



Maryland

Department of the Environment

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

Ben Grumbles, Secretary
Horacio Tablada, Deputy Secretary

February 24, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky
Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, Suite 2W
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 492 – Environment – Discharge Permits – Inspections and Administrative Continuations

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE or the Department) has reviewed SB 492, *Environment – Discharge Permits – Inspections and Administrative Continuations*, and would like to share some information regarding this legislation. MDE also wanted to note that we are currently working with the sponsors and interested parties to amend the language of the bill to lessen the burden on MDE while providing similar improved outcomes for Marylanders.

SB 492 would limit the period in which discharge permits may be administratively continued, establish new inspection, and administrative penalty provisions for certain facilities operating under a discharge permit, and impose new reporting and personnel requirements for MDE's discharge permitting programs.

Reducing the number of administratively extended water discharge permits is a top priority for the Secretary. Currently, the Water and Science Administration has 196 individual discharge permits that are administratively extended and the Land and Material Administration currently has 16 individual discharge permits that are administratively extended. The Department is committed to reducing the backlog of individual discharge permits to 10% or less within the next 12 months.

As part of this plan, the Department is reviewing each of the administratively extended permits to determine appropriate actions. Additionally, the Department is in the process of reviewing and validating its permit tracking database. In 2021, MDE upgraded to a new system and as a result, we have found duplications. Corrections are expected to be completed within the next 60 days, potentially reducing the number of administratively extended permits. MDE has also worked with several non-governmental organizations to develop a ranking system to prioritize permits.

Thank you for considering the Department's information regarding this legislation. We will continue to monitor SB 492 during the committee's deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 410-260-6301 or tyler.abbott@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Tyler Abbott

cc: Lee Currey, Director, Water and Science Administration