

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

June 2, 2021, 1:00 p.m. via Zoom

The meeting was held remotely under the Governor's Order issued on March 12, 2020, which authorizes a public body to meet remotely and suspends the requirement of a quorum on the body being physically present at the meeting location. All votes were taken as roll call votes.

Members in Attendance: Beth Card, Kevin Cranston, Commissioner John Lebeaux, Kathy Baskin, Tonya Colpitts, Julia Blatt, Anita Deeley, Russell Hopping, Kim LeBeau, Bob Mann, Priscilla Matton, Brad Mitchell, Jennifer Pederson, Rich Pollack, Helen Poynton, Heidi Ricci and Richard Robinson.

Beth Card called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. She introduced herself and provided an overview of her background and the agenda for today's meeting. A motion was made and seconded for approval of the minutes from the last meeting. Beth Card conducted a roll call vote. The minutes were approved with Julia Blatt abstaining.

The meeting agenda proceeded as follows, with Beth Card providing commentary unless otherwise noted.

I. PFAS/Pesticides.

March 5th – Announcement that PFAS is coming from fluorinated containers for Anvil. Anvil shipped in metal does not contain detectable levels of PFAS. MA initiated its own testing. Analysis is continuing; some is complete but getting more data on a regular basis. Eleven non-Anvil products also tested, including multiple container sizes of same product. Upon confirmation of PFAS, on April 26th, mosquito control districts were asked to immediately stop using affected products. Included postponement of larviciding efforts in Bristol/Plymouth County areas until confirmed that relevant containers had no detectable levels. VectoBac product was applied in a few locations this season. Understand from analysis done that PFAS levels in that product do not present health concerns in communities where applied. This aligned with takeaway we understood from Anvil testing as well.

Heidi Ricci noted this is why we need to be cautious about pesticides in general. Don't know synergistic effects of pesticides in general. So many flaws in federal regulation. Really need to be cautious, particularly with chemicals that won't break down.

Jennifer Pederson curious about mosquito control happening in wetland areas with wells and what the legacy effects might be. Is MA planning to look at that, too, and see if there is any correlation there? Beth Card explained her understanding that we are careful in terms of sampling in water supply areas and think there is interest and effort to look at where there has been application in the past. Lot of moving parts to all of this. Those areas would be of first and foremost concern. Asked for Kathy Baskin's input, who said there were no focused plans on groundwater wells. Have looked at surface waters both inside and outside historical spray areas. Looking at data to see if there are any trends. Jennifer Pederson asked that well water testing be top priority. Caroline Higley added that DEP is doing "worst case scenario" modeling of test

results here. Assuming a pesticide directly enters a drinking water source, PFAS levels are essentially non-detectable. That scenario modeling is still ongoing but consistent with results of Anvil testing this past fall.

Richard Robinson asked if anyone at state level was privy to inert ingredient components, even if they're not going to be made public. Brad Mitchell said that during his time at MDAR, he could not get that information except through DEP. Certain ingredients that trigger thresholds get reported on safety data sheet; not saying we shouldn't have access to all of it, but typically reportable through some other mechanism.

II. Opt-out Program Update.

Beth Card noted that opt-out applications were due May 28th. EEA received 35 complete applications, mostly from central and western MA communities. Now that EEA has submissions, review has begun with support from EEA agencies and DPH. Trying to move with relative speed on this so municipalities have some ability/certainty in terms of their process and to be able to implement alternative mosquito management plans as quickly as possible ahead of the season. Applications will be considered individually and focus will be on historical arbovirus risk, regional risk of excluding the municipality from spraying, and ability of municipality to successfully implement alternative plan.

Heidi Ricci stated she's heard from numerous communities asking about how they can get support for surveillance testing without routine spraying of larvicides or adulticides. DPH has great public education resources and she's pointed many to those for public education but surveillance resources remain lacking. Caroline Higley thinks this issue falls within Task Force's function and if people want to discuss that. Kevin Cranston agreed and felt it was part of Task Force's goal of providing such recommendations. Heidi Ricci reiterated concerns about process not being opt-in. Jennifer Pederson suggested an overview be provided at the upcoming MMA conference.

III. ERG Progress Report.

Lauren Brown provided update on ERG's progress to date. She is a senior toxicologist at ERG and serves as project director. Gave overview of research team, which includes tech advisory panel. For activities completed to date, ERG did onboard additional experts in response to Task Force feedback; listened in on proposal review. Heard need for additional ecotoxicology and pollinator expertise. ERG has been attending weekly check-in calls with EEA to stay on schedule and answer questions about report. Have also attended all Task Force calls since contract award and having multiple scope/advisory calls to make sure they stay on task. Have extracted all data from more than 100 annual mosquito control district and SRB reports from 2016 to present, and select data from 2009 to present. Will continue to analyze and synthesize data moving forward.

