



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 553

Environment - Sale and Application of Coal Tar Pavement Products – Prohibition

DATE: FEBRUARY 26, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation SUPPORTS House Bill 553 based on the known toxicity of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons from coal tar to aquatic and marine organisms. This legislation would prohibit the sale and use of coal tar pavement products that are a source of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon contamination.

Coal tar is a byproduct of bituminous coal combustion. Coal tar has been used as a sealant for asphalt and roofing material for many decades. Nowadays, however, superior and less-toxic alternatives are available. For example, petroleum asphalt mixed with clay and other minerals creates superior composite sealants that are more durable and release far less toxic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) into the environment.

PAH is a known carcinogen both for humans and aquatic and marine life. Recent studies comparing coal tar to asphalt sealants reveal the considerably greater risk of PAH leaching into groundwater and becoming airborne dust from surface cracking. For this reason, several states are considering bans on coal tar.¹

One of the biggest challenges to meeting the Chesapeake Bay Blueprint in Maryland is the increasing pollutant load of stormwater runoff. Permits from Maryland Department of Environment require the removal or retrofit of impervious surfaces, including pavement to replace coal tar with asphalt. A ban on additional sales of coal tar will help expedite the reduction of PAH contamination of surface waters more rapidly than any commercially driven phase-out or transition.

For these reasons, CBF urges a FAVORABLE report on HB 553 from the Environment and Transportation Committee. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Doug Myers, Maryland Senior Scientist at 443.482.2168 or dmyers@cbf.org.

¹ [Health Concerns Over Common Driveway Sealant Continue to Prompt Local Bans](https://www.eesi.org/articles/view/health-concerns-over-common-driveway-sealant-continue-to-prompt-local-bans), Environmental and Energy Study Institute (August 2016), available at <https://www.eesi.org/articles/view/health-concerns-over-common-driveway-sealant-continue-to-prompt-local-bans>

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.