

Secretaries' Science Advisory Board

MEETING MINUTES

Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building

Monday, June 7, 2023

10:00 AM-1:00 PM

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretaries' Science Advisory Board (SAB) met on Monday, June 7, 2023, in person in the Ground Floor Hearing Room in the DEQ Archdale Building, in a public meeting. SAB members in attendance were Tom Augspurger, PhD, Chair; Jamie DeWitt, PhD; Richard Di Giulio, PhD; Gina Kimble, PhD; John Vandenberg, PhD; Betsey Tilson MD, MPH; Viney Anjea, PhD, David Howard, MPH and Detlef Knappe, PhD. Also, in attendance were DEQ and DHHS staff: Sushma Masemore, P.E., Frannie Nilsen, PhD; Jared Wilson, MSc; Michael Scott; Richard Rogers, Michael Pjetraj, Karen Higgins, Linda Culpepper, Bridget Shelton, Paula Chappell, Chris Ventaloro, Stephen Rice, Kennedy Holt, MSPH; and Virginia Guidry, PhD, MPH.

I. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 10:05 AM by Chairman ("Chair") Augspurger noting that the Board is attending virtually due to the brief agenda, but there is an in-person listening option in the Archdale Building's Ground Floor Hearing Room.

II. Review and Approve Agenda

Chair Augspurger asked for a motion and second to accept the agenda with the changes made to accommodate the presentations. The agenda was approved by unanimous vote.

[June 07, 2023, Agenda](#)

III. Ethics Statement

Chair Augspurger read the ethics statement and reminded the members that if anyone had any conflict of interest, or issues for which a conflict may be perceived, to indicate so. No conflicts were noted by those in attendance.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes for April 5, 2023

The draft meeting minutes were circulated to all members and minor edits were requested; the December minutes were adopted unanimously by verbal vote to include the requested edits.

[April 05, 2023 Meeting Minutes](#)

V. DEQ/DHHS Updates

DEQ Update: ([meeting recording](#) 00:25:06)

Provided by Sushma Masemore, P.E., Assistant Secretary for the Environment, NC DEQ.

PFAS Information:

Today marks the 1st year anniversary of DEQ release of PFA Action Strategy.

- 3 primary focuses of the Action Strategy
 - protecting communities
 - protecting drinking water

- cleaning up existing contamination-
- DEQ continues to work with public water systems to assess PFAS levels across the state and is working with those utilities to prepare for the upcoming EPA drinking water regulation. The work with municipalities to test 50 systems over a 3-month period, the systems were identified as having higher levels of PFAS in their water systems through the PFAS Network study and are working to sample 655 small community public water systems (includes schools and day cares and those community systems).
- Division of Waste Management (DWM) is launching pilot program under the Bernard Allen emergency drinking water fund to support residences that have PFAS contamination in drinking water wells and provide treatment systems to eligible residences.
- DEQ is requiring PFAS information from new facilities as well as existing facilities and is looking into adding permit conditions to approach PFAS emissions or wastewater discharging and will address disclosing the use or release of PFAS and where needed additional monitoring.
- DWM will require all solid waste sanitary landfills to include PFAS analysis of their ground water and leachate sampling. A letter was sent in March and will begin in July of this year.
- The Board will complete the review of latest information on PFOA and PFOS and will be recommending a method for developing bioaccumulation factors for these chemicals that are critical to standards development.
- Actions at the Chemours site:
 - Construction of a barrier wall with extraction wells and a treatment system that cleans up the PFAS in the collected water is in operation and treating contaminated water. The barrier wall is in the process of being completed.
 - Regarding the revised Chemours work plan related to its assessment in Lower Cape Fear, beyond the immediate adjacent area of Chemours to include assessments of Brunswick, Pender, New Hanover, and Columbus County.
 - 5175 well have been tested.
 - 1281 wells from private residences have detected PFAS above the consent order and team is working to ensure that they get clean drinking water.
 - 7700 or so homes have been identified as eligible for testing.
 - Continue to encourage communication from Chemours with the public on private well sampling.
- Continue to work with EPA and other federal and state partners addressing pfas address life cycle of PFAS from use into waste generation and ultimate disposal.
- Working with NCDHHS to ensure agency actions are aligned to protect public health and environment.
- Launched a fellowship program that is a collaboration between agencies and the scientific community.
- DEQ is posting resources online for residents and the public.

Board questions and DEQ answers occurred at 00:36:40 in the [meeting recording](#).

