

National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group (NPDWAG)

Backweston AgriLabs Building – 28 February 2024

Attendees

The following organisations were represented at the meeting:

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Chair)	[DAFM]
Animal and Plant Health Association	[APHA]
Cork County Council	[CCC]
Environmental Protection Agency	[EPA]
Federation of Agrochemical Retail Merchants	[FARM]
Golf Ireland	[GI]
Health Service Executive	[HSE]
Irish Farmers Association	[IFA]
Local Authority Waters Programme	[LAWPRO]
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	[NFGWS]
University of Galway	[UG]
Teagasc/ASSAP	[Teagasc/ASSAP]
Uisce Éireann	[UÉ]

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the hybrid meeting of the NPDWAG. Apologies received in advance from several members were noted. New participants (representing some existing stakeholders) were welcomed.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

There were no comments on the minutes of the previous meeting (29 November 2023). Attendees were asked to forward specific text to the Chair by 15 March 2024 if they had any suggested amendments. The Chair noted that the minutes would be published on DAFM's pesticides website in due course –

www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/waterprotection/nationalpesticidesanddrinkingwateractiongroup

Action update

- DAFM – An information note on best practice measures for sprayer handling operations has been finalised and will soon be published on the DAFM pesticides website. NPDWAG members were asked to disseminate the note to relevant stakeholders.
- EPA – A demonstration was provided on how to use EPA Water Maps (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water>) to determine surface water catchments and search for associated information. Additional information on navigating Water Maps and accessing data is available at the following links –
www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/freshwater--marine/River-Flow-Estimates--HydroTool-Readme.pdf (HydroTool – how to display a catchment on EPA Water Maps)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNNQtw_6uel (EPA Water Maps general how to)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkB3nqua8Jo (finding water chemistry data)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVEGin-2PKg (Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps)
- UÉ – The UÉ version of catchment boundary maps can be shared with group members as required.

3. Uisce Éireann updates on drinking water exceedances and Catchment Focus Group activities

There are currently 27 EPA pesticide compliance plans open, serving a population of 380,898 – a decrease of 13,645 since the previous update (29/11/2023). Nine EPA pesticide compliance plan files were closed in 2023, and four EPA Directions. Fifty-two parametric exceedances were recorded in 2023 (26 for MCPA, 8 for 2,4-D, 4 for triclopyr, 3 for glyphosate, 3 for clopyralid, 1 for mecoprop, 1 for metaldehyde, 1 for propyzamide, 1 for 2,4-DB, 1 for metazachlor and 3 exceedance of the total pesticides level of 0.5 ppb). Four exceedances have been recorded so far 2024 (3 for 2,4-D and 1 exceedances of the total pesticides level).

Action

UÉ to confirm the number of compliant months recorded for Newport PWS.

UÉ catchments update – The ongoing work of Catchment Focus Groups (CFGs), involving collaboration by relevant stakeholders at a local level in priority catchments, was highlighted. CFGs are currently working in the following catchment areas – Lough Forbes (Longford Central), Newport, Clonroche, River Feale and Deel (Newcastle West PWS, Foynes/Shannon Estuary, Listowel, Abbeyfeale), Cavan (Belturbet PWS) and Greenmount.

Action

UÉ to consider possibilities for additional participation in CFGs, including IFA representatives and further agricultural advisors.

UÉ also provided an update on the Erne-Larah Water Source Protection project. Thirty-five Water Environmental and Management Plans (WEMPs) have been completed. Measures in the plans include mulching and weed-wiping for control of rushes, provision of buffers, fencing and drinkers and tree planting. Follow-up visits to the farms involved will be carried out this year and monitoring of water bodies will recommence in April.

UÉ Source Protection Strategy – Drinking water source risk assessment and management are now a legal requirement (S.I. No. 99/2023 - European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2023). The deadline for this work is July 2027. UÉ will draft a new source protection strategy during 2024, which will subsume the current Interim Pesticide Strategy.

4. APHA catchment monitoring results and stewardship activities – overview of 2023, plans for 2024

Monitoring programme

Raw water monitoring results from the five catchments included in the programme were reviewed. For the Lough Forbes catchment, the number of exceedances in 2023 (138) was similar to the number recorded in the previous three years (130 in 2020, 137 in 2021 and 124 in 2022). In the Belturbet catchment the number of exceedances in 2023 (92) represents an increase on detections recorded in 2022 (78) but a decline on the number recorded in 2021 (114). Newport was highlighted as a success story, with a decrease in exceedances recorded over the past three years (44 in 2021, 20 in 2022 and 6 in 2023).

