



Keeping Score for the Environment

SINCE 1979

GUBERNATORIAL MID-TERM REPORT CARD

Overall Grade

D+

GRADE

Air

C-

Water

B

Energy

C-

Fisheries & Wildlife

C-

Smart Growth

D

Transportation

F

Land Preservation
& Open Space

F

Administration
& Appointments

D

Grading Maryland's Governor

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For 25 years, the Maryland League of Conservation Voters (LCV) has analyzed and evaluated the environmental votes of our state legislators in Annapolis. Since 1997, the Maryland LCV has also published a report card evaluating the environmental actions of the State's Governor. We encourage you to use this report card and join us in making environmental protection a top priority in Maryland.

The Governor's office has enormous influence on the future of Maryland's environment, natural resources, and public health. Through both words and actions, the Governor sets the tone and pace of environmental protection in the state. Because Maryland voters count environmental issues as a top priority, this report card takes a close look at the Governor and his Administration's actions—or lack of actions—to protect our air, water, and lands.

At the mid-point of his term in office, **the Maryland League of Conservation Voters gives Governor Robert Ehrlich an overall grade of D+ for his environmental actions to date.**

Overall Grade	D +
Air Quality	C -
Water Quality	B
Energy	C -
Fisheries & Wildlife	C -
Smart Growth	D
Transportation	F
Land Preservation & Open Space	F
Administration & Appointments	D

While the Governor has been rightly praised for proposing the significant Bay Restoration Fund and Brownfield reforms, the lack of progress on air pollution and failures in transportation planning, budget priorities, smart growth, and land preservation bring down the Administration's overall grade.

The Maryland League of Conservation Voters prepared this assessment of Governor Ehrlich and his Administration with input from environmental leaders around the state and through a review of the Governor's major actions since taking office.

The report card is based on the first two years of the Governor's term, from January 2003 through December 2004. The methodology used to prepare this and prior gubernatorial scorecards includes a review of the following: agency actions, positions on legislation, funding priorities, public statements, environmental advisors, and executive appointments.

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The issues detailed within each graded category are intended to be representative of the Administration's commitment or lack thereof to environmental protection and restoration but are not necessarily a comprehensive listing of every action.

Governor Ehrlich has two more years to improve his record and leave a legacy for future generations. This is the time for action to clean up air pollution, protect our precious lands and parks, promote smart growth, and provide sound transportation options for all Marylanders.

Maryland League of Conservation Voters

Air Quality

C-

While we do not give bad marks to Governor Ehrlich for inheriting a state with unhealthy air, his record on allowing poor air quality to continue and worsen is a serious problem that directly affects public health and the environment. With weaker air pollution controls coming from the federal government, it is increasingly up to the state to set air quality standards and controls. The Governor has shown promise in authorizing litigation against federal New Source Review rules. In addition, the Maryland Department of Environment's (MDE) role in new projects and actions on some pollutants is a step in the right direction, but much more must be done.

Air Pollution - Failing

For years, Maryland has been consistently among the worst states in the nation for ozone and smog-related pollutants, often ranking in the worst five. The Baltimore region fails to meet two separate standards for ozone under the Clean Air Act (CAA), and several Maryland counties fail to meet the CAA's standard for airborne particles.

Maryland's Department of Health issued a report in 2003 that concluded air pollution has created a growing epidemic of asthma in the state. In that year alone, there were 32,000 emergency room visits, 8,000 hospitalizations, and 88 deaths reported due to asthma—nearly double the amounts reported in 1980. As a result of the Ehrlich Administration's failure to aggressively address these air problems, more than 80 percent of Marylanders are forced to contend with ozone and smog levels higher than the federal air standards deemed to be healthy. Continuous exposure to these pollutants has numerous detrimental effects on these citizens, including a drastically increased risk of respiratory illnesses and lung damage. Children, senior citizens, and individuals with pre-existing respiratory trouble are especially at risk.

