

National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group

26 February 2020
Backweston Agri-Labs Building

Attendees

The following organisations were represented at the meeting:

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Chair)	[DAFM]
Agricultural Consultants Association	[ACA]
Animal and Plant Health Association	[APHA]
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	[DHPLG]
Environmental Protection Agency	[EPA]
Ervia	[Ervia]
Federation of Agrochemical Retail Merchants	[FARM]
Golfing Union of Ireland	[GUI]
Health Service Executive	[HSE]
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	[ICMSA]
Irish Farmers Association	[IFA]
Irish Water	[IW]
Local Authority Waters Programme	[LAWPRO]
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	[NFGWS]
Teagasc/ASSAP	[Teagasc/ASSAP]
Wicklow Co. Co.	[WCC]

1. Welcome

- Chair welcomed new group members from the EPA and the IFA.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

- The minutes of the last meeting were noted.
- The discussion on the DAFM information note on sustainable rush management methods was noted. A draft of the note has been circulated – this will be covered under item 8.
- The updated information table on pesticides causing exceedances, incorporating amendments suggested at the last meeting, has been circulated. An up-to-date version will be circulated on a quarterly basis ahead of each meeting.
- A meeting on 10 December 2019 on the catchment monitoring programme for 2020 was held. APHA will provide an update.
- A short stakeholder questionnaire on attitudes to PPP use that could be used by group members was discussed. Teagasc/ASSAP developed the questionnaire, which will be discussed under item 8.
- DAFM drafted some information on weed wiper testing requirements, for inclusion in 2020 press releases.

3. Update on drinking water exceedances and enforcement – preliminary overview of 2019

Environmental Protection Agency

- A review of the 2019 exceedances reported to the EPA and a brief overview of ensuing actions was provided. There have been no exceedances reported to date in 2020.
- Preliminary figures for 2019 show 82 exceedances across 27 supplies. This is a decrease on the 2018 and 2017 results (respectively 85 exceedances across 34 supplies and 150 exceedances across 49 supplies). The majority (63%) of the exceedances in 2019 were attributable to MCPA, with 8.5%, 7.3% and 4.9% attributable to fluroxypyr, 2,4-D and glyphosate respectively.
- The percentage attributable to MCPA has decreased significantly in recent years.
- The maximum and mean detected levels for reported exceedances have also decreased in recent years.
- Individual exceedances in 2019 were predominantly in the ranges 0.1-0.14 microgram/L (36 exceedances) and 0.15-0.19 microgram/L (23 exceedances).
- The EPA was able to close files on six supplies in Q4 of 2019. Two of these supplies were on the Action List (Abbeyfeale and Troyswood).
- Regarding the six other supplies on the Action List, Belturbet had five failing months in 2019, Longford Central and Newport had four failing months, Clonroche had three failing months, Cavan RWSS had two failing months and Newcastle West had one failing month.
- The EPA currently has 27 open investigation files, which compares favourably to the 41 open files at this time last year.

Irish Water

- IW presented their national quarterly update for Q4 2019.
- The closure of six open files since the previous quarterly update was noted (Abbeyfeale, Troyswood, Donegal, Tallanstown, Villierstown, Louisburgh).
- Regarding the 27 files currently open, six are on the Action List and 21 are on the Watch List.
- A lot of work has been carried out in the Action List catchments, particularly Longford Central.
- APHA monitoring over the winter in the Longford Central catchment should provide an insight into whether or not there is carryover of residues from previous use.
- Apart from the Action List areas, IW asked for the assistance of the group in relation to 14 other open files with exceedances in two or more months or an exceedance in the last quarter.
- The decrease in the proportion of exceedances accounted for by MCPA was noted.
- An increase in the number of fluroxypyr exceedances was noted (10% of the total in 2019, compared to 5% in 2018). Press releases issued by IW have

been amended to reflect this trend and the detection of other substances, rather than focusing solely on MCPA.

- IW noted that there were over 70 open files when the NPDWAG commenced work in 2017. This number has now been reduced to 27, which reflects well on the work of the group.

Action point:

- A discrepancy between EPA and IW figures in relation to the proportion of exceedances accounted for by MCPA should be rectified.

