

Tuesday, March 11, 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 HB 902 Coal Combustion By-Products - Fees, Coordinating Committee and Regulations

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports HB 902, offered by Delegate Lehman. 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.

HB 902 bill 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. HB 902 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.

Additionally, the bill strengthens the Maryland Department of the Environment's regulatory authority by requiring it to adopt updated regulations on coal combustion residuals. These regulations will enhance monitoring, improve disposal and storage standards, and ensure that past and present disposal sites are managed responsibly. TNC strongly supports these provisions as they will help prevent future contamination and promote stronger accountability for managing coal combustion by-products. The bill's inclusion of a minimum fee for coal combustion by-product generators ensures that there is a dedicated funding mechanism to support regulatory efforts and environmental oversight. It is an important step in making sure that those responsible for generating CCBs contribute to their safe management and remediation.

HB 902 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 Delegate Lehman for sponsoring this bill.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 902.