



## Meeting Minutes

**Quarterly Meeting**  
**Thursday, May 4, 2023**  
3:00 PM –6:00 PM  
Clinton City Hall  
221 Lisbon St, Clinton, NC 28328

At 3:01 pm, Vice Chair Marian Johnson-Thompson read the ethics statement and called the meeting to order.

### **Board Members Present**

Marilynn Marsh-Robinson  
Dr. Danelle Lobdell  
Carlos Velazquez  
Veronica Carter  
Sherri White-Williamson  
Vice Chair Dr. Marian Johnson-Thompson  
Carolina Fonseca Jimenez  
Jeff Anstead  
Dr. Deepak Kumar  
Ranee Haven-O'Donnell (*virtual*)

### **Board Members Absent**

Chair Dr. Jim Johnson, Jr.  
Naeema Muhammed  
William Barber III  
Rev. Rodney Sadler Jr.  
Elke Weil  
La'Meshia Whittington

**I. Tim Watkins, DEQ Chief Deputy Secretary: Welcoming Remarks**

Chief Deputy Secretary Tim Watkins, on behalf of Secretary Biser, thanked the board for being present and thanked the Town of Clinton for hosting. Mr. Watkins highlighted PFAS as a DEQ priority and underscored the importance of discussing PFAS contamination, especially for communities in the Cape Fear River Basin. He explained that DEQ has taken steps to test water and air emissions for Gen X, and provide drinking water for affected residents in Sampson, Bladen, and Robeson counties, in addition to other actions DEQ has taken to address PFAS statewide.

Mr. Watkins discussed the transition to clean transportation across North Carolina in support of Governor Cooper's efforts to meet climate goals and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, Mr. Watkins prefaced a follow-up to the board's previous conversation on cumulative impacts.

**II. Michael Scott; Division Director for Division of Waste Management, DEQ: "PFAS Private Well Sampling Updates"**

Mr. Michael Scott presented on per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and well water sampling in Sampson, Bladen, Robeson, Cumberland, New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender, and Columbus Counties. Mr. Scott focused on Gen X (also known as HFPO, dimer acid, or C3 dimer acid) contamination from Chemours manufacturing plant in Bladen County, NC. Gen X has been generated in non-stick coatings as a replacement for PFOA and has entered into the environment for the past 30 years. The EPA and DEQ have been working to set regulations and health goals for PFOA, PFOS, and other PFAS chemicals. Since 2017 Gen X has been detected in both surface water and groundwater, which is important because the majority of NC relies on well water (groundwater) as their primary drinking water source. The primary exposure route to PFAS is through ingestion of drinking water. The consent order between DEQ, Cape Fear River Watch and Chemours requires specific actions for reducing PFAS contamination in the Cape Fear River Basin, requires private well testing, and reduction of air emissions. To address air emissions from the Chemours plant that contributed to groundwater contamination, a thermal oxidizer has been installed on the Chemours facility to reduce air emissions by more than 99%. Well testing is ongoing around the Chemours Fayetteville Works facility and in four counties downstream.

As required by the Consent Order, the facility's is constructing a mile-long underground barrier wall with extraction wells to capture and treat groundwater for PFAS before it enters into the Cape Fear River. The consent order requires Chemours to provide households impacted by PFAS contamination from the plant with alternate water, starting with bottled water or water vouchers, to eventually be transitioned to a filtration system. Residents receive alternate water supplies if their household water source measures GenX above 10ppt or a single PFAS compound present above 10 ppt or a cumulative concentration of PFAS compounds above 70 ppt. Testing for private wells occurs free of charge to the homeowner, but the process itself costs about \$300 per test. Testing is run by either Chemours or DEQ. There has only been a 30% response rate to outreach despite testing being free of charge. Beyond Chemours, the

team is working on understanding Aqueous Film Forming Foam as another main source of PFAS in North Carolina, and some sampling has been done to test for PFAS contamination from AFFFs.

