GOAT Noat for May 2020

Update on Environmental Legislative Proposals

The 2020 Maryland Assembly session ended on March 18th, 19 days earlier than planned due to the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic. As a result, only one of the bills that the environmental community advocated “crossed the finish line” and was passed by both the House of Delegates and the Senate. And several bills came close to passing but the clock ran out.

The ban of the pesticide chlorpyrifos, when enacted into law in 2021, will be a real victory for public health and environmental safety and Maryland will be one of a handful of states with that law. You may recall that Homewood Friends Meeting signed onto a resolution to support the ban. While the passage is very good news, a significant concession was required to get the bill passed, namely a “sunset” of the ban in 2024. We will probably see the ban come up again in the next few years.

A sample of bills of great environmental interest that did not make it to the finish line included (but are not limited to):

- $2 billion over 10 years to improve and expand public and mass transportation in Maryland.
- Ban on plastic bags for grocery stores and restaurants.
- Moving beyond coal for electricity generation including closure of the six coal-fired electric plants in Maryland and training and support for displaced workers.

All three of these bills had strong factual rationales and great support but also powerful opposition. However, there was a very good outlook for passage if the Assembly had not been closed early. We can be sure that these bills will be introduced again, although the political and economic landscape may look very different in 2021.

Prepared by John McKusick. Based upon information provided during the legislative wrap up for the sponsoring organizations, the Sierra Club of Maryland and the League for Conservation Voters of Maryland. April 23, 2020.