

AGRICULTURAL CHEMICAL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:

10:00 a.m., August 9, 2001

LOCATION:

TNRCC, Park 35, Building F, Room 3202A, Austin, Texas

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

The FY01 Fourth 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]
Texas Cooperative Extension [TCE]

REPRESENTATIVES

Steve Musick	Chair, Member, TNRCC, Austin
Jeanette O'Hare	Member, TDA, Austin
Barry Miller	Member, TAGD, Gonzales
Radu Boghici	Member, TWDB, Austin
Kevin Wagner	Member, TSSWCB, Temple
Michael Kelly	Member, TSPCB, Austin
Bruce Lesikar	Member, TCE, College Station

AGENCY STAFF

Amelia Smith	TDA, Austin
Joe Peters	TNRCC, Austin
Alan Cherepon	TNRCC, Austin
Abiy Berehe	TNRCC, Austin
Don Renchie	TCE, College Station
Ann Ardis	USGS, Austin

INTERESTED PARTIES

Denise Rhodes	Syngenta, Austin
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MEETING SUMMARY:

I. Opening Remarks

Steve Musick (TNRCC) called the meeting to order by welcoming everyone to the meeting, and brought attention to the agenda. The record of the previous meeting was brought up for changes, and since there were none, they were approved as is. This was followed by the Subcommittee members introductions. Dr. Allan Jones, TAES, College Station was the only member not in attendance. (Note the name change for the TAEX, which is now the Texas Cooperative Extension, or TCE). Attending for Donnie Dippel, TDA, was Jeanette O'Hare, for Murray Walton, TSPCB, was Michael Kelly, and for Janie Hopkins, TWDB, was Radu Boghici. Mr. Musick then proceeded to the Task Force Reports.

II. Task Force Reports

Site Selection Task Force: Radu Boghici (TWDB), attending in place of the 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 showing sampled wells was provided as a handout. The regional monitoring of the Gulf Coast aquifer is completed. The next region scheduled for monitoring, the Hill Country's Hickory and Ellenberger aquifers, has begun, and will be completed soon, estimating about 90 samples. Following this, the TWDB will sample about 18 wells in the Lipan aquifer, in the San Angelo area. Next year, they will sample the Carrizo-Wilcox aquifer and possibly 1 to 2 of the Minor aquifers. They will try to keep at about 700 samples per year.

Mr. Musick asked about well density requirements by the TWDB. Mr. Boghici said there was no standard well density requirement, being different for each aquifer, area and population. Phil Nordstrom (former Task Force Chair from the TWDB) had initially established that they should try to get at least one sample per 2 ½ minute quadrangle, and the TWDB has used this as their minimum density number.

Education Task Force: Chair, Bruce Lesikar (TAEX), announced the recent name change for the TAEX to the Texas Cooperative Extension, or TCE. He then went on to summarize educational efforts, especially in the Panhandle region. Montey Dozier is working with the county agents in District 1, Amarillo on water quality, and will also be conducting a well screening program in District 3 (Rolling Plains, just SE of the Panhandle region) that will initially test for fecal coliform. Dana Porter (TCE) is preparing training events for District 2 in Lubbock, which will include water quality and protection, as well as results of atrazine monitoring detects and investigations in the Panhandle by the ACS. They will also try to include coordination with Montey Dozier on well plugging of abandoned wells.

The BMP Task Force: It was noted that the Chair, Dr. Joe Peters (TNRCC), will be presenting the charge for regional BMP compilation in the Panhandle Region, as Item V on the agenda.

He provided a brief update on the Picloram program, that sampling was completed, 3/4 of the analyses were done, and that only one detect was found, in Wise County.

State Management Plan Task Force: Jeanette O'Hare (TDA), was sitting in for the SMP Chair, Dr. Ambrose Charles (TDA), had nothing new to report on the Final Rule, and Denise Rhodes (Syngenta) commented that the Bush administration has reviewed it, but no statements have been prepared at present.

Data Evaluation and Interpretation Task Force (DEITF): Chairman, Dr. Allan Jones (TAES), was not present, thus no update was presented. Mr. Musick noted that no charges of work to the DEITF were outstanding.

III. Gulf Coast Aquifer Cooperative Atrazine and Metolachlor Monitoring

Alan Cherepon (TNRCC) provided a handout with a map summarizing the atrazine and metolachlor screening of groundwater for the Gulf Coast Aquifer, as a continuation of cooperative monitoring in Texas, with the TWDB collecting the samples, and TNRCC analyzing them by immunoassay.