Ms. Sheri White-Williamson asked if any PFAS testing is occurring around the Sampson County Landfill.

Mr. Scott replied that sampling was done a few years ago to test the Sampson County Landfill leachate for PFAS, including Gen X. This data is being followed up for all solid landfill wastes after July 1<sup>st</sup>. For Sampson County specifically, there has been an expedited timeline and testing is ongoing.

Ms. Veronica Carter asked why only drinking wells are being tested as primary sources of drinking water. She points out that people in food deserts rely on produce as a means of food and income, with wells and irrigation as water sources to grow their own food.

Mr. Scott replied that well sampling has gone beyond private wells. DEQ's Division of Water Resources has sampled all ambient groundwater wells in the region to understand where PFAS are present in the aquifer.

Ms. Carter added that drinking water wells are a cheaper additional water source to county or regional water sources, but some wells are not subjected to testing.

Mr. Scott replied that wells close to where testing needs to occur are being included. There is active discussion in the agricultural sector on how PFAS travels through plants.

Ms. Carter asked if rain barrels have been included in testing in areas further from the source pollution site.

Mr. Scott responded that the amount of PFAS emitted from the stacks since the thermal oxidizer has been installed is drastically reduced. There is ongoing research into how PFAS is transported through the atmosphere. Their primary goal is to first ensure a safe drinking water supply for residents.

Ms. Marsh-Robinson asks how much money is in the Bernard Allen fund.

Mr. Scott responded that the Bernard Allen Fund covers around \$300,000 for PFAS. They have asked for this to be recurring funding as DEQ's works to fully identify the scope for providing alternative water.

Ms. Carter commented that she has heard that people think that the well testing request sent by mail was junk mail since Chemours sends out many letters to the community.

Mr. Scott thanked her for the feedback.

**III. Paula Hemmer; Senior Environmental Engineer, NCDOT: "NCDOT: NC Clean Transportation Plan"**

Ms. Paula Hemmer provided updates on the final report developed in response to Executive Order 246 which was issued to increase the number and sales of zero emission vehicles in the state. The zero-emission infrastructure assessment as part of Executive Order 271 is ongoing. They have considered input for light duty vehicles, medium-heavy duty vehicles, fleet transportation, vehicle miles traveled, and infrastructure focus areas to act upon reducing emissions. She noted that hydrogen is currently recognized as the secondary fuel source for medium and heavy-duty vehicles by the Biden Administration. Key recommendations have included increasing equitable outcomes in transportation planning projects, ensuring access and affordability to clean transportation, and establishing a coordinated clean transportation strategy. Ms. Hemmer gave a brief summary of recommendations in each focus area. Ms. Hemmer also emphasized that many of the actions recommended in the Clean Transportation Plan will depend on the Clean Transportation Plan work groups.

#### **IV. Maya Hoon; Title VI and Environmental Justice Coordinator, DEQ: “Environmental Justice Analysis for the Advanced Clean Trucks Rule”**

Ms. Maya Hoon described the proposed environmental justice analysis method for the Advanced Clean Trucks Rule (ACT) from Governor Cooper’s Executive Order 271 which require medium and heavy-duty (M/HD) vehicle manufacturers to sell more zero-emission M/HD vehicles. The proposed approach includes using route-based sources and idling sources to analyze areas for possible higher emissions. For areas with potentially higher emissions, sociodemographic indicators would be analyzed to determine whether emission reduction benefits may be experienced as a result of the ACT rule. Idling sources are highly concentrated throughout NC, suggesting high potential for emission reductions and possible benefits across the state, but a proposed approach may include looking at the number of idling sources within a census tract.

Ms. Carter commented that most data sources came from before 2015, when US census population increased between 2010-2020 and a new major interstate was built in 2019.

Ms. Hoon clarified that the updated EJ analysis has data through 2023.

Dr. Lobdell asks for clarification on the data sources.

Ms. Hoon clarified that the 2019 data is specifically for route-based sources. The idling source dataset is from 2023 data on the multi-modal statewide freight plan. Demographic data was from the 2019 5-year averages.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson asked if there are any incentives across all demographics to use public transit.