A pattern of late exceedances, up to early October, was noted in some catchments. It was suggested that awareness of the fact that the use of MCPA products is prohibited from the end of September until the beginning of March could be emphasised further at a local level through advisory services.

A draft proposal for the 2024 catchment monitoring plan is in the process of being finalised.

5. Review of list of pesticides monitored in drinking water – update from DAFM

DAFM gave an overview of plans to review the list of pesticides currently monitored in treated drinking water by UÉ. Thirty-three pesticide substances are monitored at present (21 baseline pesticides, 12 additional pesticides). Twenty of these substances are approved at

EU level for use in plant protection products (under Regulation (EC) 1107/2009) and 13 substances are not approved under Regulation (EC) 1107/2009. Important factors for consideration in updating the list are the scale of use and various substance properties (e.g. water solubility, environmental persistence, environmental mobility etc.). Regarding the scale of use, a preliminary analysis based on sales and usage data shows that various high-volume substances are already included in the current monitoring programme. Options were discussed for criteria that could be used to help decide whether substances should be added to the list. The possibility of removing some substances will also be considered, such as those whose use is no longer authorised and for which there have been no detections over a long period of time.

Action

DAFM to continue work to examine and prioritise substances for possible inclusion on the monitoring list.

6. Outcomes from Pest-Man research project (University of Galway)

The main outcomes from the Pest-Man project (Pesticide Management for better water quality) were presented (www.pestman.ie). The aims of the project were as follows – (i) review on legacy pesticides, their mitigation and current regulations, (ii) development of soil texture-specific environmental risk ranking based on several pesticide properties, (iii) evaluation of twelve industrial and agricultural materials as potential adsorbents for the removal of herbicides from water, (iv) field study incorporating two different remediation systems in two agricultural catchments and one urban area.

Risk ranking tool – A pesticide transmission risk model was developed to examine the potential movement of pesticides through soil to waterways. The model uses information on various properties of pesticides (soil half-life, soil adsorbency and water solubility) and combines this with information on soil permeability to generate an overall score indicating the risk of transmission. The model could be used to help identify critical source areas for better land management.

Evaluation of materials as potential adsorbents for removal of herbicides from water – Twelve industrial and agricultural materials were assessed as potential adsorbents. The materials were ranked by potential for adsorption based on laboratory tests. GAC (granular activated carbon) was the best performing material for the removal of five commonly used herbicides from aqueous solutions. However, due to cost, GAC was replaced with CAC (coconut-based activated carbon) for subsequent field investigations. CAC is less expensive than GAC and performs similarly in terms of adsorbency.

Field study – The CAC interventions (filter pipe and filter bags) were deployed in small water bodies (streams, tributaries) in two catchments and one urban area. The water bodies were monitored before and after the intervention. The study showed that the interventions worked best when the water flow was slow, the height of the water was lower than the height of the bags or pipe and the interventions spanned the width of the waterway. The filter pipe intervention was also found to be more efficient at adsorbing herbicides from the tested waterways than the filter bags intervention.

7. Communications activities – updates and plans for 2024

UÉ provided an update on plans for the Spring Spray with Care campaign and targeted social media campaigns for priority areas.

DAFM indicated that an article addressing amateur users was being considered.

8. Planning for 2024 – general actions, priority area actions

Attendees were asked to reflect on activities that could be undertaken in 2024 and to ensure that all relevant activities are recorded in the UÉ 'Action Tracker' spreadsheet.

9. Other stakeholder updates

- Teagasc – The Farming for Water European Innovative Partnership Project (Water EIP project) was officially launched on 7 March 2024. Preparations for the operational phase are ongoing. Several measures relating to pesticides will be included in the project.
- GI gave a brief overview of work to promote environmentally sustainable practices within golf clubs.
- EPA noted the use of liquid carbon for MCPA adsorption at the Derg water treatment plant in Northern Ireland.

10. Regulatory updates (DAFM)

- Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR) proposal – The European Parliament rejected the SUR proposal in a plenary vote held on 22 November 2023 and the EU Commission have now formally withdrawn the proposal.
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2023/564 \(content and format of the records of plant protection products kept by professional users\)](#) – Professional users will be required to record and submit pesticide use in electronic reporting format annually from 2026.

11. AOB

No AOB items were raised.