Notes on the River – ARSENIC AND CLEANER, SAFER RIVERS!

It is a delight to report good and important news. As many of you know, Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy has been advocating for the removal of arsenic (a known carcinogen) from chicken feed. Drew Koslow, your Choptank Riverkeeper, has worked on this issue for years, and actively pursued passage of a Maryland ban this past legislative session, testifying in key committees in both the Maryland house and senate.

Arsenic in feed has routinely been fed to chickens raised in Delmarva, purportedly to curtail bacterial or parasite growth in the stomachs of the animals. The arsenic ends up in their waste, and once the chicken manure is spread on our fields and landscapes, the arsenic migrates to our rivers. Approximately one billion pounds of untreated chicken waste is produced on the Delmarva Peninsula each year, a staggering amount. Anecdotal comparisons suggest it is equivalent to the amount of human waste produced by three major cities.

While Maryland legislators had a failure of political will on this issue, tabling it for summer study, other forces were at work. On June 8, as the result of a recent FDA study showing that small amounts of arsenic may be in the meat of the bird, Pfizer and its subsidiary Alpharma, the manufacturer of the food product, agreed to remove it from the market—not just in Maryland but nationally! Pfizer will phase out the sale of arsenic in chicken feed over thirty days to give farmers the opportunity to transition to other food sources.

Many people and organizations, including Maryland Attorney General Doug Ganzler, worked on this issue. In a June 8 press release Ganzler described this development as “a victory for public health and environmental protection. “All are to be commended for bringing about positive change. The day the news was announced, Midshore Riverkeepers received the following email note, sent to us and others from Louise Mitchell, Sustainable Foods Program Manager, Maryland Hospitals for a Healthy Environment, University of Maryland School of Nursing:

*We want to thank you and congratulate you for each of your contributions to the work we did collectively on the arsenic legislation in Maryland earlier this year AND for ALL of the work done over the past several years to ban this common practice!! Food and Water Watch thinks that our work in Maryland likely contributed to this next step ... which is permanent change on a national level !!! Congratulations and Well Done!!!*

To learn more about this change, please visit our website at [www.midshoreriverkeeper.org](http://www.midshoreriverkeeper.org)

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