4. Catchment monitoring results – overview of 2019, plans for 2020

- Winter monitoring results from the Lough Forbes catchment were presented. No exceedances were detected in December 2019 and January and February 2020, which suggests that contemporaneous use is the cause of the exceedances in this catchment and that legacy issues play a more minor role than previously thought.
- The 2020 monitoring plan involves new monitoring of the Belturbet catchment, additional monitoring points in the Lough Forbes catchment (Drumsna Marina and eastern Lough Forbes) and reduced monitoring in the Feale and Deel catchments. Monitoring in the Nore catchment is no longer required.
- Sampling in 2020 will start in the first week of April and continue on a specified weekly or fortnightly basis until October. There will also be over-winter monitoring, from mid-November 2020 to mid-March 2021, at a reduced number of locations (final locations still to be agreed).
- NFGWS noted that a number of Group Water Schemes are undertaking pesticide monitoring in areas that cover part of the Belturbet catchment and offered to share this data and to give their assistance to other relevant actions.
- Regarding stewardship activities, the possibility of organising a TOPPS training event for agricultural contractors was raised as an issue for consideration.

5. Priority and watch list areas 2020 (updates, new Catchment Focus Groups, LAWPRO activities, ASSAP activities, IW pilot project update)

LAWPRO

- Work undertaken in various WFD Priority Areas for Action (PAAs) was outlined.
- In the Border region ASSAP advisors are currently working in the Annalee and Upper Erne PAAs, both of which are upstream of the Belturbet drinking water supply. A second ASSAP farmer engagement meeting was held in the Upper Erne PAA on 25 February 2020. Field work in the Emy Lough PAA (Glaslough and Emyvale supply) has commenced. A farmer engagement meeting for this PAA is scheduled for 4 March 2020.
- In the Western region the Newport Catchment Focus Group has been established and LAWPRO is a member of this group. The feasibility of water

monitoring on the Glenisland River, which is part of the Newport drinking water supply catchment area, is currently being explored.

- In the South East region work is ongoing in the Dinan and Nuenna PAAs, which are upstream of the Troyswood drinking water supply. Field work was completed in both of these PAAs in 2019. ASSAP advisors are now operating in the catchment based on the field work reports. Work is due to start in 2020 in the Bannow PAA, which is upstream of the South Regional Wexford supply.
- In the South Western region assessment work started on the Deel in 2019 and no toxicity effects were noted during fieldwork. In the Feale catchment field work has been narrowed down to two rivers and work will start in the coming months.
- In the Midlands and Eastern region the Lough Forbes Catchment Focus Group is continuing to work with stakeholders to make the best use of APHA monitoring results. LAWPRO will meet with the EPA's hydrometrics team to discuss flow monitoring to help establish which inputting water body into Lough Forbes is contributing the highest load of pesticides.
- LAWPRO inputs to preparations for the third cycle of Ireland's River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) (2022-2027) were noted. It is proposed to discuss PAAs for the third cycle at regional interagency workshops during 2020.
- Various community engagement activities by LAWPRO Community Water Officers were also noted. Mayo has a new Community Water Officer who will engage with the Newport Catchment Focus Group.

ASSAP

- 1179 farm assessments have been completed up to 31 January 2020.
- Two types of issues have been identified during the assessments relating to pesticides – 'Pesticide storage and handling' (identified on 80 farms) and 'Pesticide and sheep dip use' (identified on 207 farms). Examples of mitigation actions selected to address pesticide issues are 'Best practice when storing pesticides' (selected on 70 farms as an action to address pesticide storage issues), 'Adhering to Buffers' (selected on 106 farms as an action to address pesticide and sheep dip issues) and 'Spraying equipment and operator fit for purpose' (selected on 35 farms as an action to address pesticide and sheep dip issues).
- In cases where ASSAP advisors have identified PPPs as a risk on a farm that does not necessarily mean that there is a problem for nearby water bodies.
- Some of the ASSAP work in PAAs was outlined, including the hosting of a farmer meeting in the West in February with subsequent farm visits planned for March. Event planning is underway in Cavan but will be dependent on what the Cavan Catchment Focus Group decides. Discussion groups in the Gageborough catchment will cover pesticides and an event will be held in the summer. The Lough Forbes Catchment Focus Group will decide on actions in that catchment.

