

Secretaries' Science Advisory Board

MEETING MINUTES

Webex Event Virtual Meeting

Monday, April 4, 2022

10:00 AM-2:00 PM

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretaries' Science Advisory Board (SAB) met on Monday, April 4, 2022 by Webex Event as a virtual public meeting. SAB members in attendance were: Tom Augspurger, PhD (Chair); Viney Aneja, PhD; Jamie DeWitt, PhD; Rich Di Giulio, PhD; Elaina Kenyon, PhD; Gina Kimble, PhD; Detlef Knappe, PhD; Thomas Starr, PhD; Betsey Tilson, MD, MPH; and John Vandenberg, PhD. Also, in attendance were DEQ and DHHS staff: DEQ Assistant Secretary Sushma Masemore; Frannie Nilsen, PhD; Zack Moore, MD; Virginia Guidry, MD; Michael Pjetraj; Michael Scott; Richard Rogers; Julie Grzyb; Julie Woosley; Bridget Shelton; Chris Ventaloro, Dylan Friedenber, Laura Leonard, Peter Johnston and Louise Hughes.

I. Call to Order (Chairman Tom Augspurger)

Meeting called to order at 10:03 AM. Chairman Augspurger noted that Mr. Madden has resigned from the Board, as he has taken a new position in the private sector. DEQ and DHHS are selecting another candidate to represent the NC Association of Local Health Directors on the Board.

II. Review and Approve Agenda

Chairman Augspurger said there were no changes to the agenda; he asked for a motion and second to accept the agenda. Dr. Vandenberg moved to accept the agenda as modified, Dr. DeWitt seconded, and the agenda was approved by unanimous rollcall vote.

[April 4, 2021 Agenda](#)

[April 4, 2021 Meeting Recording](#)

III. Ethics Statement

Chairman 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. Dr. DeWitt explained that she is currently working on research on PFAS, serves on EPA's PFAS Science Advisory Board, receives funding from the NC General Assembly and the federal government for said research, and serves as an expert witness in cases involving PFAS. Dr. Knappe also explained his research on PFAS, and he receives both state and federal funding for his research.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes for February 7, 2021

The draft meeting minutes were circulated to all members for review March 28, 2022. Dr. Betsey Tilson moved acceptance as drafted; Dr. David Dorman seconded, and the February minutes were adopted unanimously by rollcall vote.

V. DEQ and DHHS updates

DEQ Update:

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

Private Drinking Water Well sampling in Lower Cape Fear Region – DWR staff sampled 70 groundwater wells, in the lower Cape Fear River Basin, including New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender, Sampson, Bladen Counties. 55 wells showed compounds covered by the Consent Order at detectable levels; Chemours responded, and DEQ provided comments. 75 requests for private well testing received; 65 currently eligible, 54 wells sampled: 15 wells non-detect, one (1) well detected PFMOAA and resident has been offered bottled water. Long-term, statewide sampling in DWR well monitoring network is ongoing; 700 groundwater wells in 234 sites across the state are part of that network; 500 wells will be sampled, samples from 159 wells in 62 sites have been collected, analyzed for PFAS compounds; sampling will continue.

Chemours Barrier Wall Design –The proposed barrier wall is 70 feet deep by 6,000 feet long along the Cape Fear River to preventing PFAS contaminated groundwater from reaching the Cape Fear River. DEQ is reviewing the 90% wall design for the effectiveness of its ability to contain and reduce the PFAS going into the river from groundwater contamination, as well as the quality assurance plans and the related performance monitoring plan. DEQ appreciates the input from many members in the scientific community. DWR has issued a draft NPDES permit which requires remediation of the contaminated seep waters and the extracted groundwater from wells; it went to public notice on March 27, 2022, and the comment period ends May 2, 2022.

PFAS sampling work at groundwater wells within the agency’s monitoring network will continue throughout this year, including areas outside the counties. DAQ continues to collection deposition data near the commercial facility, as well as at each of our seven (7) regional offices. The data are posted on the DEQ website. DEQ continues to interact with EPA, the UNC Policy Collaboratory, and other scientific bodies within the state and across the nation, including partnerships with various states that are in similar position as North Carolina, or have taken a variety of actions; DEQ is in close communication as well as coordinating to bring the best knowledge process and procedures for testing and sampling.

Regarding the fire in Winston-Salem, Mr. Pjetraj (DAQ) explained the coordination with Forsyth County, EPA and the DEQ Regional Office. Mr. Michael Scott (DWM) explained that remediation of groundwater and material management was handled by several departments in DWM – hazardous waste and solid waste – for proper disposal. Mrs. Masemore replied there will be a post-assessment and will report to the Board at the next meeting.

DHHS Update:

Provided by Dr. Zack Moore, State Epidemiologist, DHHS

1. COVID updates: Sustained decline over the last nine (9) weeks, across most coded metrics after peak of Omicron variant in mid-January. Low number of COVID hospitalizations. Internationally big surges again in Asia, China and Korea, as well as Europe with emergence of new subvariant; DHHS watching very closely. Wastewater monitoring expanding the number of municipal sites monitoring municipal wastewater; brief released reframing COVID response moving forward, moving away from measure to mitigate collective risk, focusing on self-healthcare and maintaining healthcare system capacity. Collaborating with local partners prioritizing equity, directing resources appropriately to those populations at highest risk.
2. Avian influenza: First outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in commercial poultry flocks in NC; tracking wild waterfowl for avian influenza viruses; assisting with response to outbreaks for public health. No detection of this virus in humans, but still monitoring people exposed to avian influenza.

3. PFAS and other issues: Coordinating with local health departments in anticipation of expected new health advisory level for GenX from EPA.

VI. DHHS Fish Consumption Advisory Presentation

Provided by Kennedy Holt, Toxicologist, NCDHHS.

[NCDHHS Presentation](#)

(Meeting Recording @ 41:25)

VII. PFAS Signatures in Multiple Media in the Lower Cape Fear Region

Provided by Dr. Amy Delinsky, Analytical Chemist, DEQ DWM.

[NCDEQ DWM Presentation](#)

(Meeting Recording @ 1:30:25)

VIII. Scoping PFAS in NC Reference Dose Derivation

Provided by Dr. Frannie Nilsen, Environmental Toxicologist, DEQ.

[NCDEQ Presentation](#)

(Meeting Recording @ 2:11:50)

IX. Public Forum

Four (4) people signed up to speak; and two (2) had previously spoken:

1. Dana Sargent, Cape Fear River Watch
2. Gary Gupton
3. Mike Watters
4. Beth Markesino

X. Adjourn

Dr. Augspurger entertained a motion to adjourn; Dr. Dorman moved, Dr. Kimble seconded, and with the agreement of the Board, and with no further business, Dr. Augspurger adjourned the meeting.

***The next meeting, scheduled for June 6, 2022,
will be held in-person in the Ground Floor Hearing Room of the Archdale Building.***

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise G. Hughes

Assistant to Sushma Masemore, Assistant Secretary for the Environment, DEQ