

AGRICULTURAL CHEMICAL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:

10:00 a.m., October 26, 2000

LOCATION:

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

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

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

ATTENDEES:

AGENCIES

Texas Agricultural Experiment Station [TAES]
Texas Department of Agriculture [TDA]
Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission [TNRCC]
Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts [TAGD]
Texas Water Development Board [TWDB]
Texas Agricultural Extension Service [TAEX]

REPRESENTATIVES

Steve Musick	Chair, Member, TNRCC, Austin
Donnie Dippel	Member, TDA, Austin
Allan Jones	Member, TAES, College Station
Barry Miller	Member, TAGD, Gonzales
Janie Hopkins	Member, TWDB, Austin
Bruce Lesikar	Member, TAEX, College Station

AGENCY STAFF

Jeanette O'Hare	TDA, Austin
Mary Ketchersid	TAEX, College Station
Joe Peters	TNRCC, Austin
Alan Cherepon	TNRCC, Austin

INTERESTED PARTIES

Lynne Fahlquist	USGS, Austin
Scott Averhoff	Texas Corn Producers Board
Chyrel Mayfield	Texas Seed Trade Association

MEETING SUMMARY:

I. Opening Remarks

Steve Musick (TNRCC) called the meeting to order and reminded everyone of the handouts, agenda and sign-in sheet. Mr. Musick also encouraged everyone to note the meeting mailout list update sheet, to complete one if you have not been receiving your meeting notices. He followed this by welcoming everyone to the meeting, with each subcommittee member introducing themselves to the audience. Kevin Wagner, TSSWCB, Temple, and Murray Walton, TSPCB, Austin, were not in attendance. The Chair welcomed Dr. Jones (TAES) as Wayne Jordan's replacement for both the Texas Water Resource Institute, and his position on the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee, ACS, and various task forces. This was followed with mention of the Data Evaluation & Interpretation Task Force (DEITF) meeting immediately following this meeting. The Chair also announced there were a couple of recent EPA notices in the Federal Register related to pesticides. One announced that EPA had sent the PMP draft Final Rule to the Secretary of Agriculture for review/comments, and that the Final Rule was also at the OMB for final review. The document could potentially make the PMP program effective within two months. Finally, the Chair noted the handout of the draft recommendations to the 77th Legislature for the TGPC's biennial report to the Legislature, which includes estimated funding needs to develop and implement the Pesticide-Specific PMPs. The recommendation is similar to ones in the previous two reports. Members of the TGPC were asked to review this and have comments ready for the afternoon meeting. Mr. Musick then proceeded to the Task Force Reports.

II. Task Force Reports

Site Selection Task Force Chair, Janie Hopkins (TWDB), briefly summarized groundwater monitoring activities of the TWDB in the Panhandle Region. A total of 499 Ogallala/High Plains, 105 Dockum, and 16 Edwards-Trinity-High Plains Aquifer well samples were collected by the TWDB. Of these, 191 domestic, 133 irrigation, 138 Public Water Supply, 115 stock and 22 industrial wells have been sampled. Approximately 450 samples had low nitrate results, while 170 samples had high nitrate concentrations. An unspecified number of samples were also collected by the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District #1, with more detail provided on these and atrazine analyses, as item V on the agenda..

The **Education Task Force Chair**, Bruce Lesikar (TAEX), emphasized that the time (every five years) in a licensed pesticide applicator's certification process is here, when they need to amass the required Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for re-certification. Therefore, TAEX has a need for volunteers to provide appropriate presentations on pesticides and water quality to this group. Mary Ketchersid is collecting and coordinating names and presentation topics, and these should be provided as soon as possible. Most of these efforts will be provided locally, at county and statewide meetings, with the groundwater districts already being included to assist with this. The ACS Chair encouraged everyone to support this effort, as this is one of the foundational programs for the subcommittee.

The BMP Task Force Chair, Dr. Joe Peters (TNRCC), provided a handout of a recent EPA request for comments, from the Federal Register. The draft document addresses Non-Point Source control of pollution from agricultural sources, with comments due by 1/16/01. Mr. Musick asked Dr. Lesikar if he had a chance to review this document, and whether it contained anything new. Dr. Lesikar noted that he was aware that this was prepared by North Carolina State University for EPA, and addressed water quality issues of mass loading and discharges to surface water. This is a major issue, as so far they have not been able to reliably quantify agricultural discharge (due to the lack of pesticide use data). Mr. Musick noted this appears to be an important document and it would be in the best interest of the ACS and BMPTF to review it, at least the portions related to BMPs, pesticides and groundwater issues. He then asked for comments/suggestions. Dr. Jones agreed, noting that some of the best agricultural science in the nation is in Texas, and that a Texas perspective should be provided. Things are considerably different in Texas than in North Carolina, where this was developed, and that Texas shouldn't just take EPA's or North Carolina's word for it. The ACS Chair asked the BMP Chair to prepare a charge for the BMPTF to prepare comments for the ACS to vote on by the next meeting. Anyone interested in taking part in this effort should contact Dr. Peters.

