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North Carolina
Secretaries' Science Advisory Board

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Meeting Minutes

October 1, 2025

Public Meeting

Archdale Ground Floor Hearing Room

10:00 am

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Secretaries' Science Advisory Board (SAB) met on Wednesday, October 1 2025, in person in the Ground Floor Hearing Room on the Archdale Building in a public meeting. SAB members in attendance were Chairperson Tom Augspurger, PhD; Gina Kimble, PhD (via Webex); Elaina Kenyon, PhD, DABT; John Vandenberg, PhD, Jamie DeWitt, PhD (via Webex); Tom Starr, PhD; David Howard, MPH (via Webex); Viney Aneja, PhD. DEQ Staff in attendance were Sushma Masmore PE; Richard Rogers; Frannie Nilsen, PhD; Jared Wilson, MS, Dylan Friedenberg. DHHS staff in attendance were Virginia Guidry, PhD MPH.

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Augspurger called the meeting to order at 10:18am. The hearing room experienced electrical/technical difficulties, so the meeting start time was delayed ~15 minutes.

II. Review and Approve Agenda

Agenda was approved unanimously at 10:22am.

III. Ethics Statement

Read by Chairperson Augspurger at 10:24 am; Dr DeWitt and Dr Vandenberg made statements.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes for April 2, 2025

The minutes from the April 2025 meeting were approved unanimously as written.

V. DEQ / DHHS updates

i. DHHS Updates (meeting recording at [00:11:05](#)).

Provided by Virginia Guidry, the branch head for Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology, DHHS.

• All the federal funding for the Occupational Environmental Epidemiology Branch for the past fiscal year has been received, covering approximately 70% of the positions in the branch.

• DHHS is about 79% federally funded, so they are watching the potential impacts of the federal shutdown.

• **New web tools:**

- [Fish advisory story map](#): interactive webpage to look at locations around the state and see both statewide and site advisories.
- Private well and health store webpage: provides private well testing and treatment guidance and links to the [Be Well Informed tool](#). Downloadable county level data is available in the tool.

• **Buncombe County Survey**

- A Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) survey was conducted in June after [Hurricane Helene in Buncombe County](#).

- Surveyed representative households across Buncombe county (urban and rural).
- Asked about current health needs and impacts they were facing.
- Results will be released by Buncombe County Health and Human Services.

- **Fluoride and 1,4 Dioxane**
 - DHHS is Reviewing recent papers on fluoride in drinking water.
 - NCDHHS received a request to establish a preliminary health goal for 1,4-dioxane in drinking water from the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority.
 - Received letters from the City of Wilmington, New Hanover County Board of Commissioners, and the Southern Environmental Law Center in support.
 - Requests are being discussed and addressed.
- **Environmental Justice**
 - DHHS is the Co-lead of the Governor's Environmental Justice Advisory Council.
 - Documenting promising practices that help bring economic opportunities and promote health in areas disproportionately impacted by environmental issues and carrying out the DHHS EJ Goals.
 - Increasing interactions with local health departments and other partners around environmental quality.
 - Increasing the inclusion of environmental health and quality in community health assessments.
 - Helping to address private well contamination and septic system failures.
- **Heat-Related Illness**
 - DHHS is tracking heat-related illnesses around the state.
 - Since May 1st, over 5600 emergency department visits for heat-related illness statewide.
 - Average weekly rate of 2.6 cases per 100,000 people.
 - 1400 more emergency department visits this year compared to the same time last year.
 - Seeing an average increase of 1.9 degrees Fahrenheit in fall temperatures from 1970 to now.
 - Running a statewide heat health alert system and sending out heat alerts with educational materials.
- **Water Filter Distribution Initiative**
 - Led by the NC Environmental Public Health Tracking program and the private well and health team.
 - Identified communities at higher risk of private well contamination.
 - Partnered with the EJ Community Action Network in Sampson county and the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation in Alamance county.
 - Provided over 500 countertop water pitchers and extra filters for distribution to households with contaminated private well water.
 - Includes educational materials and a survey to ask about usability and provide feedback.
 - Goal is to provide low-cost, easy-to-maintain treatment for households that need it.

ii. **DEQ Updates** (meeting recording at [00:27:01](#)).

