

AGRICULTURAL CHEMICAL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:

10:00 a.m., January 4, 2001

LOCATION:

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

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

The FY01 Second 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]
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board [TSSWCB]

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
Richard Egg	Member, TSSWCB, Temple

AGENCY STAFF

Debbie Danford	TDA, Austin
B.O. Spoons	TDA, Austin
Monty Dozier	TAEX, College Station
Joe Peters	TNRCC, Austin
Alan Cherepon	TNRCC, Austin
Jim Thomas	TNRCC, Austin
Chuck Dvorsky	TNRCC, Austin

INTERESTED PARTIES

Denise Rhodes
Mary Kelly
George Caldwell

Syngenta, Austin
Texas Center for Policy Study
Texas Farm Bureau

MEETING SUMMARY:

I. Opening Remarks

Steve Musick (TNRCC) called the meeting to order by welcoming everyone to the meeting, with each subcommittee member introducing themselves to the audience. Richard Egg sat in for Kevin Wagner, TSSWCB, Temple, while Murray Walton, TSPCB, Austin, was the only member not in attendance. 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 should continue either in the Hill Country or the Gulf Coast aquifer beginning March 2001. They would have a more detailed update at the next meeting. Mr. Musick recommended the SSTF have a meeting prior to starting up the monitoring in March, so as to get input from the Extension Service and Soil and Water Conservation Board for atrazine use in the Hill Country region. This will enable a better decision as to which samples to collect an additional volume for immunoassay analysis.

This was followed by the Chair asking Mr. Cherepon, TNRCC, to provide a brief update on TNRCC's scheduled sampling and investigative activities in the Panhandle. Mr. Cherepon summarized plans for January monitoring at Friona, Tulia and Dimmitt, investigative work at Plainview, and possibly Hereford.

The **Education Task Force Chair**, Bruce Lesikar (TAEX), mentioned Mr. Cherepon providing him with an electronic slide-show on the Pesticide Management Plan and atrazine detect investigations in the Panhandle, for use in the licensed pesticide applicator's re-certification process and county agent training programs. Dana Porter (TAEX) is also preparing to conduct several water quality presentations in the Lubbock area in the spring, and will also be using some of the materials provided in Mr. Cherepon's slide-show on the PMP and the Panhandle atrazine investigations.

The **BMP Task Force Chair**, Dr. Joe Peters (TNRCC), provided a handout of comments received from three ACS members related to an EPA request for comments on a draft document that addresses Non-Point Source control of pollution from agricultural sources, with comments due by 1/16/01. Mr. Musick allowed several minutes for the subcommittee to review the comments and prepare questions/comments on them. After a few minor comments were voiced for recommended changes, Mr. Musick suggested these changes be made, along with adding forthcoming comments

by the TSSWCB. Once completed, these would be delivered to EPA by the due date, as submitted by the ACS.

State Management Plan Task Force: The SMP Chair, Dr. Ambrose Charles (TDA), was not present, so the Subcommittee Chair summarized that the Texas Generic PMP was in the printing process, and should be completed during the next week or two. Copies will be distributed to respective agencies and entities.

Data Evaluation and Interpretation Task Force (DEITF): Chairman, Dr. Allan Jones (TAES), summarized the meeting of the task force immediately following the previous ACS meeting in October. The DEITF then prepared the reports for Tulia and Dimmitt, and sent the drafts out for comments. Only two comments were received suggesting minor changes to the reports. He provided handouts for subcommittee members and read through the conclusions and recommendations sections from each of the reports, starting with Tulia.

III. Tulia/Dimmitt Charges to DEITF

Conclusions and recommendations were as follows:

Tulia

- Atrazine detection in groundwater is confined to the well field area south of town
- atrazine is likely from a point source
- migration likely down alongside PWS or abandoned well casings or possibly by natural percolation through the soils and formations to the water table
- Concentrations are below the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for atrazine
- Recommend annual or quarterly monitoring of impacted wells, PWS well 14, and a private well and adjacent wells
- City should implement a Source Water/Well Head Protection Program, including addressing abandoned well plugging
- Regional educational efforts for atrazine applicators on the use, storage and disposal of this pesticide
- Conduct an annual atrazine use survey

Dimmitt

- 3 areas with atrazine detected in groundwater
- All concentrations are below the MCL
- two of the areas have playa lake/tailwater ponds with relatively high atrazine concentrations, all three areas have adjacent croplands where atrazine is used, and is the likely source of contamination
- Migration likely down alongside PWS well casing or by natural percolation to the water table
- No mandatory BMPs recommended, as concentrations are below the MCL
- Sample wells annually or quarterly if possible
- Conduct regional education on atrazine use, storage and disposal
- The city should implement a Source Water/Well Head Protection Program, including proper

- abandonment of wells
- An atrazine use survey should be conducted annually

Following these summaries, the Chair asked for comments and any discussion. Mr. Musick recommended changing the first recommendation for Dimmitt from no mandatory BMPs to recommending voluntary BMPs. TDA suggested their name be removed from the last recommendation of each report, so that the task force or ACS should arrange for appropriate agencies to conduct annual atrazine use surveys of the property adjacent to wells with detects. Someone like the NRCS/Ag Statistics Service are better for such a survey, as any such surveys done by TDA become available through the open record access process, and landowners would not be as willing to participate should TDA conduct the surveys. Monty Dozier (TAEX) suggested USDA/NRCS should be included in the source water/well head protection recommendation, for input on establishing 2000-foot radius agricultural use buffer zones around PWS wells in these areas, under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Barry Miller (TAGD) also suggested a sentence be added to the Source Water/Well Head Protection recommendation to address education on abandoned well plugging requirements. Bruce Lesikar (TAEX) suggested removal of some wording in the Dimmitt Report, in the paragraph between the findings and recommendations, "...irrigation runoff transports and concentrates it into the playa..." to remove the words "and concentrates" from this sentence.

