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Federal Report on Toxics in the Bay Shows Need for More Pesticide Information

*Findings Support Goal of Pesticide Information Act
in Maryland 2013 General Assembly*

(Annapolis, MD) – A new federal report detailing the extent and severity of chemical contaminants in the Chesapeake Bay confirms the need for more pesticide information in Maryland, said a group of public health and environmental advocates. Members of the Smart on Pesticides Maryland coalition said the [Toxic Contaminants in the Chesapeake Bay and its Watershed](#) report bolsters their support for a cost-neutral pesticides use reporting bill to be introduced in the 2013 Maryland General Assembly legislative session.

The report issued by the U.S. EPA, Geological Survey, and Fish and Wildlife Service is a part of President Obama's 2010 [Chesapeake Bay Executive Order](#) strategy and is to be used to set goals for reducing toxic substances.

The report details which pesticides are widespread in the Bay watershed and others for which there is insufficient data. The report states: *"Data and research gaps exist for many pesticides including some current-use and some legacy pesticides, and consequently the extent and severity remains uncertain... the potential sublethal effects of low concentrations of many pesticides (and degradates) and their mixtures (including adjuvants, etc.) in the environment is poorly understood."*

"Our current lack of information about pesticide usage results in dangerous data gaps," said Dr. Robert Lawrence, Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future. Dr. Lawrence said, "Environmental scientists and public health professionals need to know what, when and where pesticides are being used in order to identify which pesticides have adverse impacts on fish, wildlife, the ecosystem, and the health of the public."

"This new report clearly illustrates the significant data gaps that exist when it comes to the occurrence and impact of pesticides in the Bay," said Ruth Berlin of the Maryland Pesticide Network. "Maryland needs comprehensive pesticide usage information. We urge Governor O'Malley and the Maryland legislature to pass the Pesticide Information Act in 2013 so we can start to get the data we need to protect Maryland families and the Chesapeake Bay."

The federal report says that toxic contaminants – including pesticides – are found widely in the Bay and are linked to adverse effects on fish, wildlife, and human health through fish consumption. Pesticides are a unique contaminant in that they are intentionally applied to kill or harm targeted organisms. Unfortunately, as the report details, pesticides also cause harm beyond their targeted pest or weed. The report notes that while there is some data on the

general use of pesticides, there is insufficient information on the occurrence and severity effects of specific pesticides.

The report echoes a finding of a 2006 U.S. Geological Survey report -- *Pesticides in the Nation's Streams and Groundwater 1992-2001*, which stated that "One of the most important gaps to be filled is improved tracking of pesticide use in agricultural and non-agricultural areas, including amounts, locations, and timing."

Pesticides applied on land – including farms, lawns, golf courses, parks and athletic fields – are all potential sources of chemical runoff. Other sources of pesticide exposure include mosquito control and gypsy moth spraying, as well as weed control on highways and utility rights-of-way. A multitude of pesticides, each with its own specific characteristics and impacts, is used in and around the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Pesticide Information Act would require pesticide applicators, as well as sellers of restricted use pesticides, to report information they are already required to maintain. Homeowners would not be affected. The Act would create a centralized, online pesticide reporting database accessible to public health and environmental officials. System setup and maintenance costs would be covered by a modest increase in existing registration fees borne by chemical manufacturers. The bill is one of the environmental community's priority legislation for the 2013 General Assembly session.

Recent [statewide polling](#) found that eight in 10 voters are concerned about the risk of pesticides to their families' health and 82 percent favor making commercial pesticide use reporting mandatory.

The 2010 Chesapeake Bay Executive Order Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, which also created the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load blueprint, states that "addressing the significant problem of toxic pollutant contamination in the Bay and its watershed is a key [Executive Order] element of this strategy" and cites "significant" environmental and human health risks from toxic contaminants.

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The Smart on Pesticides Maryland – For Safe Waters & Healthy Kids campaign is a coalition of concerned Maryland citizens working to pass legislation creating a simple and cost-neutral, centralized online pesticide reporting database in 2013.

Smart on Pesticides is part of the Pesticides and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Project, which was established in 2007 by the Maryland Pesticide Network and the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future. It is the first working group in Maryland dedicated to reducing the occurrence and risks of pesticides in the Bay watershed, in order to protect water quality, aquatic life, wildlife and public health. Project participants include scientists, public health experts, waterkeepers, watermen, representatives of the agricultural and pest management industries, and environmental organizations.