

AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:

10:30 AM, April 20, 2011

LOCATION:

TCEQ, Park 35, Building F, Room 2210, Austin, Texas

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

The FY11 Third Quarter Meeting of the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee of the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee

ATTENDEES:

AGENCIES

Texas AgriLife Research [TAR]
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality [TCEQ]
Texas Department of Agriculture [TDA]
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board [TSSWCB]
Texas Water Development Board [TWDB]
Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts [TAGD]
Texas AgriLife Extension Service [TAES]

REPRESENTATIVES

Joseph L. Peters	Chair, Member, TCEQ, Austin
Richard Eyster	Member, TDA, Austin
Kevin Wagner	Member, TAR, College Station
Donna Long	Member, TSSWCB, Temple
Janie Hopkins	Member, TWDB, Austin
Kirk Holland	Member, TAGD, Austin
Mark Matocha	Member, TAES, College Station

AGENCY STAFF

Alan Cherepon	TCEQ, Austin
David Villarreal	TDA, Austin
Scott Underwood	TCEQ, Austin

INTERESTED PARTIES

Brad Spencer	Temple
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MEETING SUMMARY:

I. Opening Remarks

The Chairman of the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee, Dr. Joseph Peters (TCEQ), called the meeting to order. Dr. Peters welcomed everyone to the meeting and had the Subcommittee members introduce themselves. Mark Matocha, the TAES replacement for Dr. Bruce Lesikar, was welcomed to the Subcommittee. The meeting proceeded to the Task Force Reports.

II Task Force Reports

Site Selection Task Force: Ms. Hopkins, the Task Force Chair, said the TWDB is continuing with monitoring of the following regions aquifers: 98 wells in the Edwards-Trinity Plateau, 225 wells in the Trinity, 90 wells in the Pecos Valley Alluvium, 15 wells in the Edwards (Balcones Fault Zone), and 54 wells in several minor aquifers in the West Texas and Hill Country regions. Additionally, the TWDB will be doing isotope sampling in the Marathon and Ogallala Aquifers. She also expressed concern that there may be less money for laboratory analyses in 2012. Alan Cherepon (TCEQ) commented that TCEQ's Pesticide Groundwater Monitoring will begin the week of May 8th in South Texas, to include Hidalgo and Cameron Counties in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and then up to San Patricio and Nueces Counties in the Corpus Christi area.

PMP Task Force: Mr. Cherepon (TCEQ), a co-chair of this Task Force, reported that in 2011, he will assess the five remaining pesticides from the original list of 57 in the **Pesticides Of INTERest System (POINTS)** database. David Villarreal added that Texas is doing well compared to most states, and thinks the assessment program will probably be discontinued in the future.

Education Task Force: The Education Task Force, as well as all task forces, will be assessed at the next quarterly meeting of the Subcommittee to determine whether any of these have overlapping tasks or are no longer needed.

The other task forces were inactive and had nothing to report.

III. USGS National Water Information System: Web Interface

Alan Cherepon, TCEQ, provided a Power Point presentation on the improved USGS National Water Information System (NWIS) website. The major areas addressed included:

- Overview and purpose of the website
- Instructions on how to access analytical data for pesticides in well and spring samples
- Details of the interactive map and the various map options available
- Additional USGS websites for water sources data and groundwater-related studies

The USEPA and USGS are trying to combine and make analytical and field data more accessible to people, and the NWIS is a good first step in accomplishing this. The website has been available for at least a year, but the present site has marked improvements over what had formerly been available there. Data includes information and analytical results by media, such as surface water, groundwater, springs, and even some air. Queries can be made as well as searching by location and media type on an interactive map.

The NWIS database provides access to much but not all USGS data. Detailed steps were provided on how to conduct a query for pesticide results in Texas groundwater and springs. The instructions included helpful hints on how to get and save most of what is needed. Examples of the screen views were also provided, as well as the various formats available for the downloaded data. The code numbers were reviewed that identify the various parameters available for the downloaded files.

Views of the various interactive map types available were presented to show the versatility of the site. These included topographic, street, satellite, a hybrid satellite and street, and a shaded terrain map showing elevations in street map view. Regular and zoomed in views were provided of Barton Springs in Austin as an example. Locations of surface water, well, spring, and other sample or field data sites are available options.

