

**AGRICULTURAL CHEMICAL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD**

**TIME AND DATE:**

10:00 a.m., April 19, 2001

**LOCATION:**

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

**PURPOSE OF MEETING:**

The FY01 Third Quarter meeting of the Agricultural Chemical Subcommittee of the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee.

**ATTENDEES:**

**AGENCIES**

Texas Department of Agriculture [TDA]  
Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission [TNRCC]  
Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts [TAGD]  
Texas Water Development Board [TWDB]  
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board [TSSWCB]  
Texas Structural Pest Control Board [TSPCB]

**REPRESENTATIVES**

Steve Musick	Chair, Member, TNRCC, Austin
Donnie Dippel	Member, TDA, Austin
Barry Miller	Member, TAGD, Gonzales
Janie Hopkins	Member, TWDB, Austin
Kevin Wagner	Member, TSSWCB, Temple
Murray Walton	Member, TSPCB, Austin

**AGENCY STAFF**

Debbie Danford	TDA, Austin
B.O. Spoons	TDA, Austin
Jeanette O'Hare	TDA, Austin
Ambrose Charles	TDA, Austin
Amelia Smith	TDA, Austin
Monty Dozier	TAEX, College Station
Joe Peters	TNRCC, Austin
Alan Cherepon	TNRCC, Austin
Abiy Berehe	TNRCC, Austin
Mary Ketchersid	TAEX, College Station
Eric Strom	USGS, Austin

## INTERESTED PARTIES

Denise Rhodes  
George Caldwell

Syngenta, Austin  
Texas Farm Bureau

### MEETING SUMMARY:

#### I. Opening Remarks

Steve Musick (TNRCC) called the meeting to order by welcoming everyone to the meeting. Bruce Lesikar, TAEX, College Station, and Dr. Allan Jones, TAES, College Station, were the only members not in attendance. A couple of announcements were mentioned. The first referred to a handout about the EPA Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program, Regional Initiative Grants call for proposals. The second drew attention to another handout on the indefinite status of the PMP Final Rule, as reported in the Pesticide Report of April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The Final Rule has been removed from OMB review, and the article included speculation of what possible changes may result, should the program be finalized. Mr. Musick then proceeded to the Task Force Reports.

#### II. Task Force Reports

**Site Selection Task Force:** Chair, Janie Hopkins (TWDB), summarized groundwater monitoring activities of the TWDB in the Gulf Coast aquifer, which began in March 2001. A map of the counties and number of wells estimated to be sampled in each was provided as a handout. They estimate around 600 to 650 wells should be sampled through summer 2001, when they estimate the regional monitoring will be completed. A coordination meeting of the SSTF, with only TNRCC and TWDB staff in attendance, was held at the TWDB, for the purpose of coordinating the continuation of cooperative sampling and immunoassay analyses. The next region scheduled for monitoring, the Hill Country's Hickory and Ellenberger aquifers, will not begin until next fiscal year.

An update on TNRCC's January sampling and investigative activities in the Panhandle was presented by Mr. Cherepon (TNRCC). This included ongoing monitoring at Friona, Tulia and Dimmitt, investigative work at Plainview and Hereford, and first-time sampling at Dumas, which completes at least one visit and sampling at each of the Public Water Supply (PWS) systems with confirmed atrazine detects. A total of 35 immunoassay analyses were done for atrazine and metolachlor, including 28 wells, two points-of-entry, four surface water, and 19 lab samples. Four wells that were scheduled to be sampled, were not, due to pump problems or no access. PWS personnel in Tulia, Dimmitt, Hereford, and Plainview were trained for collecting quarterly samples for immunoassay analysis. Trends in atrazine concentrations were summarized in the handout. Another sampling trip to the area, scheduled for June or July 2001, is to include the wells requiring follow-up sampling from the Panhandle cooperative monitoring work of last year.

**Education Task Force:** Chair, Bruce Lesikar (TAEX), was not present, thus no update was presented.

**The BMP Task Force:** Chair, Dr. Joe Peters (TNRCC), will be addressing a discussion for a possible charge for regional BMP development/compilation in the Panhandle Region, as Item V on the agenda.

