

Minutes for the Mosquito Control for the Twenty-First Century Task Force Meeting

August 10, 2021, 12:00p.m. via Zoom.

Beth Card called meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. Routine items:

1. Like previous meetings, this meeting is being hosted as a Zoom webinar. All task force members and state staff are panelists and can participate freely. Everyone else is participating as attendees and can post questions through the Q&A function.
2. Will first vote on minutes, then present miscellaneous updates, and then discuss, initiate, and vote on proposed subcommittee assignments. The task force may not need the full time blocked off today (two hours).
3. DCR's designee, Steve Doody, will be moving on from his task force position and will be replaced by Nicole Keleher, the forest health director at DCR. Nicole Keleher introduced herself and provided her background.

Jennifer Pederson noted her name was spelled wrong in last roll call but moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Lebeaux seconded the motion.

Minute approval vote: Kevin Cranston (aye), John Lebeaux (aye), Nicole Keleher (abstain), Kathy Baskin (aye), no vote heard from Eve Schluter or Heidi Porter, Derek Brindisi (abstain), no vote heard from Julia Blatt or Tonya Colpitts, Anita Deeley (aye), Russell Hopping (aye), Kim LeBeau (abstain), Bob Mann (abstain), Priscilla Matton (aye), Brad Mitchell (abstain), Jennifer Pederson (aye), Richard Pollack (aye), Helen Poynton (abstain), Heidi Ricci (aye), Stephen Rich (aye), no vote heard from Richard Robinson, Sam Telford (aye).

Updates:

1. Status update on EEE from Vice Chair Kevin Cranston.
 - a. Mosquito abundance being observed is based on submitted specimens (mosquito, human, and mammal) to the state public health lab as well as data from DPH long term traps. We are collecting DPH traps directly, which gives us some comparability across seasons.
 - b. Collected over 4,000 pools for testing at state public health lab. Pools are a group of similar or identical species that have been sorted by a given trap, generally about 50 mosquitoes per pool. The whole pool gets tested for virus presence.
 - i. Have yet to see a single Eastern Equine Encephalitis ("EEE") positive pool.
 - ii. Have seen 30 West Nile Virus ("WNV") positive pools.
 - iii. Tested 6 mammal submissions, generally from horses, and yet to see a single EEE or WNV positive specimen.
 - iv. Over 85 human specimens and yet to see a single EEE or WNV human positive.
 - c. We are at the point in the season when human positive tests tend to emerge, which can occur through August and September. The mosquito abundance is trending up significantly for all EEE vectors.

- i. Very dry/hot spring and wet/cool summer, but heavy precipitation events have driven mosquito abundance for a number of important species.
- ii. In particular, we look at *Culiseta melanura* (bird biting mosquito). Starting in early July, we've seen a steep/steady trend up in abundance of these mosquitoes.
 - 1. This has hit a 5-year mean, even higher than 10-year mean in terms of overall abundance. Can't predict future but looks like it continues to be on increase. Has exceeded 2020 mean.
- iii. Another species is *Coquillettidia perturbans* (bridge vector that bites mosquitoes and mammals). This is often one species associated with mammals/humans getting EEE.
 - 1. This mosquito has also hit the 2020 mean and has been increasing quite dramatically in the last two weeks, probably associated with some of the rain events. *Aedes vexans* and *Ochlerotatus* also seeing dramatic increases.
- iv. Good news is we're not seeing EEE in mammals or humans, but the bad news is that if there were significant infections in birds, conditions are in place for bridging events.
- d. Heidi Ricci asked if the population number data can be shared and said this was a very helpful update. Kevin Cranston said they can be made available to task force members and will send to Caroline Higley.
- e. Heidi Ricci also asked if they're targeting responses to WNV? Kevin Cranston noted that DPH is seeing WNV pools in 8 counties. Recommendations stay the same; largely associated with human habitation and often in urban environments.
- f. No other questions.