IW

- Recent work has focused on trying to select a catchment and establish the scope of the pilot drinking water project.

- From the workshop held last year, it seemed Newport and Belturbet were identified as the most suitable catchments but both had their challenges.
- IW contacted DAFM to obtain an understanding of the number and types of farms in these areas.
- Currently it looks likely that a region in the Belturbet catchment will be selected for the project but this has not yet been agreed.

DAFM

- The new Catchment Focus Groups in Newport and Cavan held their first meetings on 21 and 24 January respectively. The next meetings are scheduled for 24 and 31 March for Cavan and Newport respectively.
- A meeting of the Lough Forbes Catchment Focus Group is scheduled for 12 March.
- DAFM officials visited the Clonroche borehole catchment on 17 February 2020 and took 16 water samples. The analytical results are not yet available. DAFM will consult with IW and the EPA when the results are available.

6. Drinking water catchments – (i) mapping update (IW), (ii) discussion on mapping safeguard zones (DAFM)

IW

- IW gave a presentation on their approach to mapping abstraction catchment boundaries and intended uses for these maps.
- IW is responsible for approximately 1,200 individual water abstractions feeding 793 individual water treatment plants (covering 310 surface water sources and 858 groundwater sources). Surface water sources provide 83% of total supply and groundwater sources provide 17%.
- The IW abstraction points have been submitted to the EPA for the National Abstraction Register.
- Surface water abstraction catchment areas have been generated automatically using the OPW's Flood Studies Update (FSU) node information, followed by refinement of the lower extents of catchments in ArcGIS to truncate catchment areas to abstraction points and a 'sense check' of the final results, with refinement where necessary.
- In the case of groundwater, the approach involves validation of existing boundaries (Zones of Contribution and Source Protection Areas previously defined by GSI and EPA) and a rapid approach to create new Zones of Contribution where needed (using standard shapes based on abstraction locations, abstraction rates and annual average recharge, and review by hydrogeologists).
- The mapped abstraction catchment boundaries are intended to be used to support drinking water safety planning and national water resource planning.
- They could also be used as a starting point for the definition of future safeguard zones or exclusion zones but would not be appropriate for this use without further assessment by the relevant authorities.

- Once the abstraction catchment boundaries have been finalised, the intention is to share them with public authorities.

DAFM

- DAFM initiated a brief discussion on mapping safeguard zones and how this information could be disseminated to PPP users.
- IW noted that there are security considerations around disclosing locations of abstraction points.
- Group members considered that there would be merit in informing farmers that their land is in a safeguard zone and acknowledged the challenge of disseminating information in a secure manner. The possibility of DAFM inspectors having access in the future to a secure database containing details of safeguard zone locations was mentioned.
- National Critical Source maps that will be developed from the Diffuse Tools project will be provided to advisors and other stakeholders.

7. Pesticide usage by non-agricultural sectors (DAFM)

- DAFM gave a presentation on plans to commence a survey of non-agricultural pesticide use in 2020.
- Sales data provides information on total quantities of both professional and amateur products placed on the market. Usage surveys provide information on the total quantities of professional products used and how they are used.
- Product use in non-agricultural sectors is currently estimated to account for approximately 20% of professional pesticide usage, based on a comparison of overall sales data and usage data from surveys of agricultural uses.
- The new survey should provide more accurate information on non-agricultural pesticide usage. It will not be conducted on an annual basis but will give a snap shot of the breakdown of professional products used across different sectors (local authorities, roads and motorways, airports, railways, golf courses and other sports areas, landscaping companies, TidyTowns, OPW etc.).
- The main objective is to get accurate basic information from the maximum amount of respondents. This will be facilitated by support from relevant stakeholders, including NPDWAG members.
- DAFM will send requests to stakeholders asking for data to be returned on (i) product names, (ii) PCS numbers, (iii) volumes purchased in 2019 and (iv) an estimate of the percentage left over at end of year.
- The results from the survey are expected to be of use in a number of areas, such as the development of targeted advice for non-agricultural users, risk assessments for pesticide use in public areas and the development of future pesticide monitoring programmes.
- The results will be shared with NPDWAG members in due course.

