

# National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group

Webex meeting – 01 October 2020

## **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]
Cork Co. Co.	[CCC]
Environmental Protection Agency	[EPA]
Ervia	[Ervia]
Federation of Agrochemical Retail Merchants	[FARM]
Golfing Union of Ireland	[GUI]
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	[ICMSA]
Irish Farmers Association	[IFA]
Irish Water	[IW]
Kerry Co. Co.	[KCC]
Local Authority Waters Programme	[LAWPRO]
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	[NFGWS]
Teagasc/ASSAP	[Teagasc/ASSAP]
Wicklow Co. Co.	[WCC]

### **1. Welcome**

- Chair welcomed attendees to the Webex meeting.

### **2. Minutes of previous meeting**

- There were no comments on the minutes of the previous meeting (26-02-2020). If anybody had any they were asked to forward to the Chair for inclusion and revision.

### **3. EPA update on drinking water exceedances and enforcement**

- 57 drinking water exceedances (DWE) in 27 supplies were reported for the year to date (29/09/2020). MCPA accounted for the bulk of these (19) followed by *glyphosate* (11) and 2,4-D (7). This compared with 47 DWE in 21 supplies for the same period in 2019.
- Exceedances in supplies across two months were identified in Newcastle West, Emyvale, Foynes/Shannon Estuary, Glaslough and North Leitrim Regional.
- Some failures in areas with no previous history of exceedances were noted – Caragh Lake (KY), Kells-Oldcastle (MH), North Leitrim Regional (LM) and Davidstown (WX).
- Open investigation files currently number 35 (*cf* 37 at the same stage in 2019). They comprise 29 supplies on the Watch List and six supplies on the Action List (Longford Central (Lough Forbes), Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick (River Deel), Cavan RWSS (Lough Acanon), Belturbet, Co. Cavan (River Erne), Clonroche, Co. Wexford (groundwater), and Newport, Co. Mayo (Newport River)).
- There was some discussion on the increased number of *glyphosate* exceedances this year. It was noted that there was some uncertainty about the number of these exceedances because of a question about the reliability of the analytical results in some cases. It was speculated that the very dry spring/early summer had provided a

window for reseedling operations, many of which would have included spraying with *glyphosate* based products to kill the existing vegetation.

- It was also speculated that the Covid-19 lockdown may have afforded opportunities for households to progress projects in the garden, using *glyphosate* and other herbicides.

#### **4. Irish Water update on catchment focus group activities**

- Updates were received on three Catchment Focus Groups (CFG) – Lough Forbes, Newport, and Cavan.
- Activities were progressed in all CFG areas, including stakeholder meetings and various key actions, such as monitoring and engagement activities.
- Details were provided on progress in establishing a Pilot Drinking Water Source Protection Project. Meetings were held in late April with representatives from ASSAP, LAWPRO, NFGWS and the Source to Tap project to discuss potential measures to be trialled during the pilot project. These meetings focused on management plans and advice and support services, training and education and specific measures to be adopted on pesticide control and rush management (e.g. mechanical control and buffer zones). Funding issues have resulted in the deferral of the start date until 2021 but it is hoped to recommence scoping and planning towards the end of this year with a view to commencing procurement of contractors and catchment scale baseline monitoring in early 2021.
- Under the auspices of the new cross-Border EU funding programme for the 2021-2027 period (PEACE PLUS), IW and NI Water are proposing a joint project to promote sustainable water management.
- A brief summary of IW's draft Interim Pesticide Strategy was also presented to the group. The scope of the strategy is to provide a "*risk management framework to objectively understand and manage pesticide risk on a prioritised basis within drinking water catchments for public water supplies*", with the aim of "*protecting drinking water sources from pesticide contamination in order to safeguard drinking water quality and the aquatic environment*". IW propose achieving these objectives by collaborating with all relevant stakeholders. The strategy will be based on three pillars, i) Collaboration, ii) Understanding Risk and iii) Managing Risk, of which Collaboration is the biggest component. It is intended to begin this initiative with a broad based consultation with stakeholders. In response to a question, IW indicated that it anticipated implementation of the strategy between 2021 and 2024, and this would be revised and updated as necessary.

#### **5. Irish Water update on drinking water exceedances**

- IW presented their national quarterly update for Q3 2020.
- With respect to the current Action List, non-compliances in 2020 were noted in respect of Clonroche (one failing month), Longford Central (one failing month), Newcastle West (two failing months) and Newport (one failing month).
- In addition to the Action List supplies, IW requested the assistance of the NPDWAG in dealing with 23 supplies that had either two failing months or one failing month in the last quarter. These supplies comprise Ballinasloe Public Supply (Galway CC), Cavanhill (Louth CC), Glaslough (Monaghan CC), Carlow Town (Carlow CC), Emyvale (Monaghan CC), Glengarriff (Cork CC), Tully-Tullycross (Galway CC), Caragh Lake (Kerry CC), Listowel RWS (Kerry CC), Foynes/Shannon Estuary PWS (Limerick CC), North Leitrim RSW (Leitrim CC), Glanmire (Cork CC), South Leitrim Regional (Leitrim CC), South Louth & East Meath WSZ (Louth CC), Louisburg PWS

(Mayo CC), Kells-Oldcastle (Meath CC), Navan-Mid Meath (Meath CC), Kilsellagh (Sligo CC), Dundrum Regional (Tipperary CC), Davidstown (Wexford CC), South Regional (Wexford CC) Glashaboy (Cork CC), and Dublin City Council (Dublin City Council;).

