

The pollution problem in our waters is being rapidly solved . . . the waters of Curtis Bay are in excellent condition, clear and free from all of the objectionable conditions that have prevailed for the last ten years. Crabs and fish are now inhabiting those waters as freely as they do in other waters of the State . . . the North Branch of Patapsco River, which has been polluted for a good many years by certain plants located near Asbestos, has improved nearly one hundred percent, due to the installation of reclamation plants at some of these factories. A systematic survey of the streams in and around Baltimore was made by our inspector during the months of August and September, 1927, and after correcting a few irregularities at the steel plants at Sparrows Point, we find there were no traces of oil or acid in the waters of Bear Creek and Dundalk section . . . We have had the hearty cooperation of the Bethlehem Steel Company, the Standard Oil Company, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Curtis Bay industries.

A statewide drought in 1930 drew attention to water conservation and led to formation of the Water Resources Commission (Chapter 526, Acts of 1933). The Commission was to develop a State plan for water resource conservation and control the use of surface and underground waters. It issued permits for and inspected construction of dams and reservoirs. With the federal Civil Works Administration and later the Works Progress Administration, it compiled data on stream flow to plan for water regulation, water supplies, waste disposal, and industrial use. Earlier, concern over Maryland's water resources had prompted creation of the Maryland Water Front Commission in 1929 (Chapter 522, Acts of 1929). Both commissions in 1941 were absorbed into the Department of Geology, Mines, and Water Resources, which shared responsibilities for water supply with the Bureau of Engineering (Chapter 508, Acts of 1941).

Debate in Congress over the federal government's role in abating water pollution began in the New Deal era and eventually led to passage of the federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948. The act funded construction of waste treatment plants and allowed federal agencies to intervene, at a state's request, in cases of interstate pollution.

In 1947, the Maryland legislature authorized the Water Pollution Control Commission "to receive, administer, and expend such funds as are now or may become available for pollution control from the Federal Government . . ." (Chapter 697, Acts of 1947). The Commission was to coordinate pollution control by all State agencies, specifically the Department of Health; the Commission of Tidewater Fisheries; the Department of Game and Inland Fish; the Department of Research and Education; and the Department of Geology, Mines and Water Resources. The Commission's annual report in 1948 noted that records of State water pollution control from 1937 to 1947 were "rather vague" since no personnel were assigned solely to that duty. In its first year, the Commission set standards and adopted regulations for water quality, establishing a basis for efficiently and scientifically combatting water pollution. In 1959, the Commission became one of six agencies under the Board of Natural Resources, and in 1964 was superseded by the Department of Water Resources (Chapter 695, Acts of 1959; Chapter 73, Acts of 1964). The Department of Water Resources became part of the Department of Natural Resources upon its formation in 1969 and was reorganized as the Water Resources Administration in 1972. The Administration transferred to the Department of the Environment in 1995 (Chapter 488, Acts of 1995).

Air Quality. An offshoot of the modern industrial age, air pollution is perceived as a more recent phenomena than water pollution. Concern for air quality began in the cities and focused initially on visible pollution, i.e., smoke or particulate matter. Local boiler inspectors played a minor role in reducing smoke. In the United States, perhaps the first air pollution regulation was an 1881 Chicago ordinance declaring any emission of dense smoke to be a public nuisance. The first federal agency responsible for air quality was the Office of Air Pollution. Created in the early 1900s by the federal Bureau of Mines, the Office conducted research on smoke emission controls.

Public awareness of invisible air pollution began in Los Angeles around 1947. A smog-reduction program regulated oil refineries and backyard incinerators, but by 1951, automobile exhausts were blamed for fouling the air. Closer to Maryland, weather conditions combined with mostly sulfur dioxide pollutants to envelop the small industrial community of Donora, Pennsylvania, in a four-day fog which killed 20 people and made 6,000 ill. In response, the Maryland General Assembly requested a study of noxious fumes in Maryland (Joint Resolution no. 16, Acts of 1949). Based on meteorological data, the Commission on Noxious Fumes concluded that Baltimore was highly unlikely to suffer from the same set of conditions which had prevailed at Donora. As for the industrialized towns in western Maryland whose topography resembled Donora, not enough data was available to make a prediction. Prior to 1950, Baltimore, Cumberland, and other Maryland municipalities had adopted ordinances for smoke control, and the Baltimore City Health Department, under its general power to abate nuisances, had taken some steps to reduce air pollution. The Commission suggested, however, that a State agency for air pollution control might be necessary in the future. Meanwhile, it recommended an annual appropriation of \$100,000 to the State Department of Health to research the problem, with half the funds allocated to