Mr. Musick asked whether there was any discussion at the DEITF meeting on monitoring soils at and around playa lakes/tailwater ponds, and to try and determine migration of atrazine into the subsurface, by coordination with the USGS NAWQA program. Dr. Jones said the USGS has contacted Dr. Senseman at the TAES about this type of study. Mr. Musick thought this would also be brought up to the full committee during the afternoon meeting, and that TNRCC staff should also communicate with the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District #1 on this issue, as they have been involved in playa lake studies in the past and may want to participate in this as well.

Due to the tight scheduling and need to move on these recommendations to initiate educational efforts, the Chair recommended these suggestions be added to the reports and for the Subcommittee to vote on accepting them now. The motion was made, and passed unanimously. These changes will be made by the DEITF and given to the Chair, and recommendations initiated, as soon as practical.

IV. Panhandle Cooperative Atrazine Monitoring

Mr. Cherepon provided a handout report and map for the subcommittee members detailing the essential information related to the Panhandle cooperative atrazine monitoring program. This included TNRCC's immunoassay analysis of samples primarily collected by the TWDB and High Plains Underground Water Conservation District #1. Twenty-six of the 759 well 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, and the largest vulnerable area and high-use area for

atrazine in Texas. The report covers the sampling period from 3/18/00 to 10/22/00. The total number of atrazine detects and non-detects were provided, along with an explanation on the limitations of the analytical method. The cooperative effort has saved the State considerable time and money, and has enabled a large portion of the State's groundwater to be screened for potential atrazine problems. This also helps fulfill requirements of the State Pesticide Management Plan to monitor groundwater resources. The ACS encourages continued cooperative pesticide monitoring efforts of vulnerable and high-use areas of the state.

Following the summary, several questions and comments were made. The Chair commented on the sparsity of samples in the north-central part of the screened area, and suggested we contact the Northern Panhandle Underground Water Conservation District to see if they are planning any monitoring in their district, and whether they would like to do a similar cooperative effort in their area. Bruce Lesikar asked why there was a greater percentage of atrazine detects by TNRCC's sampling. Mr. Cherepon and the Chair said the sampling conducted by TNRCC were in areas where there were confirmed detects in PWS wells, and was not a blind monitoring effort. Mr. Musick also explained in greater detail the immunoassay results, as compared to the lab method, and how the higher concentrations provide a higher degree of certainty of actual parent atrazine being present and detected by lab confirmation analysis. The last question was whether there were any QA/QC problems during the project. Mr. Cherepon said the field blanks all came up as non-detects, duplicate samples were all very near in concentration for detects, and only one batch of samples experienced problems during the calibration run. Two of the calibration values were out of accepted ranges, but were within acceptable values for the others. Also, when compared with concentrations from the same wells in previous analyses by both immunoassay and lab analyses, they were very close, indicating no serious QA/QC concerns were encountered, that these values were close approximations, and within acceptable limitations for a screening program.

V. IPD Update Report

Dr. Peters provided a handout and summary on the Interagency Pesticide Database (IPD). The summary table on the second page identified the number of data points added since the database was last updated, including some 1000 added samples and wells, approximately 3,500 analytes tested for, and 17 added confirmed detects of four pesticides, with atrazine and prometon being detected the most. A question was raised as to why there were so few verified detects in the newer data. This was because there was no time or resources with which to conduct confirmation sampling and analysis, but should be scheduled for the present or following fiscal year.

VI. Public Comment

There were no public comments at this meeting.

VII. Announcements

Barry Miller announced the passing away of Wayne Wyatt, the longtime director of the

HPUWCD#1, and how his presence will be missed by all. Mr. Musick noted several water-related meetings, such as the National Groundwater Protection Committee, American Drinking Water Standards and others, and would provide details at the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee meeting in the afternoon.

Donnie Dippel (TDA) mentioned the Drinking Water Quality Advising Committee meeting on 1/9/01, and the Surface Water Protection Committee meeting, at the Blacklands Research Center, Temple on 1/12/01.

Monty Dozier said there would be a public meeting in Hillsboro on Tuesday, 1/9/01, at 7PM, on atrazine TMDLs for Aquilla. Bruce Lesikar noted TAEX/TAES will be having their annual meeting at Texas A&M University the week of 1/15/01. There will be several presentations on water issues that would be of interest to members of the ACS. Representatives from the Panhandle Region would be attending, as well as speaking. He also mentioned that Mary Ketchersid (TAES) has prepared a study guide to accompany the Abandoned well video.

Dr. Jones mentioned the TWRI is interested in getting a broader participation from state agencies, would appreciate any contacts, and that any interested parties should contact him. Mr. Cherepon brought attention to an EPA request for participation in an educational effort related to children and pesticide labels, as appeared in the 12/26/00 Federal Register Environmental Documents (handout provided). Mr. Dippel also noted a recent re-certification training in Friona, and that they would be conducting similar workshops in Tulia and Dimmitt this year. The Chair requested TDA provide responses on this training when completed.

The FY01 3rd quarter meeting of the Agricultural Chemicals Subcommittee is scheduled for April 19, 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

Several presented to subcommittee members only