



Why is a new Health Impact Assessment needed to adequately protect the City of Salisbury?

A ten-house poultry operation has been proposed just outside the City of Salisbury, Maryland, on top of the paleochannel—a major source of drinking water for the City. The Wicomico County Health Department conducted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to assess the potential health risks and impacts of the operation. But the Health Department did not follow standard HIA guidelines, and the report is flawed.

The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF) was identified as a stakeholder in this assessment, even though we were not aware of the effort. Below, we provide an overview of our concerns with the process and findings of this HIA.

Stakeholder engagement

Information in HIA	Our Concerns
The HIA reports that the health department consulted with environmental advocacy, public health, and community groups.	The health department did not consult with developers, planners, health workers, employers, unions, representatives of affected sectors, or vulnerable groups.
The HIA lists CLF and other groups as participating stakeholders.	CLF was not aware of the HIA, and other groups listed in the report have stated the same.

Air quality and vectors

Information in HIA	Our Concerns
The HIA focused on asthma as a negative outcome of air quality impacts.	The HIA ignored upper respiratory illness, chronic cough and phlegm, chronic bronchitis, and more.
	The HIA ignored the potential impacts of increasing the insect and vermin population.

Water quality & the Paleochannel

Information in HIA	Our Concerns
The HIA focused on methemoglobinemia, also known as blue baby syndrome, as a health risk related to elevated nitrates in drinking water.	The HIA ignored other relevant health endpoints such as birth defects, cancer, thyroid conditions, reproductive problems.
The assessment and research questions are based on best-case scenarios.	The HIA does not account for risks posed by fires, floods, other natural disasters and weather events, or farm accidents.
The HIA cited research by Advanced Land & Water, Inc. (ALWI) and stated that the Paleochannel is not vulnerable to nitrate contamination.	This research was dangerously misrepresented . The HIA failed to include ALWI's warning that Salisbury's drinking water source, the Paleochannel, is vulnerable to point and non-point nitrate contamination, particularly from agricultural activities.