- Data on pesticide exceedances (by parameter) for 2019 and 2020 show that *MCPA* exceedances decreased from 52 in 2019 to 21 in 2020 and that *glyphosate* detections increased from four in 2019 to 11 in 2020. However, as noted earlier, there is some uncertainty about the number of glyphosate exceedances in 2020 due to analytical issues.
- Regarding the 35 investigation files currently open (covering six Action List supplies and 29 Watch List supplies), ten new supplies have been added to the Watch List during 2020. These comprise Glengariff (Cork CC), Caragh Lake (Kerry CC), North Leitrim RWS (Leitrim CC), South Leitrim RWS (Leitrim CC), South Louth & East Meath WSZ (Louth CC), Louisburg PWS (Mayo CC), Kells-Oldcastle (Meath CC), Kilsellagh (Sligo CC), Davidstown (Wexford CC), and Dublin City Council (fed from Leixlip). *Glyphosate* and *MCPA* each accounted for approximately 40% of the exceedances across the newly added supplies.
- It was agreed that IW and APHA should endeavour to align timings between the APHA monitoring programme and IW's regulatory/monthly investigative monitoring programme.
- JL agreed to contact KK post-meeting to discuss prompt notification of pesticide failures to ASSAP advisors.

## 6. APHA catchment monitoring results

- APHA summarised the monitoring plan for 2020, indicating no monitoring in the Nore catchment, reduced monitoring in the Feale and Deel catchments, enhanced monitoring of Lough Forbes, and new monitoring of the Belturbet catchment.
- L. Forbes catchment (LFC) – generally a disappointing picture of *MCPA* exceedances was presented for 2020, with evidence of a significant event in the environs of Scry Bridge in mid-April. The magnitude of this breach indicated a point source breach – either filling directly from a water source with associated spillage, or product reaching a drain(s) in a farmyard. In contrast with results from 2019, the LFC in 2020 was relatively clear of *MCPA* exceedances in late winter/early spring, suggesting that the residues detected over the same period in 2019 were a result of contemporaneous applications as opposed to legacy issues. However it is not possible to be definitive about this.
- Belturbet catchment (BC) – this is a very large catchment which started well but deteriorated from early May onwards. It was suggested that the exceptionally dry spring and early summer window could have facilitated the spraying of rush dominated soils that may not have been accessible in recent years.
- Deel catchment (DC) – results from this catchment presented a very different pattern from those presented above. There were two distinct periods of detection at the end of April (week 18) and mid-June (week 26). In week 18 every sampling location yielded an *MCPA* exceedance, as did all but two locations in week 26. There were also detections/exceedances for 2,4-D and mecoprop at multiple locations during these two weeks. Between these two sampling dates there was a period of four weeks with no *MCPA* exceedances at any sampling point.
- Feale catchment (FC) – in some regards this behaved similarly to the DC, with a significant number of failures in weeks 18 and 26/28. Some detections in week 28 indicate significant events (Owveg River @ Bateman's Bridge = 6.266 µg/L *MCPA*,

Feeder Stream No. 2 @ Caherlane Bridge = 3.562 µg/L MCPA). Apart from these incidences, the catchment generally displayed good compliance with regard to pesticide detections.

- It was confirmed that the TOPPS Academy event originally scheduled for 26-28 May 2020 and subsequently rescheduled for October 2020 has now been postponed to 2021.
- Some issues relating to the service provider for laboratory analysis were also discussed.

## 7. Communications activities

- Ervia made a general request to the group to forward any good quality pictures of spraying activities or agriculture activity in the vicinity of water bodies (rivers and streams).
- 205 articles/stories in 20 counties detailing issues relating to water quality and pesticide usage. It was estimated that approximately 7.5m people would have been reached by this communication strategy. The '*Spray with Care*' media campaign was constructed around three message versions; ver1 was targeted to areas where there were no issues arising, and encouraged people and groups to keep up the good work; ver2 targeted communities where pesticides were detected in drinking water supplies but no exceedances were reported (the message here was to reinforce good practice with regard to the use of PPP and to remain vigilant); ver3 focused on areas and communities where exceedances had been detected, and what needed to be done to address the problem.
- Messages which appeared in DoneDeal and funded by LAWPRO and the DAFM also generated considerable interest.
- In all communication activities, the intention was to bring the message back to a local level, so that individuals could relate to the problem, e.g. instead of X non-compliances detected in Co. Z, X non-compliances were detected in River Y between April and May.
- In discussion Teagasc requested to be informed immediately of any local exceedances, as it undermines the credibility of the ASSAP advisors if they are out on farms and unaware of a problem locally. IW agreed to progress this and requested Teagasc to provide a national contact point for all such notifications.
- LAWPRO complimented the *Straight A's for Amenity* document, and suggested that it might be beneficial if it could be converted to an infographic for wider distribution within the amenity sector (e.g. general public and gardening centres etc.). The NFGWS indicated that they had done some work in this regard which they would be prepared to make available.
- There was some discussion on the contribution of amateur users of PPP to drinking water non-compliances. A recent article in the Farmers Journal also highlighted this issue.