**State Management Plan Task Force:** The SMP Chair, Dr. Ambrose Charles (TDA), had nothing to add to what was pointed out earlier in the Pesticide Report handout, in which the Final Rule was placed indefinitely on hold.

**Data Evaluation and Interpretation Task Force (DEITF):** Chairman, Dr. Allan Jones (TAES), was not present, thus no update was presented.

### **III. Groundwater Monitoring for Atrazine in the Texas Panhandle**

Mr. Cherepon provided a presentation and slide handouts summarizing the results of the continued monitoring of Panhandle PWS wells with previous atrazine detects, as well as the monitoring of Panhandle wells performed under the cooperative atrazine sampling program . Acknowledgment was given to Janie Hopkins and the TWDB, as well as Don McReynolds of the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District #1 for their part in collecting and delivering samples for analysis. Slides included bulleted lists of program accomplishments, fulfillment of PMP components, sample summary, conclusions, estimated cost savings, and recommendations. Several graphics of sample and analytical documentation were included, as were several key maps. The maps included:

- Well sample locations
- Closeup of area that overlaps PWS systems with confirmed atrazine detections
- PWS systems with confirmed atrazine detections, with 2 new additions needing to be confirmed as a result of the cooperative monitoring program
- Vulnerability assessment and high-usage map for Texas
- Closeups of vulnerable areas and PWS systems having atrazine detects in Panhandle
- Closeup of high usage map with PWS and cooperative monitoring locations with detects above 0.3 ppb atrazine, indicating a better match over the high usage areas
- Targeted cropland maps in 1999 for corn, sorghum, and wheat, 3 main atrazine-use crops

The primary advantages of the cooperative sampling program include

- Cost savings
- Covering entire regions/whole aquifers
- Catching developing problems while concentrations are still low enough to prevent more serious environmental and health concerns, due to immunoassay detection levels being lower than standard laboratory methods
- Potential for developing regional approach of action for wide-spread detections

### **IV. Gulf Coast Aquifer Cooperative Atrazine and Metolachlor Monitoring**

This item was presented during the SSTF update by Janie Hopkins.

## **V. Discussion of Regional BMP Development for the Panhandle**

A handout was provided giving a summary regarding the need for regional BMP compilation by the BMP Task Force, which would involve a charge to the Task Force. Mr. Musick then gave a small introduction of the topic of discussion. The TDA and TAEX are responsible for educational efforts on pesticide use, storage, and disposal. Due to the extent of atrazine detects in the central area of the Panhandle, and even though there is not sufficient evidence of whether the concerns are primarily point source or non-point source, the BMPTF Chair feels a compilation of appropriate BMPs which are applicable across the affected counties is warranted.

Dr. Peters then proceeded to describe some of the background for this topic. Sampling of public water supply wells in the Panhandle of Texas over the last few years has indicated the presence of atrazine. The cities with confirmed atrazine detections include Friona, Plainview, Tulia, Herford, Dimmitt, and Dumas. The detections are primarily clustered around Castro County. The wells affected are those completed in the Ogallala Aquifer. Except for one well, the detections have been below the MCL. Other sampling in the panhandle, done in cooperation with the Texas Water Development Board, also indicates the presence of atrazine in the same area. Because of these consistent detections of atrazine in this area it is felt that an educational effort should be undertaken under the Generic Pesticide Management Plan to inform the local agricultural producers of the Best Management Practices available for the minimization of groundwater contamination from pesticides.

Thus, the following are recommended for the charge:

- Facilitate appropriate educational efforts directed towards the proper use of atrazine and other pesticides in the Panhandle region.
- Since BMPs are already compiled and published for each county, through the County Agricultural Agents and the TAEX, an effort should be made to determine if there are any which are consistent across the region of detects, and compile a summary of these for use in educational efforts.

Some discussion followed, with Mr. Musick commenting that the basic concern seems to be the prevention of improper application of pesticides, through the dissemination of BMPs through educational efforts. Denise Rhodes, representing Syngenta, had a number of concerns. She questioned whether BMPs could be compiled before there is a final determination of whether they need to be directed toward prevention of point source or non-point source contamination. She also had questioned how atrazine detect data should be presented so that it is not mis-represented and how should it be flagged to define accuracy distinctions. Mr. Musick responded that only the most basic confirmed information would likely be presented, that there are few if any actual public health threats at present, but the number of confirmed detects clearly indicates a regional concern for atrazine. However, the low concentrations involved will keep BMP programs on a voluntary level. A further comment was that the TNRCC is required to send copies of the meeting notes and any new detect data to EPA, but until the Final Rule is in place, there is nothing too formal.