The final items addressed included other available data sites on the Internet, as well as groundwater-related projects in which the USGS is involved. Examples of several were presented. Brian Reece, USGS, Austin and the USGS Website were acknowledged as sources for the information provided.

Janie Hopkins (TWDB) asked how this compared with the USGS Water Watch data. Mr. Cherepon explained the website has considerably more data available than presented here today, such as stream flow, water levels for wells, and that the presentation goal was to share with the subcommittee some useful and general aspects of the site that may be helpful for pesticide results from groundwater or surface water samples. He also mentioned some other sources of pesticide data, such as TCEQ's in-house Interagency Pesticide Database (IPD), but it is not available on the Internet and it does not include an interactive map, which are some important features of the USGS site.

IV. Business Items

None scheduled for this meeting

V. Information Exchange – Status Updates

Alan Cherepon provided a summary of important issues addressed at the recent EPA/States/Tribes pesticide meeting in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Mike Kelly (TDA) and Alan Cherepon (TCEQ) were the only Texas State agency representatives present at the meeting, the smallest number at such a meeting that he could recall.

The EPA Region 6 Pesticide Program Chief, Wes McQuiddy, has been replaced by Craig Carroll. Changes in administration continue, making it difficult to get things done quickly with staff having to bring their new administration up to speed.

The National Pollution Discharge Elimination System's (NPDES) general Pesticide Permit program, originally scheduled to be operational on 4/9/11 was granted a six-month extension until 10/31/11. The extension was requested by EPA since they were unable to finalize the permit they were developing for states that may choose not develop a permit of their own. Also, the U.S. Congress has passed a bill that would counter the court decision and not require the permits; however, the bill has yet to pass through the Senate and the President.

The EPA Region 6 office is undergoing scrutiny by auditors attempting to identify waste and overlapping programs that could be eliminated in an effort to further trim the budget. The Region 6 pesticide meeting took place during a week Congress was approving weekly temporary budget extensions and could not estimate the 2011 budget, let alone the 2012 budget.

One final important item was a letter from the U.S. Attorney General, which stressed the Federal government's renewed commitment to language access obligations under Executive Order 13166, and related to the Limited English Proficiency Act passed by then President Bill Clinton. The commitment could potentially require all state agencies to provide everything related to agency communications in both Spanish and English, and cost considerable time and money.

Richard Eyster (TDA) added that EPA was considering a rule that would change the definition of navigable streams, which could extend the NPDES/TPDES permit coverage considerably. The change could define water bodies as "Navigable," under the Clean Water Act, streams and bar ditches, even if intermittent. He anticipates a draft of the rule should be available for public comment by May or June.

Mr. Cherepon asked the Subcommittee members for presentation ideas for future ACS meetings, and to contact him with any ideas. Dr. David Villarreal (TDA) suggested that if we had a room where webcasts could be accessed, the subcommittee could include presentations available through this media on their agenda. Mr. Cherepon responded that he would check on this option, and that at the very least, TCEQ has that capability in some of their other conference rooms, if not in this one. Dr. Villarreal added some information he had received from a previous SFIREG meeting. The US Congress has good bipartisan support for a bill to better define FIFRA and possibly do away with the need for an NPDES general permit for pesticide applications. He also attended the national meeting on the NPDES permit, along with Charles McGuire (TCEQ), and noted that Louisiana was nowhere near ready with their version of the permit at that time (a few months prior to our meeting). Louisiana mistakenly thought they had cleared some things with EPA, but were disappointed to learn otherwise.

VI. Announcements

No announcements were made.

VII. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

VIII. Adjournment

With no further announcements or public comment, the meeting was adjourned.

Recorded and transcribed by Alan Cherepon.

In their afternoon meeting, the decision was made by the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee that its FY11 fourth quarter meeting would take place on 07/20/11 at 1:00 P.M., in TCEQ Building F, Conference Room 2210. The Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee meeting will, therefore, take place on the same date and in the same room at 10:30 A.M.

Attachments

USGS National Water Information System: Web Interface presentation handouts