State Management Plan Task Force: The SMP Chair, Dr. Ambrose Charles (TDA), was not present, and there was nothing new to report.

Data Evaluation and Interpretation Task Force (DEITF): Chairman, Dr. Allan Jones (TAES), mentioned the meeting of the task force immediately following the ACS meeting. The DEITF will address the charges and reports for Tulia and Dimmitt, and report back to the ACS at the next meeting.

III. FY01 Sampling Strategy

Alan Cherepon (TNRCC), summarized the draft sampling plan for FY01, highlighting the primary objectives provided in the handout to the subcommittee. Sampling activities were prioritized, with continued cooperative ambient monitoring and the investigation of atrazine detects in Plainview, Tulia and Dimmitt at the top of the list. Other items included continued monitoring at Friona, investigation of detects at Hereford and Dumas, Follow-up sampling at wells having atrazine detects above 0.3 ppb from the Panhandle cooperative monitoring program, completion of vulnerable area monitoring in Hidalgo County, and follow-up sampling at wells with atrazine detects in the Interagency Pesticide Database (IPD).

Barry Miller (TAGD) commented on the large number of TWDB samples in the Panhandle region that exceeded the MCL for nitrates, as noted in the SSTF update. Mr. Miller noted that it appears nitrates are a greater health concern and bigger issue than atrazine. He asked if anyone even knew the health hazards of atrazine, with the Chair pointing out that it is a suspected carcinogen. Mr. Miller asked whether the nitrate issue should be addressed in the CEU course request made by Dr. Lesikar, earlier in the meeting. The SSTF may be the best group to address this issue.

Janie Hopkins noted that the TWDB is finished with sampling in the Panhandle and would be sampling in the Hickory aquifer in the Hill Country of Central Texas and the Brazos River Basin next, followed by sampling the Gulf Coast aquifer by next summer.

The Chair finished by noting that the Subcommittee needs to continue its work on the response component of the PMP and the ambient monitoring component. He then discussed the reasoning for the FY01 sampling strategy priorities, and if any changes should be made, possibly upgrading only the follow-up sampling of detects in the Panhandle cooperative monitoring program. He asked if there were any changes to the proposed strategy, and since there were none, asked that it be approved by the ACS as is. The FY01 Sampling Strategy was thus approved as presented.

IV. IPD Update Report

Dr. Peters was to present an update on the Interagency Pesticide Database (IPD), but noted that the scheduling was a little pre-mature. A significant amount of analytical data was entered by a summer intern, but well data entry was not completed. The update report should be ready for next meeting.

V. Panhandle Cooperative Atrazine Monitoring Update

Mr. Cherepon provided a handout and map for the subcommittee members detailing the essential information related to TNRCC's immunoassay analysis of samples collected by the TWDB and High Plains Underground Water Conservation District #1. Twenty of over 500 samples had atrazine detects at or above 0.3 ppb, the cut off point at which lab confirmation analysis comes back as a non-detect. These wells are recommended for follow-up sampling, with most of them centering around Castro County, and stretching from Deaf Smith to Hale Counties. This trend coincides with the PWS systems having atrazine detects. Since this report covers the period from 3/18/00 to 8/16/00, approximately 70 additional samples have come in since. Also, approximately another 25 wells sampled by the HPUWCD#1 recently have received state well numbers, latitudes and longitudes, and were not included in this preliminary report. The final report for the Panhandle sampling should be completed for the next ACS meeting, and will include approximately 95 more data points.

VI. Public Comment

There were no public comments at this meeting.

VII. Announcements

Ms. Hopkins announced the TWDB will release several publications this year, primarily on modeling of the major and minor aquifers of Texas. Dr. Jones asked if this work in any way addressed pesticide issues the ACS is working on. The Chair and Ms. Hopkins replied that these reports probably won't address water quality issues, but could possibly be addressed in future work. Lynne Fahlquist, USGS, commented that USGS's NAWQA program is, and will continue to address water quality issues, including contaminant migration estimates for various portions of specific aquifers.

The FY01 1st quarter meeting of the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee is scheduled for January 4, 2001 at 10AM, in Building F, Room 2210. The Texas Groundwater Protection Committee meeting will follow at 1PM, at the same location as the ACS meeting. This was not announced at the meeting, since it was scheduled during the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee meeting following the ACS meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

Recorded and transcribed by Alan Cherepon.

Attachments

Presented to subcommittee members only