Provided by Sushma Masemore, PE, Deputy Secretary for the Environment, NC DEQ

- **PFAS Regulations in North Carolina**
 - North Carolina plans to retain the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for PFOA and PFOS while reviewing the remaining regulations.
 - The state has been preparing for the implementation of drinking water standards under the State Drinking Water Act.
 - **Groundwater Standards**
 - North Carolina has taken the initiative to establish PFAS groundwater standards through the Environmental Management Commission (EMC).
 - The current rule requires the regulation of any contaminants in groundwater above the practical quantification limit (PQL).
 - Rulemaking activities proposed to EMC were adopted in September, codifying PFAS standards for PFOA, PFOS, and GenX.
 - These substances are now regulated at the PQL levels, with GenX regulated at 10 ng/L.
 - The sampling/testing of private wells is ongoing at the request of home and business owners.
 - The Division of Waste Management (DWM) implements the Bernard Allen program for private well users.
 - DWM works with DHHS in sampling, analyzing, and communicating options to homeowners with elevated levels. Some homeowners are on filtration systems, while others are being connected to municipal supply.
 - **Surface Water Rules**
 - DEQ has authority under the Drinking Water Act regarding surface water rules, specifically for industrial effluent and wastewater treatment facilities discharging into state waters.
 - An approach to establish PFAS water quality standards was presented but did not proceed.
 - Instead, the EMC requested rulemaking for minimizing/monitoring PFAS from dischargers. The Division of Water Resources has been working with EMC to present a potential rulemaking package. The Office of State Management, Budget and Fiscal Analysis approved the rulemaking.



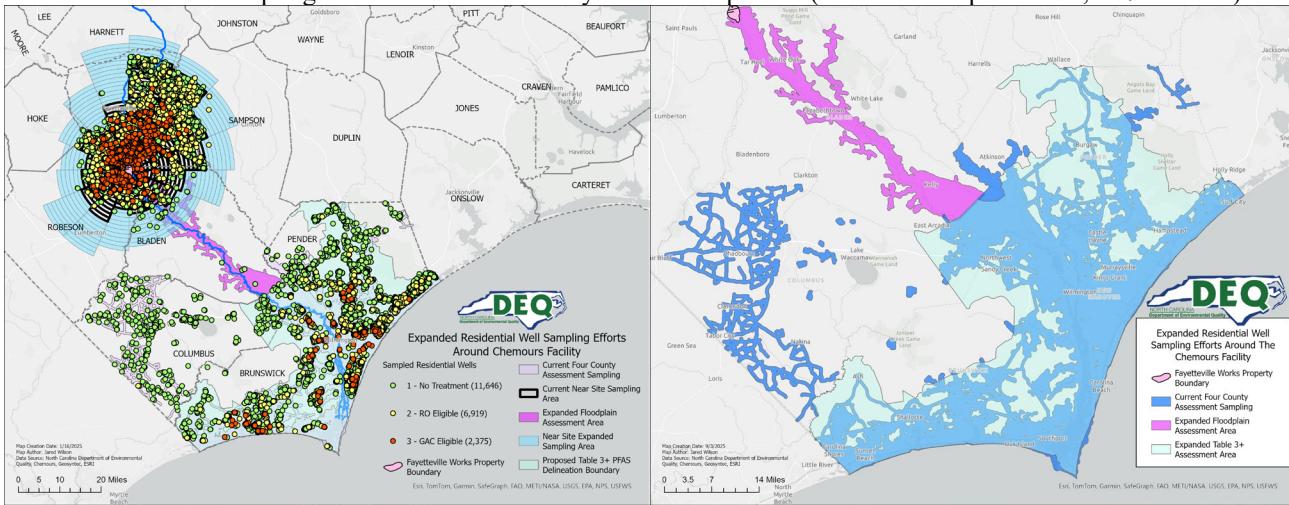
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- **Chemours Updates**

- An update on the Chemours private well testing program was provided using the map below.
- The sampling area related to the facility has been expanded (lower eastern part of NC, ~10 counties).



