



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

ROY COOPER
Governor

ELIZABETH S. BISER
Secretary

**Secretaries' Science Advisory Board
MEETING MINUTES
Ground Floor Hearing Room, Archdale Building
Wednesday, December 6, 2023
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 Wednesday December 6, 2023, in person in the Ground Floor Hearing Room in the Archdale Building in a public meeting. SAB members in attendance were Tom Augspurger, PhD, Chairperson; Betsey Tilson MD, MPH; Jamie DeWitt, PhD (virtually); Richard Di Guilio, PhD; John Vandenberg, PhD; David Howard, MPH; Elaina Kenyon, PhD; and Tom Starr, PhD. The DEQ staff in attendance were Sushma Masemore, P.E., Frannie Nilsen, PhD; Jared Wilson, MSc; Michael Scott; Mike Abraczinskas, Taylor Hartsfield, Richard Rogers, Dylan Friedman, Josh Kastrinsky, Joelle Burleson. The DHHS staff in attendance were Virginia Guidry, PhD, MPH and Zack Moore, MD, MPH.

I. Call to Order-10:13am

Chairperson Augspurger called the meeting to order at 10:13am.

II. Review and Approve Agenda

Chair Augspurger asked for a motion and second to accept the agenda. The agenda was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

[December 6 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 October 4, 2023

The draft meeting minutes were circulated to all members; the October minutes were adopted unanimously by roll call vote.

[October 4 Minutes](#)

V. DEQ / DHHS updates

DHHS Updates – Section 1 ([meeting recording timestamp 00:11:24](#))

Provided by Zack Moore, Zack Moore, MD, MPH, State Epidemiologist and Epidemiology Section Chief, Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Section, NC Department of Health and Human Services

- 1- This has been an important week in public health: Medicaid was expanded on Friday Dec 1 which gives the opportunity for coverage to 600,000 to NC residents that are currently uninsured. There were 270,000 NC residents that moved into full Medicaid and now have full coverage.
- 2- Current issues with Respiratory Virus season: We are currently in season, right now see increases in influenza and RSV infections, there is a 'high plateau' with Covid19, but seeing increases in detections in the wastewater testing for Covid19. We expect an uptick in respiratory virus infections going into the holidays and are continuing to encourage mitigation steps and vaccines. There is an updated 2023 Covid and annual Flu vaccine, and RSV for people over 60 and pregnant women.
 - a. Regarding the increase in detections of Covid in wastewater in the past week, there is a [new dashboard from CDC](#) with new summary metrics and more information for a number of states that are participating in wastewater surveillance.
 - i. There is also the [NC Wastewater Monitoring Dashboard](#), the CDC data is more aggregated, but there is more site specific information relevant to NC on the NC website.

DHHS Updates – Section 2 (meeting recording timestamp 00:16:10)

Provided by Virginia Guidry PhD, MPH, Branch Head, Occupational & Environmental Epidemiology, NCDHHS

- 1- Climate Strategy report has been submitted annually by [cabinet agencies](#).
- 2- Heat related illness report; expanding efforts to do heat-health alerts, focusing on SE NC, which is an area of greatest need, and expanding across the state. DHHS is working with local health departments, academic, emergency preparedness, and others in this effort. DHHS is also engaging with DEQ in Climate Pollution Reduction Grant funding.
- 3- DHHS just attended the Environmental Justice (EJ) Action Forum, event with Federal, state, local, and community representatives to discuss EJ issues in NC, and specifically to discuss an ongoing and complicated site in Mebane.
- 4- Exec Order 292- Oct 24, 2023- This Executive Order is specifically focused on EJ and has a few specific requirements; for example: all cabinet agencies must create EJ metrics within 120days, DHHS is underway. Also working on a joint mapping tool with DEQ and other agencies. There are also requirements to measure cumulative impacts that are hard to measure, DHHS is collaborating with academic partners to do this.
 - a. The CDC EJ-index incorporates EH outcomes more than the Federal EJ-Screen tool, and additional data that is beyond demographics. The CDC incorporates the health piece, at the state level there is more granular data. State is developing its own tools that are tailored to the communities more than the national tools can, but they serve a complimentary purpose.
- 5- [NCDHHS: DPH: Epidemiology: OEE: Environmental Health Data Dashboard](#) – The DHHS Environmental Health Dashboard continues to be updated and CDC index has been added.
- 6- PFAS- continue to support DEQs PFAS work as needed.

