

AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:

10:30 AM, November 12, 2014

LOCATION:

TCEQ, Park 35, Building B, Room 201A, Austin, Texas

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

The FY15 First Meeting of the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee of the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee

ATTENDEES:

AGENCIES

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

REPRESENTATIVES

Alan Cherepon	Chair, Member, TCEQ, Austin
David Villarreal	Member, TDA, Austin
Janie Hopkins	Member, TWDB, Austin
Mark Matocha	Member, TAES, College Station
T. J. Helton	Member, TSSWCB, Temple
David Van Dressar	Member, TAGD, La Grange

AGENCY STAFF

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INTERESTED PARTIES

None in attendance for this meeting

MEETING SUMMARY

I. Opening Remarks

The acting Chairman of the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee, Alan Cherepon, TCEQ, called the meeting to order. Subcommittee member Dr. Kevin Wagner Texas A & M AgriLife Research (TAR) was not in attendance. Mr. Cherepon welcomed everyone to the meeting and had the Subcommittee members introduce themselves. The chair

asked the subcommittee members to take a couple of minutes to review the minutes from the previous meeting for possible changes or approval as is. Following review, the motion was made by Dr. Villarreal (TDA) and seconded by Dr. Matocha (TAES) to accept the minutes as is. The vote was unanimous to accept the minutes. The meeting proceeded to the Task Force Reports.

II. Task Force Reports

Site Selection Task Force: Ms. Hopkins, the Task Force Chair, provided a summary on the TWDB's completed and planned sampling activities. Ms. Hopkins reported that the 2015 sampling contract has been approved. The TWDB will sample in the Trinity, Edwards-Trinity Plateau, the Lipan, and other smaller aquifers this year. The TWDB 2014 monitoring included over 300 well samples from the Carrizo-Wilcox, Seymour, Sparta, Yegua-Jackson, and Queen City aquifers. This included wells in the primary fracking area underlain by the Carrizo-Wilcox and Lipan aquifers.

Education Task Force: Mr. Cherepon, a co-chair for the task force, had nothing to report at present, but will be presenting a summary on the recent EPA Region 6 pesticide meeting, and the EPA Region 6 annual QA conference in Dallas during October during the Information Exchange portion of the meeting. Dr. Matocha (TAES), the other co-chair, did not have any updates to report.

PMP Task Force: The other task forces were inactive and had nothing to report.

III. FY14 Pesticide Monitoring Summary-Alan Cherepon

Mr. Cherepon provided a summary of pesticide groundwater monitoring activities in 2014. Main topics included the On-Going monitoring by TCEQ in the Panhandle, Cooperative Monitoring with the TWDB, and updates to the Interagency Pesticide Database (IPD). The On-Going monitoring of specific public Water Supply (PWS) wells with previous high atrazine detects was conducted at several systems in the Central Panhandle Region. The atrazine levels either remained about the same or had slightly higher concentrations by immunoassay screening analysis. The Cooperative monitoring was conducted in the aquifers mentioned earlier by Ms. Hopkins, primarily in the Carrizo-Wilcox and adjacent aquifers. There were no significant detections of atrazine or triazines screened for by immunoassay analyses. The IPD was updated prior to the former chair, Dr. Joe Peters, retirement in June. The updates were from the past five years, with data from both the USGS and TCEQ. The IPD now has over 6,000 well samples, over 300,000 analyses, and 361 confirmed detections of pesticides.

Mr. Cherepon fielded several questions from subcommittee members. Most questions involved specifics about the number of increased atrazine concentrations in the Panhandle wells, and specific numbers in the IPD update.

IV. Business Items – FY15 Proposed Pesticide Groundwater Monitoring Plan and Subcommittee Charge and Focus Discussion

Mr. Cherepon next provided a copy of the proposed FY15 Pesticide Groundwater Monitoring Plan for the subcommittee to approve. A copy had previously been provided to the Site Selection Task Force members to review, and since there were no comments, a short time was given for the chair to go over the main focus of monitoring this fiscal year. Due to budget uncertainty for the year, options for how much could be accomplished were provided. The cooperative monitoring with the TWDB remains the priority, including as many pesticides to be screened for by immunoassay analysis. Should sufficient funds be available, two to four additional pesticides, as well as atrazine, will be analyzed for. The additional pesticides may include diuron, glyphosate, imidacloprid, and trifluralin. The only other task will involve atrazine monitoring at and around a well southeast of Austin, which had reportedly detected atrazine in the well water sample the well owner had analyzed on the new well.