TDA commented that several education programs already exist. They also commented that much BMP research had already been done and as a result a plentiful supply of BMP guidance already exists. Therefore, it should be unnecessary to develop any new BMPs or any new BMP documents. We should draw from the existing documents for BMPs to be implemented through educational efforts directed towards producers and applicators. Another comment made by TDA was that the only enforcement incentive should be through the pesticide labels. The Chair responded that at this stage we were only concerned with voluntary programs implemented through educational efforts, and therefore, enforcement incentives are not needed at the present time. At this point we also need to determine if contaminated areas extend beyond those identified thus far. Mr. Spoons of TDA mentioned that educational efforts by Monty Dozier of TAEX go well beyond the basics, and should be sufficient. Mr. Musick said that, since all agencies are in agreement with the philosophy and mechanisms of the Generic PMP, what is needed, which should be documented, is a well coordinated effort to identify the contaminated areas (those where detects are most prevalent), to summarize and compile which BMPs are appropriate for the Panhandle region, and to apply these in educational efforts in those areas. Kevin Wagner of TSSWCB commented that it might be worthwhile to look over the existing listings of BMPs and make sure something isn't being missed in our educational efforts. Mr. Cherepon added that at an earlier meeting of last year, TAEX made a statement on how each county's BMPs were very specific to local conditions, and what we are trying to do is assess whether there are any which may be similar and consistent in these counties of concern in the Panhandle. Since Bruce Lesikar (TAEX) and Allan Jones (TAES) were not present, the Chair said it would be better to wait until next meeting to get additional comments from them on this matter of whether BMPs will be applicable on a regional basis in Panhandle.

## **VI. Public Comment**

There were no public comments at this meeting.

## **VII. Announcements**

Texas is hosting the National Pesticide Applicators Certification & Training Conference from about 6/11-13/01.

Donnie Dippel (TDA) mentioned the Surface Water Protection Committee meeting, at TDA, Austin, on 5/10/01.

Debbie Danford (TDA) announced the annual ARPA meeting will be on 6/4/01 at 10AM at TDA.

Alan Cherepon mentioned the American Water Resources Association Conference will meet in San Antonio from 4/30/01-5/1/01.

Mr. Cherepon reminded everyone of the TNRCC Environmental Trade Fair from 4/30/01-5/2/01, and that the paper he presented here today and several others by the Groundwater Planning & Assessment Team will be presented at the fair.

Mr. Cherepon also commented on the new Farm-A-Syst-type website by the state of Illinois, and recommended everyone check the content for consideration of whether Texas should design a similar site. The website address is; [http://web.aces.uiuc.edu/watershed/training\\_ed/Adult/50ways/index.htm](http://web.aces.uiuc.edu/watershed/training_ed/Adult/50ways/index.htm) He also provided comment on the April 5 Pesticide Report article on the PMP Final Rule, especially that Syngenta was providing monitoring of two PWS systems in Kentucky, where atrazine concentrations are above the MCL, and the state was implementing BMPs in the area, including filter and buffer strips and alternate year applications of atrazine.

It was announced, in the afternoon, at the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee meeting, that the FY01 3rd quarter meeting of the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee will take place on August 9, 2001 at 10AM, in Building F, Room 2210, and the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee meeting will follow, at 1PM, at the same location.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

Recorded and transcribed by Alan Cherepon.

### **Attachments**

- EPA Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program, Regional Initiatives Grant call for proposals
- Pesticide Report, Vol.4, No. 17, 45/01, article on PMP Final Rule
- TWDB map of Gulf Coast Aquifer groundwater sampling estimates for cooperative monitoring of atrazine and metolachlor
- TNRCC's January Panhandle sampling summary report
- Audience notes for presentation slides on Atrazine monitoring in the Panhandle
- Preliminary discussion on Panhandle regional BMPs