MDE has opposed legislation that would clean up pollution from vehicles (the single largest source of Maryland emissions of air toxics and volatile organic compounds and a major source of nitrogen oxides and greenhouse gases) by requiring car companies to offer Maryland consumers a larger percentage of the cleaner vehicles that they are already producing. MDE also opposed efforts to clean up air pollution from in-state power plants.

New Source Review - Shows Promise

A leading source of Maryland's air pollution comes from emissions from mid-west power plants. Lacking effective federal regulations, states are the only authority that can address this problem. Failure to respond to emissions from fossil-fuel power plants will lead to increased asthma and code red ozone days in Maryland.

The Bush Administration has proposed rules allowing new air pollution sources to be considered modifications to existing facilities, thereby avoiding more rigorous regulation and permitting requirements. The rules have serious implications for Maryland efforts to address pollution from out of state power plants. Under the prior Administration, the Maryland Attorney General entered the state into a joint suit by a number of northeastern states to block the rule. Maryland continues to fight these "New Source Review" rules in the courts.

New Projects - Satisfactory

MDE has funded several projects that have direct air quality benefits, including retrofit programs to reduce emissions from diesel school buses, trash haulers, and fire trucks. Under an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant, MDE and the Maryland Transportation Administration successfully converted a number of buses to ultra low sulfur diesel.

New Air Regulations - Good Job

In a regional, collaborative effort among several northeastern states, MDE has begun implementation of a series of new regulations aimed at manufacturers of otherwise unregulated sources of air pollution in consumer products. These include cleaning compounds, floor finishes, personal care products, automotive specialty products, disinfectants, aerosol paints, and lawn and garden products. The new regulations are designed to remove at least 13 tons of volatile organic compounds from the air each day.

Water Quality

B

Marylanders have good reason to thank Governor Ehrlich for his support in the creation of the Bay Restoration Fund, which is a solid step toward reducing pollution from sewage treatment plants. However, the state is severely behind in setting total daily maximum limits on pollution as well as in finding ways to clean up pollution from agriculture. The proposed delisting of chromium as a toxic chemical in Baltimore's Inner Harbor is a dangerous omen for human and aquatic life in the area.

Bay Restoration Fund - Great Job

An initiative proposed by Governor Ehrlich in the 2004 General Assembly resulted in the enactment of legislation designed to fund significant and much-needed improvements to the 66 largest wastewater treatment plants in Maryland. Nitrogen is one of the deadliest pollutants in the Chesapeake Bay, fueling dead zones. The Bay Restoration Fund, dubbed by some as the “flush tax,” places a small monthly charge on household sewage bills, an annual fee for households on septic systems, and usage fees for non-residential customers. The income from the septic charge will be directed toward septic system upgrades and agricultural cover crops. Although the Governor originally opposed including septic systems to the measure, he signed the legislation in May 2004.

Total Maximum Daily Loads - Incomplete

The Ehrlich Administration continues to lag in developing the pollutant limits for Maryland waterways required under the Clean Water Act. At the current rate of regulation, the state will not establish required “Total Maximum Daily Load” (TMDL) limits for pollution in Maryland watersheds until the year 2037—some 58 years late. In December 2004, a number of Chesapeake Waterkeepers sued the Environmental Protection Agency to compel the federal agency and states to take timely action on TMDLs.

Agricultural Pollution - Needs Improvement

Agriculture is the largest source of nutrient pollution damaging the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams. Manure from poultry and livestock production is a major component of that pollution. The Ehrlich Administration rolled back “co-permitting” regulations that required poultry processors to have permits to address the nutrient management practices of their contract farmers. Early on, the Administration proposed relaxing some requirements in the Water Quality Improvement Act, the law designed to curb nutrient pollution from farms. Ultimately, steps were put in place to facilitate implementation of the law. Runoff from agriculture remains an enormous problem for the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

Chromium Pollution in Baltimore Harbor - Needs Improvement

Chromium, which is toxic to humans and harmful to aquatic life, has concentrations in Baltimore Harbor that are among the highest anywhere in the United States. When several environmental groups opposed the state's attempt to remove chromium from the list of substances that impair the health of Baltimore's Inner Harbor, the Maryland Department of Environment largely ignored these comments. Finally, because of pressure from the Environmental Protection Agency, MDE is now awaiting the results of additional research before taking action on this issue.