- 10 sets of analysis were run from 3/22/01 through 7/23/01
- 356 well samples, 16 duplicates and 17 field blanks were analyzed
- 39 counties were sampled, with most detects in the counties south and west of Houston
- There were 4 atrazine detects (with 2 of these in field blanks) and 8 metolachlor detects (with one of these in a field blank)
- All detects, except for one of the atrazines, were below 0.1 ppb, and one well had a detect of both atrazine and metolachlor, all very low concentrations that would likely be non-detects by lab analysis
- Problems include 3 detects in field blanks, 20 samples frozen and broken, not analyzed, and 15 metolachlor/13 atrazine samples exceeded holding times
- Do not anticipate followup sampling due to low concentrations, higher priorities in Panhandle region

Ann Ardis (USGS) added her agency will be conducting sampling in FY02 in the Gulf Coast Aquifer, and will extend the study area to the Houston region, as part of the NAWQA program. This will include about 30 wells. The USGS is also conducting additional sampling in the Panhandle region, but for much more than pesticides. This will include radon and tritium for age dating. This is part of the southern part of the High Plains study.

Mr. Boghici mentioned that samples have recently been collected in Jackson County. However, since the meeting, 24 samples were actually collected in four other counties; Ft. Bend, Brazoria, Kimble, and Washington. The next area to be sampled under the cooperative agreement between TNRCC and TWDB is the Hill Country/Ellenberger/Hickory/Trinity Aquifers area, with sampling already nearly completed. The TWDB anticipates about 19 samples.

IV. Groundwater Monitoring for Atrazine in the Texas Panhandle

An update on TNRCC's July sampling activities in the Panhandle was presented by Mr. Cherepon. This included ongoing quarterly monitoring at Tulia, Dimmitt, Plainview and Hereford, all being Public Water Supply (PWS) systems with confirmed atrazine detects, and located in the central part of the Panhandle region. Of these, Plainview and Hereford have yet to be investigated in more detail before a charge to be developed for the DEITF. Also, 12 of the 21 wells with atrazine detects above 0.3 ppb during the cooperative monitoring effort last year were re-sampled for confirmation of detects. The High Plains Underground Water Conservation District #1 collected an additional 5 samples for a total of 17 out of the 21 detects above 0.3 ppb atrazine being re-sampled so far (77%). The remaining wells will hopefully be sampled in the next fiscal year. Lab results have not come back yet, so a more complete report on this sampling will be made at the next ACS meeting, including the annual update on Friona, and possibly the quarterly sampling results for Hereford, Tulia, Dimmitt, and Plainview. Since the lab results were only recently received, a more complete summary of the sampling trip will be presented at the next ACS meeting.

Ann Ardis (USGS) mentioned the USGS is planning on doing an agricultural land-use study in the High Plains, and hope to install about 30 wells. They also plan to conduct this on both an impacted playa basin and one that is not impacted by pesticides. She also mentioned that Kevin Denahay, the NAWQA Manager for the High Plains, will be coming to Austin on 9/28/01, and will see if they plan a meeting to give those outside the agency an opportunity to meet with him to discuss results and proposed work on borings and monitoring wells.

V. Discussion of Regional BMP Compilation for Atrazine in the Central Panhandle

A handout of the charge for a regional BMP compilation by the BMP Task Force was provided by Dr. Peters. He sent it out for comments to others in the BMP Task Force, and received 2 replies. One of these was a comment by Dr. Paul Baumann (TCE) that several sources of BMPs are already available, and didn't want to have any duplication of effort. Another comment by Dr. Monty Dozier (TCE) was that Tex-A-Syst is for point source issues, and that it is not yet clear as to what the source is in the Panhandle. Dr. Peters said the aim of this effort should be to get the most appropriate ones for atrazine contamination of groundwater and provide references of sources.