She next explained updates in the nine different subject matter areas being examined by ERG:

1. Working on history of WNV and EEE in MA. Reached out to DPH for data on human and animal cases; obtained it and have begun summarizing in tables and maps. Have also had calls with them to understand nuances and limitations of data, e.g. changes in data

collection methods. Have run into obstacle with data precision. Given privacy concerns, data only available at county level for human cases. For animals, it is available at municipality level.

2. Looking at mosquito policy structure, its effectiveness, and the challenges it generates on public and private lands. Have reviewed more than 40 documents related to best practices and interviewed more than 20 respondents.
3. Looking at mosquito control opt-outs and exclusions. Have reviewed current opt-out policies and individual exclusion requests, looking specifically at MA and other states where relevant (New England, NY, NJ, and MI).
4. Looking at pesticides and their composition, toxicity, resistance, PFAS, and frequency of use. Have collected information on products applied since 2009 and the amount of each applied since 2016. Looking at bioaccumulation tendencies and reviewing literature on synergistic effects with ecotoxicology expert. Noted unknown inert ingredients as a data gap, as it impacts complete understanding on synergistic effects.
5. Reviewing and providing information about six different types of non-chemical mosquito controls listed in the RFP. Plan to summarize effectiveness for each of these, applicability for use in MA, and considerations for protected areas and buffer zones per Wetlands Protection Act.
6. Looking into minimizing non-target impacts of mosquito pesticide use. Will outline potential changes to pesticide use to protect non-target receptors. Specifically focusing on vulnerable individuals, drinking water supplies, pollinators, and aquatic life. Have conducted interviews with relevant experts and still need to finalize literature review on best practices.
7. Looking at public water system laws and regulations for pesticide use protections. Have conducted several interviews with drinking water and pesticide experts. Question for Task Force: is anyone aware of any monitoring done in conjunction with non-aerial pesticide application?
8. Looking at impact of mosquitos, mosquito-borne diseases, and mosquito controls. This includes looking at costs of human infections and how these would change by various levels of control. Also looking at how commerce is impacted by mosquito-borne disease and control.
9. Looking at impact of climate change on mosquito populations and mosquito-borne diseases. Question for Task Force: are there key people in state government with whom they should speak on these issues?

ERG's next steps will be synthesizing the research to date, finalizing topic area reports, developing executive summary for review by tech advisory panel and EEA, responding to comments from review, and then submitting it to the Task Force.

Jennifer Pederson thanked ERG for the hard work. Asked for what was needed from water suppliers. Lauren Brown explained ERG hasn't found evidence of monitoring after non-aerial spraying and wondering if instances of that were occurring.

Heidi Ricci also thanked and said very helpful. Hoped presentation would be available later for reference. Three questions. 1) On efficacy, and how assessing that, recognize challenges with the level of specificity of some data; don't know if possible but really interested in understanding more about where trapping is done in relation to habitats of mosquitos and populations of people, and how it relates to where cases are? Particularly want to assess how much chemical use is in response to places where it's not possible to do reduction actions v. just roadside spraying for nuisance. 2) On market, glad to see sensitive individuals included there; hope it includes infants and people with chemical sensitivities. Hope they will look at literature reviews of Boulder, CO folks and comments from the public listening session. Worried about EJ populations and people who are not English speaking, and not knowing what should be reported. Asked if ERG is doing anything on other species, like amphibians? Lauren Brown said they are looking at aquatic life and focusing on the species as outlined on the slide. 3) On best practices, know different districts operate slightly differently; some lots of spraying, some almost never do it. Would want to look at those trends. Also, didn't see trash removal as form of source reduction; Lauren Brown said she could follow up with folks on what's included in each sub-category.

Kim LeBeau asked about Section 4 (pesticides composition, toxicity, resistance, PFAS, frequency of use), and was wondering what others are doing to check chemicals before delivery to consumer, as well as long-term storage of chemicals and whether packaging degrades and therefore provides possibility for PFAS or other components to enter into the pesticides.

Russell Hopping thanked for presentation and referenced Section 6 and pesticides impacts; concerned bees and pollinators being lumped together with agricultural environment; lots of other pollinators, too.

Richard Pollack urged focus on human health impacts.