Beth Card moved to the establishment of subcommittees. As a reminder, the goal is to create subcommittees that will work in smaller groups to focus on subsets of required recommendations given the wide range of scope that we have before us. Beth expressed appreciation for the task force again for its willingness to volunteer and commit time. Members were very generous with offerings to participate. The proposal to create 4 subcommittees was organized around statutorily-required recommendations. Each will meet twice per month until recommendations are finalized. The full task force at the same time will continue to meet once per month and during these meetings, a portion of time will be devoted to subcommittee updates and discussions of challenging topics. Each subcommittee should probably have at least 4 members plus 1 chair. Subcommittees will be a bit of extra work for chair, who is responsible for leading the subcommittee with lots of support from its members, including helping to establish the direction and strategy of the subcommittee and providing full updates to the task force. Members are responsible for attending all meetings to the extent they can and then vote on decisions for those subcommittees.

The plan today is to share the proposal now and give task force members 10 minutes to sit and read quietly before coming back to talk about things. EEA was more or less able to give everyone their strong preferences across the board, including where people expressed strong

preference for chairpersonship and membership. EEA tried to keep individual membership to 3 subcommittees or fewer, as it's a big time commitment. EEA also tried to ensure an odd number of members on each subcommittee to avoid tie votes. If anyone wants to see the survey responses, she's happy to share. Caroline Higley added a legal reminder that the voting in each subcommittee will be by simple majority, and quorum will be determined by number of folks who are actually on subcommittee.

Heidi Ricci raised question on process; if any subcommittee do not come to consensus on any key point, can they submit alternative thoughts even if an odd number? Maybe cross bridge when we get there? Beth Card said the task force as a whole will be making final decision, so subcommittee will put things forth to task force, who will ultimately vote and decide. Can use monthly updates, too, to bring up challenging conversations about issues and let the full task force weigh in. Goal is to ensure that everyone is heard so people can make fully informed decisions in the end. Brad Mitchell requested confirmation if subcommittees are mainly advisory? Beth said yes; votes will put a finer point on where subcommittees land on certain issues, but final product back to Legislature will be from the full task force. There could be an option to put minority positions forward so task force is aware.

Caroline then screenshared the assignments. Took break at 12:27 p.m. so task force members could review. Beth Card called people back at 12:37 p.m. Caroline added that she can track change edit the document as discussion goes so people can follow changes. Reminder that everyone has the ability to attend any of the meetings and participate; but the proposal on screen contains the voting members of each subcommittee. Heidi Porter had expressed interest in mosquito control policy but was not chosen; if multiple people were chosen, was a little confused about how rankings were done. With multiple folks on each one, a willingness to pull people in from pool of "willing" folks would be appreciated. Caroline said it was not intentional to exclude and can make the change now. Tried to first take into account the strong preferences. Beth Card said can take care of adjustments and then go back and figure out about odd/even numbers of committee members.

Heidi Ricci said she appreciated effort going into this. Fine with her assignments. So much integration between different subcommittees; as she looked at policy subcommittee, wanted to make sure we're not narrowing their charge too much. Wants to ensure that if group comes up with ideas to discuss beyond just the specific recommendations assigned to each subcommittee, that we can include some of those. Beth Card said that was helpful; happy to think about it and hear from others. Noted that we have set parameters around what we think charge of subcommittee ought to be in line with legislation, and of course there will be areas where we may expand or one subcommittee's conversation may bleed into another's. Tried to set a framework to keep conversations from becoming unwieldy, but to extent each subcommittee wishes to branch out into broader area, worth highlighting at task force updates.

Brad Mitchell said on best practices, can remove him because large group and pretty well balanced; think it could get in way of being effective. Noted that didn't wish to wordsmith descriptions. Agree with Heidi Ricci and don't think there's an issue with going a bit beyond if

there is consensus from subcommittee members. Stephen Rich interpreted bullet points to be guides rather than boundaries, so consistent with how he made decision on how he could serve.

Beth Card didn't see any other hands raised. Asked how members felt about having even numbers of subcommittee members now that adjustments were made? Brad Mitchell thinks these are advisory, so fine for even number. Would look to have minority opinions reflected in what's brought back to task force; won't always agree and that's okay. Important that all of task force reflect minority opinions as well when they report. Bob Mann agreed with Brad Mitchell's point. Heidi Ricci thirded this opinion.

Caroline Higley added that if there are people who really want to be on a particular subcommittee, or if folks think they're overrepresented, please use this as an opportunity to weigh in.