DEQ Updates (meeting recording timestamp 00:23:05)

Provided by Sushma Masemore, P.E., Assistant Secretary for the Environment, NC Department of Environmental Quality

- 1- PFAS monitoring - Data in water systems- 700 ambient monitoring wells- of 700 looking at 235 locations across the state to look at water quality across the state. DEQ is systematically taking samples and measuring for PFAS- Table 3+ PFAS are being analyses. 296 of wells have been sampled. Will be made publicly available when reviewed. Finding some that are above the NPDWR levels- stats will be provided in the future.
 - a. Testing Public Water Systems (PWS) including drinking water (DW) supplies, treatment plants, large and smaller privately owned systems. Finishing the review and will release this data. There have been detections above the proposed NPDWR levels.
 - i. 286 smaller systems- 21% above the Proposed MCLs.
 1. 40% of systems that exceed NPDWR are sourced by surface water (SW).
 2. 19% rely on groundwater (GW) supplies; addressing GW clean-up it will support those DW systems.
- 2- PFAS Standards Development- DEQ is currently in the process of creating surface water (SW) and groundwater (GW) standards. Staff provided PFAS info item to Environmental Management Commission (EMC), the staff highlighted that PFAS affects some of our most vulnerable resources, all these connections are being tied into the EPA proposed standards to provide cleaner DW for all North Carolinians. Environmental benefits and fiscal impacts to the state will be presented in the future.
- 3- Import of Gen X wastewater from the Netherlands to the Chemours Fayetteville facility – traditionally requests are handled by EPA, and reviewed to determine if the waste is hazardous- this evaluation was done, and they conditionally approved the import of the wastewater. In the news, DEQ asked EPA questions, and asked Chemours questions with a formal letter. Chemours responded by the Nov 15 deadline. This enlightened us as to how much was coming into NC. An error in the report amount, 4.4mil lbs. per year was incorrect, 200,000 lbs. per year was what it was supposed to be. EPA withdrew their conditional approval for NC to receive this waste.
 - a. DEQ continues to work with EPA and ask questions. More analysis in the coming months and years if another request is made. Also working with Chemours and asking question related to the waste. Some of the wastewater has been used as recycled material in their polymer processing area. None of that water is released into the environment. That water is required to be handled off site as per a Consent Order (CO) from many years ago.
- 4- Private Drinking Water Well sampling update- the CO near site assessment continues today, sampling is currently ~27 miles out from facility, DEQ continues to require well testing – currently 7000+ homes qualify for water treatment through the CO.
 - a. Lower Cape Fear Region - 4 counties where CO PFAS have been detected. This work continues. 1481 properties above CO criteria and receive filtration and other options. NEWS- DEQ team has been asking questions about contamination and the testing options open to all relevant homes- floodplain areas carry pollution across many areas, upon review many homeowners that could be eligible, so DEQ required eligibility area to be expanded. Expanded areas added through DEQ requirements – 14,000 homes that are eligible for testing. This helps the homeowners to understand if their wells are affected and if they require filtration and helps DEQ understand the extent of the contamination and what clean up requirements need to be met.
 - i. In the process of testing these homes, there are 2 trigger points, CO and NPDWR, some homeowners are

seeing PFOA and PFOS above MCLS, DEQ is using the Bernald Allen (BA) fund to assist these non-CO related affected homeowners with filtration options. MS executing a pilot process where homeowners can apply for filtration and testing thru the BA program. 22 requests currently in review.

- 5- Sampson county- some homeowners have been but on bottled water, and looking into filtration options, not sure who is responsible and DEQ is investigating this issue. Public meeting was held with DHHS a few weeks ago. Working with many partners across state including the NC Collaboratory to determine how the DEQ can leverage the expertise available to address this large area of attention.
- 6- Climate Pollution: CPRG grant under the IRA law- each state received funding to establish a CPRG program. NC has been ahead of many states. Need to understand GHG emissions across the state, build inventory, understand sources, and mitigate sources. Updating existing resources, and creating a PCAP primary climate actions program, in the works for implementation next year. Asking stakeholders where they see the biggest benefit for addressing climate change- GHG, air pollution, co-benefits associated with GHG reductions. Webinar tomorrow evening. Had 3 public meetings in the past 2 weeks. Based on this idea in the PCAP we can apply for greater funds to implement these projects. Team looking at transportation, energy reductions in homes and industries, natural working lands and resilience benefits.

Informational Items:

- VI. DEQ PFAS Rulemaking Activities Update** ([meeting recording timestamp 00:44:48](#))
DEQ staff presented a synopsis of PFAS toxicological summary presented to the NC Environmental Management Commission (EMC) during its November 9, 2023, meeting.
[PFAS Water Quality Standards Summary Information presentation](#)

- VII. Human Health Risk Assessment for 1,4-Dioxane in Drinking Water** ([meeting recording timestamp 01:17:05](#))
Assistant Secretary Sushma Masemore requested SAB's assistance to prepare a legislative report that assesses human health risks of 1,4-Dioxane in drinking water.
[1,4-Dioxane presentation](#)

- VIII. Lunch – 11:30am – 12:30pm.**

- IX. DEQ Applied Research Fellow Presentation** ([meeting recording timestamp 01:50:35](#))
Dr. Ralph Mead presented the ongoing work that is being conducted with DAQ.
[Atmospheric Deposition of PFAS presentation](#)

- X. PFAS Toxicology Studies Update** ([meeting recording timestamp 02:13:32](#))
DEQ staff will inform the Board on the status of the Consent Order toxicology studies and other known PFAS studies that are underway at other agencies.
[Ongoing PFAS Studies presentation](#)

- XI. Public Forum**
No community members signed up to speak.

- XII. Adjourn – 1:30pm**

The next NCSSAB meeting will be held on Wednesday April 3, 2024.