Action point:

- Group members to provide input and feedback on the proposed survey to the DAFM Pesticide Controls Division.

8. Communications activities (updates and plans for 2020, FARM TV 2020 campaign?, TidyTowns engagement, stakeholder questionnaire, rush management advice note)

- IW provided an overview of communications activities. The main national and regional media campaigns will be launched in April.
- Work with compliance specialists in IW will be incorporated into the generic press release.
- The level of coverage last year was deemed satisfactory.
- DAFM officials participated in several radio shows.
- A draft press release for Belturbet and Cavan RWSS is ready for issue.
- Various media queries have been responded to by IW.
- Farm TV contacted IW in relation to a one month campaign with the short version of the rush control video.
- Other agricultural events have provided costings for showing the video.
- IW asked group members to consider another online campaign this year.
- DAFM urged group members to consider contributing to the funding of the Farm TV campaign.
- It was noted that a questionnaire on attitudes to PPP use, suitable for use at various types of stakeholder events, is being developed by Teagasc/ASSAP. The aim is to have the final version ready by the end of March.
- New draft DAFM guidance on sustainable rush management was presented. It is hoped that the new guidance will be used by all advisors this year.
- A number of comments on the draft guidance have already been provided to DAFM. Group members were asked to submit any further comments as soon as possible.
- Post-meeting note – the new guidance (information note and graphic) is available at the following location:
www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/waterprotection/

Action points:

- Group members to consider contributing to the funding of the Farm TV campaign.
- Group members to submit comments on the draft rush management guidance as soon as possible.

9. Planning for 2020 – general actions, priority area actions

- DAFM circulated a template for stakeholders to record their planned actions for 2020.

10. Update on research activities

- *Pest-Man* (www.pestman.ie/) This is a new project, led by NUIG, and funded from the EPA research call launched in April 2019. It has a budget of €452,000 and is co-funded by DAFM. The project will run from now until the end of November 2023. One of the main objectives is to develop a low cost passive *in situ* method to mitigate impacts of pesticide use on drinking water quality. Representatives from DAFM's Pesticide Registration Division will participate in project steering committee meetings. The first meeting of the project steering committee is scheduled to take place in April.
- *DiffuseTools project* (cwrr.ucd.ie/diffusetools-project) (www.researchgate.net/project/DiffuseTools-Catchment-Models-and-Management-Tools-for-Diffuse-Contaminants-Sediment-Phosphorus-and-Pesticides) It was noted that the project has been extended to September 2020 and that National Critical Source Area maps should be made available during 2020.
- *Source to Tap project* (www.sourcetotap.eu) No update since the previous NPDWAG meeting.
- *WaterProtect* (water-protect.eu) (www.water-protect.ie) No update since the previous NPDWAG meeting.
- *Fairway project* (www.fairway-project.eu/) No update since the previous NPDWAG meeting.

11. Regulatory updates

- *Drinking Water Directive* – DHPLG indicated that they intend to form a Drinking Water Expert Group to advise on preparations for the transposition and implementation of the recast Drinking Water Directive. The first meeting of the group is expected to be held in March or April. DHPLG also noted that the public consultation on the Significant Water Management Issues in Ireland report, identifying issues to be addressed in the 2022-2027 River Basin Management Plan, will run until 26 June 2020.
- DAFM noted that the recast Drinking Water Directive is likely to be formally approved by both the European Council of Ministers and the European Parliament before the end of the first quarter of 2020. The recast legislation includes a definition of relevant pesticide metabolites, which are also subject to the 0.1 microgram/L threshold level for individual pesticide substances. The definition is as follows – *A pesticide metabolite is deemed relevant for water intended for human consumption if there is reason to consider that it has intrinsic properties comparable to those of the parent substance in terms of its pesticide target activity or that it generates (itself or its transformation products) a health risk to the consumer.*

12. Other stakeholder activities for noting

- No additional items were noted.

13. AOB

- DAFM clarified that Integrated Pest Management guidance for non-agricultural use is available. A document on responsible pesticide use in public, amenity and garden areas (Straight A's for Amenity) is available on the DAFM pesticides website at the following location – www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/integratedpestmanagement/