The summary was followed by some questions about why the specific pesticide kits were chosen. Mr. Cherepon explained that since the Cooperative monitoring covers a large area and mix of well types, most pesticides are potentially used. Also, these pesticides are on the list of the 57 identified by State-FIFRA Issues Research and Evaluation Group (SFIREG), used in the Pesticides Of Interest Tracking System (POINTS) assessments as those most commonly used or found in water samples, and are potentially on the list of pesticides EPA has scheduled for re-review. The chair also explained why the budget was so unsure. The motion to accept the plan as provided was made by Ms. Hopkins (TWDB) and seconded by Mr. Van Dressar (TAGD) and passed unanimously.

Following the monitoring plan adoption, the chair updated everyone on the suggested changes to the subcommittee previously voiced by Dr. Villarreal (TDA). He suggested we expand the focus of the ACS to include all chemicals, or possibly only meeting on an as-needed basis. Discussion followed in what options the SC wanted to consider. These included:

- Expand the charge to include all chemicals that could potentially contaminate groundwater
- To only meet on an as-needed basis
- To dissolve the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee, only resurrecting it on an as-needed basis
- Other suggestions

At the previous meeting, a motion was made and was composed of the following points.

- Change the name of the ACS to the Groundwater Contamination Subcommittee and expand its focus from pesticides only to all chemicals
- Make the change for a one-year trial period, and to reevaluate the charge of the Subcommittee after the one-year period
- Determine what additional members may need to and want to serve on the Subcommittee over the one-year period

Making charges for Subcommittees is the prerogative of the full committee which makes the final decision, regardless of what the ACS members decide. However, the subcommittee voted unanimously to pass the motion listing the suggested changes to be presented to the TGPC, which has been reported to them. The Committee is scheduled to consider this matter in the afternoon meeting today. The chair commented that water quality and pesticide issues appear to have taken a lower priority with EPA and the states at the recent EPA Region 6 Pesticide meeting. He also commented that he has been involved with meetings of the ACS since 1998, has seen much value in having such a mechanism for communicating and coordinating pesticides and groundwater quality issues, and would prefer to see the ACS continue. He asked if any subcommittee members have come up with further considerations related to these changes.

Dr. Villarreal (TDA) added that he did not actually suggest dissolving the subcommittee, but rather, expand the focus to other chemicals and contaminants of interest. Some of these include pharmaceuticals, biological/infectious agents, and fracking chemicals to name a few. He feels it important for the TGPC to document how they are addressing newer issues in groundwater contamination and protection, should an entity such as the Sunset Commission question what and why they did or did not address these items of interest.

V. Information Exchange – Status Updates

The chair provided a Power Point summary of important issues addressed at the EPA Region 6 EPA/States/Tribes pesticide meeting, which was held on 10/7-8 in Addison, and the annual EPA Region 6 QA Conference on 10/20-24 in Dallas. Primary items of interest at the pesticide meeting included the EPA and states in Region 6 consider water quality a lower priority in 2015, the revised definition of “Waters of the U.S.” and the ensuing stakeholder arguments EPA has run up against in this issue, an effort to better protect bees/pollinators from pesticides, and recent analytical technical improvements for pesticide analyses. The Quality Assurance conference included a very good pesticide track, also addressed protection and studies of bees/pollinators as related to pesticides, changes to and how to better prepare and review Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs), and statistical sampling method as an improved method for justifying where and how many samples to collect while monitoring. The chair also noted that he was able to deliver the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) QAPP for 2015 to EPA at the Region 6 meeting one week, and pick it up, approved, during the QA conference two weeks later.

VI. Announcements

The chair announced that the annual Texas Plant Protection Association Conference will be held at the Brazos Center in Bryan on December 10 and 11, and that he will be setting up and manning the table for TGPC/ACS materials. He further added that he had done this with Joe Peters in the early years of TCEQ attending this event around 2000. He next asked if there were any other announcements.

Mr. Helton (TSSWCB) announced that the National Non-Point Source meeting is scheduled for November 17-20 in Dallas.

VII. Public Comments

There was no public comment, there being no one present from the public.

VIII. Adjournment

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

Recorded and transcribed by Alan Cherepon.