Heidi Ricci asked if there were any task force members who did not respond to survey. Caroline Higley thought everyone did respond. Didn't get all state government designees to respond but she had follow-up conversations with those folks to confirm their perspectives. Heidi Porter indicated concern about even numbered subcommittees for voting. Brad Mitchell pointed out Robert's Rules allow even number when advisory only and not making policy decisions. Beth Card asked Heidi Porter if she felt more comfortable given that the full task force will be making the final decision. Heidi Porter said she was fine with it but wanted to put her thoughts on the table. Heidi Ricci asked a question about general scope of work – is the overarching goal for recommendations public and environmental health or is it also nuisance control, or is that to be discussed among subcommittees and provide comment back to overall task force? Caroline Higley said it involves both and may be up to subcommittees the mechanisms which drive subsets of components of recommendations.

Beth Card then moved to individual subcommittee discussion. Reminder of roll call for every subcommittee. Discussed the subcommittees as follows:

1. Mosquito Control Policy Structure. No discussion or comments. Brad Mitchell made motion to approve, seconded by Rich Pollack. Roll call: Cranston (aye), Lebeaux (aye), Keleher (aye), Baskin (aye), Schluter (didn't hear), Porter (aye), Brindisi (didn't hear), Blatt (none), Colpitts (none), Deeley (aye), Hopping (aye), LeBeau (aye), Mann (aye), Matton (aye), Mitchell (aye), Pederson (aye), Pollack (aye), Poynton (aye), Ricci (aye), Rich (aye), Robinson (didn't hear), Telford (aye). Motion carries.
2. Local Engagement. No discussion or comments from task force members. Caroline Higley noted member of public question; Henry asked if number of members is fixed? Caroline Higley said the count of persons per subcommittee was defined based on interest, not a predetermined number. Jennifer Pederson moved to approve, seconded by Kathy Baskin. Roll call: Cranston (aye), Lebeaux (aye), Keleher (aye), Baskin (aye), Schluter (didn't hear), Porter (aye), Brindisi (aye), Blatt and Colpitts (didn't hear), Deeley (didn't hear), Hopping (aye), LeBeau (aye), Mann (aye), Matton (aye), Mitchell (aye), Pederson (aye), Pollack (aye), Poynton (aye), Ricci (aye), Rich (aye), Robinson (didn't hear), Telford (aye). Motion carries.

3. Pesticide Selection. Helen Poynton asked if whether there would be room for proposing a tiered approach, such as these are the safest pesticides we could use and would use them in certain situations, and then if things worsened, move up to more hazardous type insecticides. Would that fall within scope of this subcommittee? Beth Card said this was a good question, and to the extent there are conversations or ideas that cross subcommittees, would certainly note there is opportunity for that and will also bring ideas together as needed in full task force meetings. Rich Pollack said that rather than concentrate just on safest, thought subcommittee might best consider an array of issues, with safety prioritization one of them, but also efficacy, cost, and other possibilities. Should leave it open for subcommittee to consider. Beth Card thought that was also a good suggestion. Jennifer Pederson said this was one thing ERG is looking at for the report and will have report before subcommittees start. Will ERG be available after report is delivered? Caroline Higley said she hoped to report back on that soon. No further discussion or comments. Jennifer Pederson moved to accept, seconded by Steven Rich. Roll call: Cranston (aye), Lebeaux (aye), Keleher (aye), Baskin (aye), Schluter (didn't hear), Porter (aye), Brindisi Blatt and Colpitts (didn't hear), Deeley (aye), Hopping (aye), LeBeau (aye), Mann (aye), Matton (aye), Mitchell (aye), Pederson (aye), Pollack (aye), Poynton (aye), Ricci (aye), Rich (aye), Robinson (didn't hear), Telford (aye).
4. Best Practices. No discussion or comments. Rich Pollack moved to accept, Brad Mitchell seconded. Roll call: Cranston (aye), Lebeaux (aye), Keleher (aye), Baskin (aye), Schluter (didn't hear), Porter (aye), Brindisi Blatt and Colpitts (didn't hear), Deeley (aye), Hopping (aye), LeBeau (aye), Mann (aye), Matton (aye), Mitchell (aye), Pederson (aye), Pollack (aye), Poynton (aye), Ricci (aye), Rich (aye), Robinson (none), Telford (aye).

Beth Card thanked everyone again for commitment to this and level of detail to which all engaged in conversation and willingness to serve on these subcommittees.

