to 3 watersheds per year, depending on the size and complexity of attendant water resource problems.
- MDE is currently working with the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin to complete a more detailed assessment of the Monocacy River Basin, a major tributary of the Potomac located in Frederick County, MD.
- **Benefit:** Completing the assessments of watersheds and aquifers will provide the State and local governments, as well as water suppliers, with an early identification of potential water shortage problems, such as those experienced in Middletown and Frederick City.

2. Restore Funding for Existing Observation Wells and Stream Gauges Deleted from the FY2005 Budget; Expand Monitoring Networks as Funding Becomes Available.

- Existing monitoring networks of stream gauges and wells have been adequately funded through FY 2005.
- MDE will work with DNR to stabilize funding needed to maintain the network in future years.
- Recommended expansion of the systems cannot be accomplished without additional funding sources.

- **Benefit:** The basic data from stream gages and observation wells is needed to assess how much water is available in streams and aquifers, particularly during drought, and to measure the impact of withdrawals on the environment.

3. Improve Coordination Between Maryland and Virginia Regarding Water Allocations from the Potomac River.

- Cabinet-level discussions between Maryland and Virginia on the coordination of water management efforts between the two States have been initiated.
- A technical workgroup made up of staff from the respective State water management agencies will be established to discuss the details of a coordination agreement that will protect the Potomac.
- **Benefit:** Without a coordinated effort, neither state can be confident that its water management decisions will assure its users of an adequate supply.

4. Support Water and Sewer Planning at the State and Local Government Levels.

- Continue to conduct Source Water Assessments, which are a prerequisite to Source Water Protection Plans.
- MDE is working with Maryland Department of Planning to provide technical guidance to local jurisdictions on incorporating Source Water Protection Plans into County Comprehensive Plans, or Water & Sewer Plans and identify possible changes to strengthen the Water and Sewer Plan statute..
- **Benefit:** These actions will result in better protection of drinking water quality by identifying potential contaminant sources ahead of time and help local governments to plan infrastructure to meet future water needs.

5. Implement a Comprehensive Outreach Program to Educate Maryland Citizens and Create Partnerships for Stewardship of the State's Water Resources.

- Seek out interest groups to cooperate with in promoting public awareness of the need for water conservation.
- Continue to encourage water utilities to conduct routine water audits, identify unaccounted losses, and pursue leak detection and repair programs.
- Explore availability of federal funding for education/outreach.
- Continue to provide funding (\$5000) to help fund the Use Water Wisely campaign with Washington Council of Governments (COG).
- **Benefit:** Greater public awareness of water conservation and water resources issues will result in better cooperation when drought restrictions are needed and will engender more support for management programs.

6. Exempt Withdrawals below a Minimum Threshold in the Appropriation Permit Law.

- MDE will prepare draft legislation for consideration in the 2005 Legislative Session to streamline the water appropriation permit process for small users, either through an exemption, a general permit or a registration process without a permit.
- **Benefit:** Exemption would free up staff to focus on review of large permits, complete source water assessments, and provide technical assistance to local governments. Exemption or streamlining would reduce the regulatory burden on the small business community.

7. Review Laws, Regulations, Funding Resources, and State Laboratory Capacity Relative to Comprehensive Management of the State's Water Resources.

- MDE has established a work group made up of County Environmental Health Directors, public works departments, and county planners to address the issue of ensuring adequate water capacity prior to approval of new connections.
- MDE is preparing draft legislation for consideration in the 2005 Maryland General Assembly to establish administrative penalties for water appropriation permit violations.
- Identify steps that will be needed (i.e. statutory, regulatory or policy change) to address other specific issues raised in the report.
- Establish a separate work group to review the adequacy of the minimum well yield criteria that was proposed for modification during the previous legislative session.
- Evaluate the need for a fee for water appropriation permits to support these or other identified water resources planning and development measures in the future.
- **Benefit:** Administrative penalties will provide a much needed enforcement mechanism. The workgroups will help MDE resolve important issues that require county and State cooperative efforts.