

Secretaries' Science Advisory Board

MEETING SUMMARY Webex Event Virtual Meeting Monday, February 1, 2021 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretaries' Science Advisory Board (SAB) met on Monday, February 1, 2021 by Webex Event as a virtual public meeting. SAB members in attendance were: Tom Augspurger, PhD (Chair); Viney Aneja, PhD; Richard DiGiulio, PhD; Jamie DeWitt, PhD; David Dorman, PhD; Elaina Kenyon, PhD; Gina Kimble, PhD; Detlef Knappe, PhD; Thomas Starr, PhD; Betsey Tilson, MD, MPH; and John Vandenberg, PhD. Also in attendance were Michael Pjetraj; Brian Wrenn; Michael Scott; Julie Grzyb; Zack Moore, MD; Virginia Guidry, PhD; and DEQ and DHHS support staff: Dylan Friedenber; Ellen Lorscheider; Bridget Shelton; Beth Dittman; Amy Risen, PhD; Heidi Cox; Joelle Burleson; Zaynab Nasif; Mercedes Hernandez; and Louise Hughes.

I. Call to Order (Chairman Tom Augspurger)

Chairman Augspurger called the meeting to order.

II. Review and approve agenda

Chairman Augspurger asked if there were any modifications to the meeting agenda sent on November 25 and posted on the Board webpage. There were no changes; Dr. Vandenberg moved to accept the agenda as proposed, Dr. Kimble seconded, and the agenda was approved by unanimous rollcall vote.

III. Ethics Statement

Chairman Augspurger read the ethics statement and reminded the members that if anyone had any conflict of interest, or issues for which a conflict may be perceived, to indicate so. Dr. Jamie DeWitt explained that she is currently working on research on PFOS/PFAS, receives funding from the NC General Assembly and the federal government for said research, serves as an expert witness, and advises on the topic via a standing committee of the National Academies of Science. Dr. Knappe also explained that he receives funding from the NC General Assembly and from federal agencies for PFAS research. There were no other potential conflicts expressed.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes for December 7, 2021

The draft meeting minutes were circulated to all members for review on January 22, 2021. Chairman Augspurgen stated Dr. Virginia Guidry emailed two corrections of attendees' degrees, and he asked for any additional corrections or questions on the minutes. Dr. Gina Kimble noticed a misspelling of Chemours on page 6, and Dr. John Vandenberg noted on page 10, the word "particular" should be changed to "particulate." John Vandenberg moved to approve the minutes with the specified changes; Dr. DeWitt seconded, and the edited December minutes were adopted unanimously by rollcall vote.

V. DEQ and DHHS updates

Chairman Augspurgen asked for the DEQ update.

DEQ Update:

- Michael Scott (Director, Division of Waste Management) provided the update.
- Secretary Regan is scheduled to go through a confirmation hearing for Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this Wednesday. The Secretary expressed his thanks for all of the work this board has done. DEQ will share with the board news on the new DEQ Secretary when that is announced.
- COVID19: All board and commission hearings and public hearings will continue to be virtual.
- DEQ toxicologist position: DEQ is expecting to make an announcement regarding hiring for this position in the next few weeks.
- PFAS: There is a public comment period through March 16th with a public hearing Wednesday, February 2, for proposed groundwater standards. Anticipate approval by the EMC in its May meeting.

Chairman Augspurgen asked for questions for Michael Scott from the board. There being none, he asked Dr. Zack Moore for DHHS' update.

DHHS Update:

- Dr. Zack Moore (State Epidemiologist and Epidemiology Section Chief, Division of Public Health, DHHS) provided the update.