A couple of update items from Beth Card:

1. Mosquito control study is due 8/15, a Sunday, so will distribute it thereafter.
2. Reminder to all that once it is shared, it can't be discussed so we don't have any deliberations taking place outside of open meeting law requirements.
3. ERG will be doing a presentation for the task force on 9/2 and at that point there will be lots of opportunity for conversation then. It's also our plan on 9/2 to publicly share and post online the study and open it up for a public comment period. Public comments will not be used to amend report but will give the public a chance to raise issues about the report that it thinks the task force should take into account during recommendation process. We may be in touch between now and then so we can start to schedule subcommittee meetings.

Heidi Ricci confirmed that task force will receive the final report but should not distribute it, and that members can ask questions and provide comments at 9/2 meeting or during public comment period but those won't be incorporated into the report. Beth Card said expectation is that we won't seek ERG to modify their deliverable; rather, we'll take feedback, capture it in a way that task force can use it in discussions and decision making going forward. There will be a new

document that summarizes the feedback received through the public comment process. Caroline confirmed that and said they expect to summarize and aggregate these comments and all other comments received throughout this process for recommendations. Heidi Ricci asked whether, if report won't be amended, why it can't be made available to the public at the same time? Caroline Higley said it would be made available to the public at the meeting itself. Jessica Burgess said we can discuss legality of that; part of consideration is that this is how materials created by public body are routinely handled in this way, to public body first and then provided to public at public meeting, but we can discuss that further.

Jennifer Pederson noted that there will be plenty of time for public comment after the report is released. Beth Card agreed, saying 9/2 won't be the only time for comment. Brad Mitchell said he felt it made sense to share with task force first because it may get questions about it at the meeting, so long as the public has time to see it and comment on it.

Heidi Ricci reiterated her different perspective, indicating there's a compressed time frame and we have to report to our respective constituencies, and would rather have it be available publicly and isn't sure why we can't just release it at the same time. Brian from Senator Comerford's office and other members of the public echoed that sentiment. Beth Card noted these comments and said she will take this back and discuss with the team and will follow up accordingly. She also reminded the task force that even if the report is shared broadly, they cannot discuss it with each other outside of public meeting so as not to violate public meeting law. Caroline Higley also reminded that each subcommittee is its own body now and so no deliberation outside of those meetings, either.

Jennifer Pederson noted a question from the public about public records law and once this is final, it could be requested under the public records law, and so why would we make people go through that? Beth Card said we would not make people go through that process and that we plan to share it publicly. Caroline Higley echoed Jessica Burgess' and Brad Mitchell's point that as the task force commissioned this study, had thought to have task force look at it first, but absolutely hears the feedback and will take that into account and will update the task force thereafter.

Seeing no other hands, Beth Card asked if there were any additional questions or comments from members of the public. Heidi Ricci raised issue for which she did not expect a state response at this point - MA Audubon received requests to waive property opt-out exclusion for locations where there have been zero positive mosquitoes found, which prompted her to begin looking at Duet and Anvil labels. She noticed a precaution about protecting bees, which she believed applied to all bees, not just honeybees. She put the quote from the label into the chat and said she didn't understand why spraying these chemicals takes place when there is no evidence of disease. Maybe more of a question for the pesticide board or for people to think about if they're on a subcommittee looking into this. Beth Card thanked her for that comment and said that was likely a conversation with pesticide program folks and can certainly look to take that back and follow up.

Pine DuBois (member of the public) asked under what circumstances will aerial spraying occur this year if there is a turn and positive test results in EEE pools? Kevin Cranston said it's a public health recommendation that would prompt concern about risk of human disease; multifactorial consideration, including looking at trends of detection in pools and positive findings in mammals and humans. Generally, at the level of high or critical risk determination on standardized mapping, at that point the acting Commissioner would make a recommendation that it's high or critical risk in a particular region and would prompt a consideration of aerial application, and that then becomes a joint decision with SRB/MDAR around initiating those actions. He referred to the overall surveillance response plan that lays out factors and considerations, which includes weather conditions, time of year, and the anticipation of likely effectiveness of aerial application as well.

Beth Card saw no other hands from task force or Q&A from public and asked for a motion to adjourn. Brad Mitchell made motion to adjourn, Commissioner Lebeaux seconded, with all in favor saying aye. Meeting adjourned at 1:21 p.m.