- The blue area on the map represents the expanded delineated boundaries for additional home sites eligible for private well testing under the consent order.
- The pink area indicates the floodplain area where contamination may have spread through past storms.
- **The Lower Cape Fear region** (New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender, and Columbus counties) required Chemours to further assess the extent of their contamination in 2023.
 - 14-15,000 additional home sites will now be eligible for testing.
 - A public virtual meeting will be held next week to convey this information.
 - Ongoing compliance-related activities are occurring near and away from the site, including permit applications and modifications.
 - The primary trigger point for qualification of the consent order in the Lower Cape Fear is the chemical PFMOAA at 10 parts per trillion.
 - NC and DEQ are awaiting the release of EPA Office of Research and Development's PFMOAA toxicity assessment.
 - The UNC Policy Collaboratory and DEQ Applied Science Fellowship.
 - Dr. Genereux from NC State will conduct groundwater-related PFAS research.

- **Current DEQ Studies & Programs**

- Two special studies were conducted:
 1. A fish study in the Cape Fear River and an analysis of saltwater fish will be presented today.
 2. A study related to the generation of biosolids from wastewater treatment facilities was funded.
 - The review and results are being finalized and will be released in the coming weeks.

- **1,4-Dioxane**

- The EMC has requested monitoring and minimization of 1,4-dioxane from affected sources (wastewater dischargers). A rulemaking package has been certified and approved and is in front of the committee.
- There is a challenge in the NC State Superior Court regarding a permit with 1,4-dioxane limits.
 - EPA is holding a public hearing on the issuance of the Asheboro permit on October 22nd at Randolph Community College.
 - EPA plans to review the health assessment of 1,4-dioxane and the methodology used.
 - The board is asked to provide input on the scientific reasonableness of conclusions regarding 1,4-dioxane.

- **Climate-Related Updates**

- EPA proposed rescinding the endangerment finding for greenhouse gases and repealing the GHG vehicle standards.
- North Carolina's Division of Air Quality submitted a comment letter focusing on the GHG standards, noting that repealing them would negatively impact NO_x, SO₂, and VOC emissions, potentially affecting North Carolina's ozone standard maintenance, especially in the Mecklenburg County area.
- The department is working to build climate change resiliency, particularly after Hurricane Helene, focusing on upgrading water and wastewater systems and managing debris.
- North Carolina received \$650 million for upgrading centralized septic systems, water, and wastewater systems.
- Dr. Kathy Dello, formerly at the NC State Climate Office, is now the Assistant Secretary for Resiliency at DEQ.



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Action Item:

VI. 1,4-Dioxane in Drinking Water Legislative Report Review (meeting recording at [00:58:20](#)).

The Board revisited the DEQ request to review the legislative report and provide a formal response. The Board discussed noteworthy items to include in their recommendation.

[1,4-Dioxane Charge Presentation \(originally presented 02April2025\)](#)

Informational Items:

VII. PFAS Rulemaking Status Presentation (meeting recording at [02:11:37](#)).

DEQ staff provided a status update on the rulemaking progress for the 02L groundwater standards and the federal MCLs.

[Groundwater Standards PFAS Update Presentation](#)
[Public Water PFAS Update Presentation](#)

VIII. DEQ Water and Fish Study Presentation (meeting recording at [02:26:08](#)).

Dr. Frannie Nilsen presented saltwater fish data from the lower Cape Fear River.

[Saltwater Fish and Water Data Presentation](#)

IX. Chemours Consent Order toxicity study status update (meeting recording at [02:55:56](#)).

Dr. Frannie Nilsen presented updated information regarding the Consent Order toxicity studies.

[PFAS CO Tox Study Update Presentation](#)
[Rat Immunotoxicity Results for NafionBP2 Presentation](#)

X. Public Forum (meeting recording at [03:35:09](#)).

There were no members of the public signed up to speak at the meeting.

XI. Adjourn (meeting recording at [03:36:42](#)).

Chairperson Augspurger adjourned the meeting at 2:48 pm. The next meeting will occur on December 3, 2025, in the Archdale Building Ground Floor Hearing Room.



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