Several comments were voiced by those present. Kevin Wagner (TSSWCB) noted that technical manuals of substantial size are available at each county's Extension office, with BMPs specific to that county, and could possibly focus specific BMPs for atrazine. The BMPs would mostly address irrigation management, wetlands, dam construction, and similar structural and surface water issues. Bruce Lesikar (TCE) reiterated that since we don't yet have a handle on the sources of the atrazine, we would be having to cover each possible one, point source and non-point source, as well as abandoned wells, and that nothing specific to atrazine probably exists at present. Denise Rhodes (Syngenta) said that her company (formerly Ciba Geigy) would still stand behind the BMP brochure they developed for protecting water resources from atrazine a number of years ago. Mr. Musick commented that we don't necessarily need to approach individual producers and applicators about

which BMPs to do on their land, but rather approach it as a regional educational effort, perhaps focusing on specific areas, such as label use. We know there is a regional atrazine problem in groundwater, which includes issues with wells, and that this charge is for compiling something for the field agents to use for atrazine.

Ms. Rhodes said she felt that until the source of contamination could be determined, she didn't think they would pay much attention to anything presented by the ACS. Mr. Cherepon commented that, based on our DEITF investigations and monitoring efforts, we already know some things about potential sources. Dr. Renchie said that there have been changes in use patterns, crop and home use over the years, which is reflected on the labels, and that we shouldn't exclude urban/home use. The historical changes in rates of application and the present results in monitoring may have little to do with present day application practices.

Ann Ardis (USGS) brought up a recent study the USGS conducted and released in the San Antonio area. The USGS results indicate higher atrazine concentrations and detects in the urban area of San Antonio. She also qualified this by noting that San Antonio and surrounding rural area is not a big crop producing region, and results might not be the typical, should a similar study be conducted in a more agriculturally important region, such as the Panhandle.

Dr. Renchie commented that even if we were to stop using atrazine today, would it affect atrazine concentrations in groundwater? Would we see any changes in a 30 year period, where is the atrazine in the present soil profile/subsurface. Perhaps corrections that are now in place, and the change in use have already corrected the situation. He emphasized that some outreach was probably needed, and that a more coordinated effort might be best. He also suggested for the ACS to consider targeting areas where crops for which atrazine are still used. Mr. Cherepon replied that from our investigations, there are indications of misuse in the present, noting examples in Dimmitt and Friona. The issue may not be a problem of only past practices, but one that has affects from current practices.

Mr. Musick said the ACS doesn't want to focus on agriculture alone in this effort, and that more urban issues should be addressed, but it is more difficult to figure the best approach. The ACS did have a presentation in the past on the urban pesticide retailer equivalent of the Master Gardener program of the TCE, which was good for bringing to light some of the urban pesticide issues. Dr. Renchie said the TCE also conducted a pilot survey of products in retail stores in urban areas, with Travis County as one of these, and found that they are selling concentrated atrazine product for homeowner use, who typically don't dilute it as required, and that these products shouldn't even be available to homeowners for home use in these forms. Ms. Rhodes said that the manufacturer has no control over the sale of product like this. Dr. Renchie felt it was more of a regulatory/enforcement issue that might best be addressed in the registration process by EPA.

The Chair reiterated the need for the BMPTF to facilitate additional educational efforts, and the scope of the charge. The BMPTF will be charged with developing a document outlining the types and reference sources of atrazine-specific BMPs applicable to the Panhandle area of the state.

VI. Public Comment

There were no public comments at this meeting.

VII. Announcements

Barry Miller said there will be a Groundwater Districts seminar (a sort of Groundwater 101) held at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center on 8/27-28/01.

Jeanette O'Hare (TDA) mentioned the Texas Range Society is having their meeting and field day in Odessa on 10/10-12/01. A field trip will be held on the 10th to see the salt cedar control program study area on the Pecos River, and the brush control seminar will be held on the 11th and 12th.

Alan Cherepon mentioned the Monitoring & Modeling for Non-Point Source Pollution in Agricultural Landscapes (9th annual NPS Workshop) will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana from 8/27-30/01.

The decision was made by the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee that the FY02 1st quarter meeting of the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee will take place on November 28, 2001 at 10AM, in Building F, Room 5108, and the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee meeting will follow, at 1PM, in Room 2210.

VIII. Adjournment

Recorded and transcribed by Alan Cherepon.

Attachments

- TWDB & TNRCC map of Gulf Coast Aquifer groundwater sampling estimates for cooperative monitoring of atrazine and metolachlor, and TNRCC preliminary summary
- TNRCC's July Panhandle sampling preliminary summary report
- BMPTF Charge for Compilation of Central Panhandle Regional BMPs