Mercury - Needs Improvement

Maryland has taken a few good first steps to phase out and properly dispose of mercury-containing products and improve the state's understanding of mercury sources. However, the state has yet to comprehensively address eliminating mercury pollution, and much remains to be done. Specifically, Maryland needs to address the following mercury sources: coal-fired power plants, municipal and medical waste incinerators, mercury in products, and dental mercury. Maryland also has a mixed record when it comes to warning residents of the risks associated with consuming mercury-contaminated fish. For instance, the state had data showing mercury contamination in striped bass (rockfish) caught in the Chesapeake Bay but failed to publicly announce this finding or issue a timely warning.

Energy

C-

Energy consumption affects both air and water pollution. The more ways Maryland can promote clean energy and conservation, the healthier our citizens, lands, waters, and wildlife will be. The Ehrlich Administration has shown some promise by not abolishing an important energy agency and, after some pressure from environmental groups, adopting standards to promote clean, renewable energy. However, the Governor vetoed a bill to impose energy efficiency standards on appliances designed to clean up Maryland's environment.

Maryland Energy Administration - Satisfactory

The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) advises the Governor and General Assembly on energy issues of increasing importance due to global warming. With miles of shorelines and eroding Bay islands and waterfronts, Maryland is particularly vulnerable to the rising sea levels caused by global warming. MEA coordinates energy efficiency efforts by state government, manages purchases of renewable energy in the state's electricity procurement, and promotes energy efficiency and hybrid automobiles to Maryland citizens. In summer 2003, the Governor authorized the creation of "The Governor's Commission on the Structure and Efficiency of State Government," headed by former Governor Marvin Mandel (commonly known as the Mandel Commission). In their final report released in December 2003, the Mandel Commission recommended abolishing the MEA. The Governor has not acted on the recommendation from the Mandel Commission to abolish the agency, and he should continue to ignore this proposal.

Energy Efficiency Standards - Failing

In 2003, the Maryland General Assembly passed a law to set minimum energy efficiency standards for appliances and equipment not already established by the U.S. Department of Energy. These standards would conserve energy, save consumers money over the life of the appliance, and, most importantly, reduce air and water pollution by limiting energy generated by coal-burning power plants. Despite the bi-partisan majorities voting for the legislation in the General Assembly, Governor Ehrlich vetoed the bill at the behest of a large national company, which did not participate in the legislative debate.

Fortunately, the General Assembly re-affirmed its overwhelming support of energy efficiency standards by overriding the Governor's veto at the start of the 2004 session. The Governor, unfortunately, made sustaining his veto a Republican Party loyalty request thus denying the bi-partisan support the bill had in its enactment. To date, the Administration has delayed the full implementation of these standards.

Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Satisfactory

Another significant energy matter recently addressed by the General Assembly was the adoption of Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS), making Maryland the 15th state in the country to adopt the RPS. This will require all sellers of competitively priced electricity to provide a sliding scale of clean, renewable energy that decreases the use of fossil fuels and reduces pollution. The Ehrlich Administration offered amendments environmental advocates believe weakened the bill. The environmental community was forced to mount a campaign in support of the bill when the Governor's signature was in doubt, but ultimately the bill was signed into law.

Fisheries & Wildlife

C-

Over the years, Maryland's traditional fisheries have suffered extensively and scientists, as well as environmentalists, are actively seeking ways to replenish and protect our native species. However, the Ehrlich Administration's rush to introduce a non-native oyster could be ill-advised until research shows it would not harm or unbalance the ecosystem. Further, the Administration should not have rolled back blue crab regulations that were designed to bring the species back to abundant numbers. The decline of menhaden is something that must also be addressed.