- COVID-19 status: Continue to see high rates of transmission in every county. There has been a decline in the number of new cases, hospitalizations and intensive care admissions. Mortalities continue to be very high.
- Emerging variants of COVID-19: There are at least three particular variants that are likely to spread more quickly and might result in increased transmission. The data suggest that vaccines will recognize those variants although there might be a decrease in protection. Surveillance continues.
- Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch staff continues to participate on the COVID-19 response. Participating in the CDC national wastewater surveillance of COVID-19 and consultation on workplace clusters.
- PFAS: Developing a general health presentation that could be provided to community groups. Continue to work with the PFAS Testing Network and national researchers, working with other state partners including Michigan and sharing lessons learned.
- Well water survey: Survey sent to about 12,000 residents with private wells. Received feedback from about 1,400 so far. Will share preliminary results with this board in the future.
- Building resilience and environmental health capacity grant from CDC: Will include environmental health data dashboard modeled after the CDC's environmental health tracking program to make this data more accessible to the public. Will strengthen the data capacity to provide access to safe drinking water. Grant will also help fortify environmental health resilience in response to natural disasters.
- Climate change and health: Working with UNC Institute for the Environment to develop a call to action to minimize health effects of climate change on children age 0-8.

Chairman Augspurger asked for questions for Dr. Moore. In response to a question from Dr. Aneja, Dr. Moore explained that the national wastewater surveillance system is not based on a concern of wastewater virus transmission but as a way to track incidence without having to rely on individual test results.

Chairman Augspurger thanked Dr. Moore and Michael Scott for the updates.

VI. Hexavalent chromium – Review and proposed concurrence on Secretaries’ Science Advisory Board response to inquiry on hexavalent chromium

Chairman Augspurger explained that he would review the few consensus edits made on the November draft at the December meeting and then would draw attention to the discussion the board initiated but did not complete at the December meeting. After work through that open item, the floor will be open again for any further edits of the recommendations document. Chairman Augspurger reviewed edits agreed to in December at these lines of the draft, and he showed the edits on the screen:

Line 254: Deleted sentence. No questions about the edit.

Line 491: “..mode of action” is singular, not plural.

Line 534: The agreed upon edit from December was further edited as suggested by Dr. Dorman to note that the designation was from IARC, and to change "Group A" to "Group 1." Dr. Tom Starr agreed. Dr. Vandenberg suggested adding what Group 1 is, so "carcinogenic to humans" was added, as was the citation for this statement.

Line 1006: Attached comments from public review were color-coded in the draft to denote those from separate commenters. It was suggested in December that a legend for the colors be added, or that the colors be dropped. It was decided that no colors were needed.

Chairman Augspurger next asked Dr. Starr to review the issue we were working on when our time ended at the last meeting.

Line 640: Dr. Starr provided a background on the last proposed edit. The board deliberated about the linear and non-linear approach and wording. Drs. Vandenberg and Starr suggested edits to this section which were displayed in redline / strikeout on the screen for the rest of the board's consideration. Just before break, Drs. Kimble, Knappe, Dorman and DeWitt concurred with the proposed changes, and Chairman Augspurger suggested that the agreed upon edits be revisited after break with a clean version

displayed for consideration. After the break the board came to an agreement on final language for this section, and no further edits were suggested.

Dr. Vandenberg moved to adopt the recommendations as edited today, seconded by Dr. Dorman. The motion was approved by unanimous rollcall vote.

VII. Public Forum

No one registered to speak. Chairman Augspurger opened up the floor for discussion.

The chairman thanked Yalonda, Louise and Mercedes for their support. The next meeting is scheduled for April 5th; it will be a virtual meeting.

Potential for presentations: PFAS – Dr. Sandra Baird and Mark Smith from Massachusetts DEP: not formally invited yet, but are available. Dr. Justin Conley, EPA, is also a possible presenter on mammalian toxicity testing for three environmentally-relevant PFAS, individually and in a mixture, as well as adverse outcome pathway mapping of PFAS.

Dr. Dorman suggested a presentation by the new toxicologist and updates on DHHS climate change initiatives based on the information that was shared earlier during the agency updates.

Dr. Aneja noted that current DEQ Secretary Michael Regan was responsible for the SSAB and he is moving on to lead the EPA. He suggested sending him a congratulatory letter from the board. The chairman offered to draft something for the board to review and approve.

With no further business, Dr. Augspurger suggested a motion to adjourn was in order. Dr. DeWitt moved to adjourn; Dr. Dorman seconded. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 12:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise G. Hughes

Assistant to Sheila Holman, Assistant Secretary for the Environment, DEQ