Dotty (public) asked about how spraying success is being measured; why can't state use all-natural spraying? Caroline Higley said that report would address in some capacity. Lauren Brown indicated that they are looking at all pesticides being used by state, understanding their active ingredients; definite spectrum as it relates to human health and environmental toxicity of compounds.

Heidi Ricci had additional question about transparency and public input. Various documents prepared from time to time; ways to improve opportunities for public input into ongoing updates? And also asked for clarification regarding role of Mosquito Advisory Group. Website says non-governmental but when/how do they meet, what is their role, and could overall system be reorganized in other, larger ways? Lauren Brown hoped the organizational chart being created will help answer some of those questions.

Jane (public) asked if statistics could be obtained from certain public organizations. Caroline Higley said can ask ERG to add to their list of organizations to check. She also urged people to use public comment process via the form available online.

Another member of the public made recommendation for study using BTI and EU environmental policy groups because they have better resources for pesticides and insecticides; use some of those resources, if possible.

IV. Recap of Public Listening Session.

Beth Card discussed May 3rd listening session. Goal was for Task Force members to listen to public perspectives on mosquito control and recommendations. 258 attendees, including Task Force members and Commonwealth employees. Received oral comments from 38 individuals. Caroline Higley distributed summary of oral comments. There have also been about 130 written comments received. General themes of oral comments included discussion of opt-out program, data and information related to mosquito control, opposition to pesticide use and spraying, concern about ingredients, and PFAS. Other commenters voiced support for various components of mosquito control, including some mentions of spraying and other components. Finally, there were comments on mosquito control structure. ERG attended the session and will also receive a copy of the oral and written comment summaries to inform their work. Do also plan to post summary online for public to view.

Richard Robinson said that for future meetings, would be helpful if table of contents could be included with comment summary.

Heidi Ricci noted comments from people not wanting to be subject to chemical trespass. People growing with organic means, managing properties for native pollinators and species, and they're being subjected to chemical exposures they don't want when there are very few people impacted (contrasted with COVID and not requiring vaccines for much greater numbers of impacted people).

Helen Poynton asked whether the Task Force is expected to read all of the comments in their entirety because many were very long. Beth Card explained EEA's intention was to pass along what it saw and received, and that EEA wanted to make sure Task Force all had it. Caroline Higley added ERG would benefit from having access to some of those documents.

Caroline Higley acknowledged public comment seeking more listening sessions and two other comments asking if listening session comments will be shared. She explained EEA's plan to post summary of listening session. Heidi Ricci explained her thought that written comments could be shared with anyone, based on language included when comments are submitted. Beth Card agreed but said could talk with team offline about how we'll pass them along. Caroline Higley agreed and said they're public record. Jennifer Pederson noted public comments posted in other contexts. Another member of the public asked about presence of Louisiana entomologist at the listening session. Caroline Higley explained it was open to the public and so anyone was able to sign up to speak at it.

V. Upcoming.

Beth Card noted no next meeting currently scheduled but also described additional work to come, including review of ERG report. Team proposes having Task Force meeting in second week of July with goal being to establish clear path forward on how it will make its next recommendations after ERG study is received on August 15th. Anticipating that subcommittees will be created to work on various topics, which may then do some of the recommendation writing for the various categories.

Heidi Ricci suggested scheduling for week after July 5th because many people will be taking vacation. Caroline Higley agreed, and noted they may schedule one monthly meeting ahead with understanding that more than one monthly meeting may be needed.

Jennifer Pederson thought it was easier to cancel meeting than schedule it, so would rather have them set up and locked in for now.

Beth Card noted Caroline Higley will work on getting meetings scheduled, with July meeting focused on process, subcommittee formation, and next steps once ERG report is received. Caroline Higley open to suggestions on how subcommittees should be formed and how best to structure this. Brad Mitchell agreed strongly on having subcommittees to make discussions more specific.

Julia Blatt asked whether each committee would be staffed by an agency staffer. Caroline Higley said all subcommittees subject to open meeting law and need to be publicized with agendas noted, so details will need to be worked out.

Eve Schluter agreed on need for subcommittees.

Beth Card noted would work on shoring up July meeting plan.

Beth Card then stated she would hear motion to close meeting but asked if there were any public questions to answer first. One question related to email address for asking questions. Caroline Higley said people encouraged to submit questions through mosquito control Task Force online submission or send an email to her. Another public question asked for at least two more public listening sessions, especially after ERG report received and before final recommendations are made.

Beth Card then thanked Task Force members, Caroline Higley, and agency staff for all their hard work. She then asked for a motion to adjourn. Julia Blatt so moved, with Richard Robinson seconding. Meeting adjourned at 2:32 p.m.