Asian Oysters - Needs Improvement

The Ehrlich Administration is pushing to allow the introduction of a non-native oyster into the Bay. Maryland has a documented, difficult history with other non-native species that once seemed innocuous, such as the nutria, mute swan, and phragmites. Scientists are concerned it will take years of research before it is safe to predict the impact, good or bad, the Asian oyster (*Crassostrea ariakensis*) will have on native species and the entire Bay ecosystem. Governor Ehrlich, while publicly repeating his claim that any decision will be made on "sound science," sent a letter to EPA in October stating, "I do not believe such delays are necessary and seek [EPA's] assistance in seeing that the process moves forward in a timely manner." In late 2004, Delaware and New Jersey issued statements opposing introduction of the non-native species at this time. While the decline of the state's native oyster is reason to investigate solutions, it is not environmentally sound to introduce a non-native species without scientific proof it's a safe long-term decision.

Crabbing Regulation - Needs Improvement

The Ehrlich Administration took action very early in the Governor's term to roll back crabbing regulations that had been carefully crafted to limit the harvest of the Bay's stressed blue crab population. The previous Administration's rules were created to live up to an agreement between Maryland and Virginia to reduce the overall catch by 15 percent. This is the level that scientists suggested would allow more crabs to live long enough to reproduce and rebuild the dwindling population so vital to Maryland's culture and economy. However, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials acknowledged that the net effect of the new, rolled-back crabbing regulations they proposed would reduce the harvest by less than the 15 percent recommended by scientists and agreed upon with Virginia.

In addition, Maryland's discouraging decision to disband the Bi-State Blue Crab Advisory Committee, which was formed in 1996 to improve the Bay-wide crab management, is serious cause for concern. Despite its landmark accomplishments of developing science-based targets for crab management and achieving a consensus among stakeholders, both Maryland and Virginia cited budget constraints when they dissolved the committee.

Menhaden Management - Needs Improvement

Fishery scientists are increasingly concerned that the depletion of menhaden, a primary food source for other species, could lead to an ecological imbalance in the Bay. There is concern that reduced menhaden stocks may be due to an increased percentage of the coastal menhaden catch harvested in the Virginia portion of the Bay. Although the Ehrlich Administration has promised to "to undertake a leadership role in advancing menhaden conservation issues," this effort has yet to yield specific results or recommendations to stop the decline of this important species.

Smart Growth

D

Maryland's natural resources and the health and quality of life of its citizens are threatened by rapid, poorly planned development. While Governor Ehrlich showed some promise in preserving historic preservation tax credits and supporting Brownfields cleanup and redevelopment efforts, his dismantling of the successful Office of Smart Growth and the proposed widening of Route 32 has set the state back years in its work to preserve Maryland lands while planning for sensible growth.

Historic Preservation Tax Credits - Good Job

Governor Ehrlich supported efforts to continue Historic Preservation Tax Credits in difficult budget times. These credits help to preserve our state's history and culture, while protecting existing buildings instead of creating new sprawl development.

Brownfields Redevelopment - Good Job

The Administration took an active role in pushing administrative and legislative reforms to Maryland's Brownfields and Voluntary Cleanup programs. Under a compromise bill, the process was streamlined, more properties and participants will be eligible, there will be additional public participation mechanisms, and penalty provisions will be strengthened. This will ensure that citizens have a better say about the future of their communities.

Office of Smart Growth - Failing

After initially defending the Office of Smart Growth, the Ehrlich Administration dismantled the office by firing key staff and folding some of its functions and remaining staff into the Maryland Department of Planning. The office had been instrumental in promoting smart growth policy. Smart growth planning, which allows for smart development that lessens environmental impact while improving the quality of people's lives, remains a critical issue for our fast-developing state where commuters sit in traffic every day and new developments destroy valuable lands.

Maryland Route 32 - Failing

In clear violation of both the letter and the spirit of Maryland's Smart Growth laws, the Maryland Department of Transportation moved forward with efforts to widen Maryland Route 32 in western Howard County. Critics argue that the project is primarily designed to feed rampant growth in western Howard, Carroll, and Frederick counties. Smart Growth advocates have filed a lawsuit to block funding for the project.

