Coal Tar Ban and Addressing Sources of PAHs

The District of Columbia banned coal tar pavement sealants in 2008 to address a major source of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) from entering District waterways, the Anacostia River, and the Chesapeake Bay. PAHs are a human carcinogen and harmful to aquatic life. Research identified coal tar sealants as a major source of PAHs in urban areas, including the Anacostia watershed. Through pavement sealant inspections to enforce the coal tar ban, the District's Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) has found new products containing ethylene cracker residue (ECR) that are not subject to the current ban but contain high enough levels of PAHs to pose a risk to human health and aquatic life. DOEE has encountered six properties within the District in the last year using these new products, making it likely they are also being used in surrounding jurisdictions, including those with coal tar bans. DOEE would like to share and get feedback from jurisdictions on options to limit PAH concentrations in pavement sealants. Potential solutions being considered by DOEE include legislative amendments that expand the coal tar ban to include sealants with PAH concentrations higher than .1% and a third-party certification process for pavement sealant products.