- When will the barrier wall be completed and how is the soil being managed?
 - There is a call scheduled today to get an update on where the wall construct project is.
 - Chemours is within 500 ft of completion as of last week. Currently, it's a matter of the weather permitting construction to continue. We expect it to be finished in the coming days/weeks.
 - There is a Soil Management Plan; some soil is incorporated into the cement and the remaining soil is managed in according to the Soil Management Plan.
 - All the extraction wells that are designed to collect ground water are operating at full capacity and the collected water is being treated and two of the three GAC systems are running based on the flow from all the wells.
- What is the earliest the mammalian toxicity study will be done?
 - The protocols are currently under revision by Chemours, and DEQ is in communication with Chemours and their contract lab to ensure that these studies are started as soon as possible.

DHHS Update: ([meeting recording](#) 00:43:20)

Provided by Virginia Guidry MD, MPH, Section Chief, Occupational & Environmental Epidemiology, NCDHHS

- DHHS is continuing to work on potential fish consumption advisories that are based on the freshwater fish data that was collected in Cape Fear River during the summer of 2022. DHHS is working on advisories by internally reviewing potential announcements via press release drafting signs for local health departments.
- DHHS is supporting PFAS investigations near military bases led by the Department of Defense by assisting on any health-related questions.
- High priority issue continues to be environment justice.
 - Submitted memo to Governor Cooper at end of May about ongoing work with local health departments to incorporate environment justice into their community health assessments and enhancing the environment health data dashboard with environmental justice metrics and promote environment justice for health equity.
- NC Wastewater Monitoring Network continues to monitor Covid, flu, and RSV in wastewater in 50 sites but is moving to tailoring program to be used in other efforts.
- The Climate and Health team is working on a follow up to executive order 271, report on health effects of transportation related pollutants and environmental justice funding opportunities.
 - Have a climate justice mini grant opportunity, local health department and community-based organization can apply hoping to release July 5 for \$30,000 a year for 2 years.
 - Started surveillance for heat related illness.
- Received additional funds that we can apply to hurricane recovery, working on a project in collaboration with the Farmworker Health program at NC State to help the population to recover from hurricanes.

Board questions and DHHS answers occurred at 00:48:30 in the [meeting recording](#).

- What is considered in the realm of transportation pollution?
 - Much of the literature focuses on and will name transportation air pollutants and exposure assessments. This is a summary of health effects of these pollutants including SO₂ and NO_x and includes environmental justice impacts illustrating that some communities are impacted more than others (i.e., lower income and communities of color). Information can help document those effects to help underscore the need for the implementation of the NC Clean Transportation plan that came out early this spring.
- Do you have details on the proposals in the memo sent about environmental justice activities?
 - It is not funded yet.
 - Government to government proposal requires partnership with community-based organization to apply the funding.
 - Partnership with Environment Justice Community Network in Sampson County and academic researcher at UNC and Appalachian State University are working to provide the testing, while the NCDHHS provides the treatment.
 - Identified low-cost treatment systems that have both countertop and under the sink options that affected households could choose from.

VI. PFOS and PFOA Bioaccumulation Factor Synopsis ([meeting recording](#): 00:53:45)

The Board discussed the draft document provided prior to the meeting and will be provided on the SAB website after approval.

Discussion Summary: The document strikes a balance between brevity and detailed information. The goal of document is to respond to the NCDEQ question on the source of a bioaccumulation factor for PFOS bioaccumulation of water to fish by all routes, fish exposure to water through food and through the water column to establishing a water concentration that's protective of people's ability to catch and consume. It is not a fish protective value. Minor edits were suggested and made to the document. There was a vote to approve on the draft with the light edits; no Board members opposed.

VII. DEQ's PFAS Regulatory Pathway (*meeting recording: 01:19:05*)

Presented by Christopher Ventaloro, Water Quality Standards Coordinator, Classifications, Standards & Rules Review Branch, NCDEQ Division of Water Resources

[Using Bioaccumulation Factors in Surface Water Standards Development and Rulemaking presentation](#)

Presentation Summary: The work the Board has done will be included in the development of surface water standards in the future. The purpose of surface water standards was summarized. Particularly, that main purpose of the bioaccumulation factors is that they allow a water column concentration to be determined that ensures fish do not accumulate chemicals. The use and the calculations of the narrative and numeric regulatory values were described.

VIII. Public Forum

No members of the public signed up to speak at the meeting.

IX. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:34 am.