Priority Places - Needs Improvement

The administration has recognized the importance of revitalizing older communities. However, the Priority Places program, a competitive program through the Department of Planning, offers very limited incentives for a few communities to engage in this important activity. We urge the administration to significantly increase these efforts and add meaningful incentives.

Transportation

F

Many Marylanders find themselves forced into long, expensive, and polluting commutes to get to their jobs. Increasing sprawl development often forces people to travel by cars instead of by foot, bike, or mass transit. The Ehrlich Administration is making bad conditions worse by pushing ahead with the environmentally destructive Intercounty Connector (ICC), while at the same time not funding much-needed transportation options that serve communities better and improve our quality of life.

Intercounty Connector - Failing

The Administration aggressively advocates a hugely expensive, environmentally destructive, and ultimately ineffective highway project proposed for Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. With a price tag now estimated at more than \$3 billion (including financing costs), the Intercounty Connector, if built, would drain state and federal transportation dollars that might otherwise be used on more efficient and less damaging projects. In fact, the federal money requested for this one highway project would be more than that requested for all transit projects in the state combined. Even supporters of the highway are now concerned about this highway financing scheme.

In addition, a recent fast-tracked environmental impact statement shows the project to be quite damaging to the environment, despite promises to build "an environmentally friendly ICC." Even with mitigation measures, stream quality, wetlands, and parklands are threatened. (Ironically, a bicycle path has been eliminated from the project.) Meanwhile, the state's own studies continue to show that the project will have very little impact on traffic congestion. In fact, studies predict the ICC will ultimately increase traffic on the Capitol Beltway.

Transportation Funding - Failing

Beyond the problems posed by the Intercounty Connector, Governor Ehrlich's budgets have consistently underfunded mass transit. Maryland's Transportation Trust Fund has been raided repeatedly in order to accommodate the state's budget deficits, causing important projects like the Baltimore Regional Rail Plan and the Washington region's Purple Line addition to languish. A program to revitalize neighborhoods along state roads was completely defunded, eliminating one of the key sources of funds for neighborhood revitalization. In addition, the Administration's plans to sell special transportation bonds that borrow against future federal funding have received widespread criticism.

Baltimore Regional Rail Plan - Shows Promise

The Governor has provided some limited support for the initial stage of the Baltimore Regional Rail Plan. This long-awaited plan would bring a sensible transportation system to the Baltimore region, increase commuter choices and link light rail, metro, and commuter trains together.

Land Preservation & Open Space F

When it comes to protecting Maryland's open spaces, parks, and farms, the Ehrlich Administration is failing to make the grade. The Administration's assault on Maryland's remaining undeveloped lands is two-fold. First, the Administration has proposed to sell off state lands through secretive land deals and by compiling lists of "potentially excess" lands that were purchased for conservation. Second, the Administration continues to raid dedicated funds that are collected and intended for land preservation programs year after year and to use those funds for unrelated purposes. The lack of leadership and reversal of land protection efforts sets back Bay restoration progress and serves as a poor example for other Bay states.

Program Open Space - Failing

The first two Ehrlich Administration budgets diverted over \$150 million in dedicated tax revenue from Program Open Space (POS) for unrelated purposes. In the FY 2005 budget alone, Governor Ehrlich diverted 75% of the dedicated funds intended to preserve open space, parks, woodlands, and pristine ecosystems all over Maryland. Not only do these diversions cut local funding, they also can result in the loss of the matching grants from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Accordingly, the state's ability to acquire and preserve such resources has been severely crippled.

Land Deals - Failing

The Ehrlich Administration set out to resell 800 acres of forest land in St. Mary's County known as the Salem Tract to a politically connected commercial developer. Through private meetings, Administration officials negotiated a price, without public bidding, below the land's true value. Since this deal came to light, a similar arrangement was discovered to be in the works regarding ecologically sensitive Chapman's forest.

