

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

TO: Marc Korman, Chair of the House Environment and Transportation Committee; C. T. Wilson, Chair of the House Economic Matters Committee; and Committee Members

FROM: Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, State Policy Manager; and Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations

POSITION: Support SB 425 Coal Combustion By-Products - Fees, Coordinating Committee and Regulations

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 425, offered by Senator Jackson. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate.

SB 425 represents an essential step in strengthening Maryland's approach to regulating coal combustion by-products (CCBs), enhancing coordination on environmental oversight, and ensuring the long-term protection of our natural resources and public health.

Coal combustion by-products contain harmful pollutants such as arsenic, mercury, and heavy metals that can leach into groundwater, pollute waterways, and pose risks to public health and ecosystems. SB 425 seeks to address these concerns by updating the regulatory framework and providing necessary oversight to mitigate these risks. Specifically, the bill establishes the Statewide Coal Combustion By-Products Coordinating Committee, which will facilitate information sharing, monitoring, and discussions on remedial actions at CCB sites across Maryland. This committee's work is critical to ensuring a transparent and science-based approach to addressing the environmental and public health concerns associated with coal combustion waste.

TNC strongly supports oversight and coordination to help prevent future contamination and promote stronger accountability for managing coal combustion by-products. The bill's inclusion of a fee structure for coal combustion by-product generators ensures that there is a dedicated funding mechanism to support beneficial reuse of byproducts, as well as mitigate human and environmental health impacts resulting from the release of coal combustion by-products from priority sites. It is an important step in making sure that those responsible for generating CCBs contribute to their safe management and remediation.

SB 425 brings a well-balanced approach to addressing the harmful effects of coal combustion by-products while improving interagency coordination and environmental oversight. This legislation aligns with Maryland's commitment to public health, environmental protection, and climate resilience. TNC thanks Senator Jackson for sponsoring this bill.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 425.