Ms. Hemmer replied that transit decisions are made at a local level, but EPA and DOT have been looking into ways to analyze incentives.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson questioned if DEQ would have any role in recommending that to the local level.

Ms. Hemmer responded that most of the recommendations for public transit occurred during COVID. She is not aware of campaigns for free transit, but a lot of ridership dropped off following COVID. She also clarified that the ACT rule is also being investigated by many other states and is based on regulations in California.

Ms. White-Williamson commented that there is no push for charging stations in rural areas and asks what efforts are being pushed in rural areas.

Ms. Hemmer responded that there is funding to make fast-charging infrastructure across the state, and the remainder of this funding will go to the communities for implementing electric cooperatives. Use of electric vehicles in rural areas is based on ownership in those areas, but infrastructure has to come before electric vehicle use. She believes that it will happen in the next few years.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson commented that most of the idling sources are present in the center of the state, whereas EJ areas are more in the eastern side of the state.

Ms. Hoon responded that she will look into what data sources are available to potentially include major animal feeding operation locations and major landfill sites since those are possible high-truck traffic areas.

#### **V. EJEAB: Cumulative Impacts Follow Up**

Ms. Sheri White Williamson updated that the report on cumulative impacts still under revision.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson added that the report will be ready for the next meeting.

#### **VI. EJEAB: Reflections on Governor's Office Community Meeting**

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson summarized that the meeting focused on what definition to use for environmental justice. They have been using the EPA's definition thus far, but there is a questionnaire to comment on if that is an effective definition.

Ms. Marsh-Robinson thanked the Environmental Justice Community Action Network and Ms. White-Williamson for spreading the word on the meeting with the Governor's office. She also thanked the Governor's office for being so involved. She reflected that the Governor's office responded well to community concerns and that the public comment period was well facilitated.

Ms. White Williamson thanked her staff and partners for ensuring good attendance. There were about 100 participants in person, and 30 virtual participants. Cumulative impacts were a priority concern for many participants. She wished there was a greater tribal presence, but she is coordinating with Jeff Anstead to ensure more tribal representation at the next meeting.

#### **VII. Stakeholder Meetings for the General Permit**

Ms. Marsh-Robinson opens discussion on stakeholder meetings for the General Permit and community feedback.

Ms. White-Williamson says that there have been two meetings about swine, poultry, and cattle permits by invitation only. There will be a public meeting on May 9<sup>th</sup> in Clinton, NC to incorporate feedback. She expressed a desire to make sure feedback is included in the draft permit. Ms. White-Williamson encouraged the board to make sure their own communities comment before the board submits their recommendations to DEQ by June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson asked if the meeting will be announced on the DEQ's website.

DEQ Deputy Secretary for Public Affairs Sharon Martin responded that there is a timeline already posted for upcoming public event and the comment period.

Ms. Carter asked about using translation services for the upcoming public comment period.

Ms. Martin confirmed that translation services will be present.

Ms. Marsh-Robinson commented that she would like the opportunity for input from the community to be closely examined by the agency to make sure that the community feels like they are being heard.

Ms. Martin responded that they have gone to lengths to restructure meetings to be more open for community input. She expressed that the DEQ wants to hear from the community, but they do have to move forward with the permits on the regulatory deadline.

Ms. White-Williamson commented that most community members will not understand fine details of the permitting process. She asked if there will be a way for community members to be more informed about the permit so they can be adequately informed to provide feedback.

Ms. Martin affirmed that the input session will be structured to go through the sections of the permit for community understanding.

### **Closing**

Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson thanked the city of Clinton for hosting the meeting and reflected on how impactful the toxics tour was for the members of the board. She thanked Ms. White-Williamson for organizing the tour.

At 4:51, Vice Chair Johnson-Thompson adjourned the meeting before the public comment period.

Public comment began at 5:13pm. The public comment period can be viewed at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qI-WORDwdY>