In addition, Governor Ehrlich has proposed selling off surplus public properties to improve the State's coffers. Many conservationists are concerned about the nature of some of the lands targeted for potential sale. Roughly 3,000 acres of state protected lands held by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources have been identified as "potentially excess." Many of these properties were acquired for permanent protection and should not be considered for development.

Both the St. Mary's County deal and the potential sale of state protected lands indicate a trend in the Ehrlich Administration to view plots of state land, even protected land, as little more than potential profit. Of even greater concern, Governor Ehrlich appears to consider pristine state land as only valuable once it has been sold and developed. Furthermore, the Ehrlich Administration has repeatedly cut the state's budget for land preservation, making it difficult, or even impossible, to eventually recover the same amount of protected state land in the future.

Administration & Appointments D

The selection of personnel, department heads, and funding priorities has a big impact on the direction and quality of environmental protection in the state. From the transition team to key appointments, conservation leaders have been concerned about some of the Administration's appointments along with enforcement efforts, funding and access.

Appointments, Agency Personnel - Needs Improvement

The Governor has a mixed record on appointments to key environmental posts. His first nominee for MDE Secretary, Lynn Buhl, an under-qualified auto industry executive, was opposed by environmental groups and the Senate rejected the nomination. Governor Ehrlich also appointed Delegate Ken Schisler, who has a lifetime Maryland LCV score of 23 percent, as Chairman of the Public Service Commission (PSC). The PSC plays a key role in the pricing and availability of renewable energy as well as energy conservation efforts.

In addition, the Administration's purge of key officials at the State's main environmental agencies resulted in a loss of years of valuable experience.

On the positive side, Governor Ehrlich appointed former State Senator Martin G. Madden to head the Critical Areas Commission. Madden, who maintained an outstanding environmental voting record in the General Assembly with a lifetime Maryland LCV Score of 90 percent, has proven to be a strong advocate on the Commission. In fact, he was instrumental in guiding important enforcement legislation through the General Assembly in the 2004 session to protect our fragile coastline from development.

Environmental Enforcement - Needs Improvement

The Maryland Department of the Environment's most recent reports show the number of enforcement actions down 20 percent and the amount of penalties down 23 percent from the previous administration. The Department credits this decrease to increased compliance. However, across all programs, there are more than 1,000 regulated entities for each MDE inspector. In the Air and Radiation program, there are more than 26,000 permits in place but fewer than 9,000 inspections. Only 2 percent of all facilities that generate or manage hazardous waste are being inspected. Meanwhile, MDE has increased its "compliance assistance" activities in lieu of enforcement.

Boards and Commissions - Needs Improvement

Advisory Boards and Commissions are important avenues for policy development in any Administration. However, a number of environmental advisory committees remain dysfunctional in the Ehrlich Administration. Some examples include: the Wetlands Restoration Steering Committee, which has not met under this Administration; the reconstituted Pesticide Advisory Council, which no longer includes labor, medical, parent/consumer, organic farmers, or environmental health representation; and the Governor's Commission on Forestry, which is weighted toward the forest products industry.

Open and Accessible Government - Needs Improvement

During the debate over the Buhl nomination, a member of Governor Ehrlich's staff publicly remarked that environmentalists had lost their "seat at the table" in terms of communications and input into this Administration. This caused the environmental community great concern. Although communications between environmental leaders and MDE remain open and cordial, access and input to this Administration and other departments remains strained.

In addition, other than the fine print in newspaper classified pages, it is increasingly difficult to get information on permit applications and opportunities for public participation. MDE has cancelled regular publication of its newsletter, and the MDE website has no listing of permit applications nor means by which listings can be searched.

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MARYLAND
LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION
VOTERS

25 YEARS OF KEEPING SCORE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The Maryland League of Conservation Voters was formed in 1979 to elect conservation-minded candidates to public office and hold elected officials accountable for their actions. As the non partisan political voice of the environmental community, the Maryland LCV is committed to making environmental protection and restoration a top priority for the state's elected officials, political candidates and voters.

Visit us at www.mdldcv.org.



MARYLAND
LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION
VOTERS

25 YEARS OF KEEPING SCORE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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