

National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group

Webex meeting – 22 February 2021

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]
Confederation of Golf in Ireland	[CGI]
Cork Co. Co.	[CCC]
Environmental Protection Agency	[EPA]
Ervia	[Ervia]
Federation of Agrochemical Retail Merchants	[FARM]
Health Service Executive	[HSE]
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	[ICMSA]
Irish Water	[IW]
Local Authority Waters Programme	[LAWPRO]
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	[NFGWS]
NUI Galway	[NUIG]
Teagasc/ASSAP	[Teagasc/ASSAP]
Wicklow Co. Co.	[WCC]

1. Welcome

- Chair welcomed attendees to the Webex meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

- The minutes of the previous meeting (01-10-2020) were noted.

3. EPA update on drinking water exceedances and enforcement – preliminary overview of 2020

- 91 drinking water exceedances (DWE) in 36 supplies were reported for 2020. Overall the number of exceedances increased slightly compared to 2019, and a small increase in glyphosate exceedances was noted.
- The number of supplies with DWE also increased compared to 2019 (from 27 to 36).
- MCPA accounted for the majority of the DWE (n=46) but this represents a decreasing trend of contributions to the total exceedances.
- For 2020, MCPA accounted for approximately 50% of total DWE, whereas in 2019 MCPA accounted for approximately 63%.
- Glyphosate and 2,4-D accounted for 10 failures each in 2020.
- There are currently 39 open investigation files compared to 29 for the same period last year. Three files have been closed since the previous NPDWAG meeting (Clara/Ferbane, Kill/Ballylaneen, Cavan RWSS). Three additional files recorded no failures during 2020 but could not be closed, since no samples were taken from supplies in April due to Covid restrictions (Ballyjamesduff, Ennis, Macroom). There is some concern over the increased number of open investigation files.
- Of the 39 open investigation files, six are on the Act list and 33 are on the Watch list.
- The six files currently on the Act list are Longford Central, Newcastle West, Belturbet, Clonroche, Newport and Foynes/Shannon Estuary.

- Five supplies that had no previous instances of exceedances were added to the Watch list in 2020 (Caragh Lake (Kerry), North Leitrim Regional (Leitrim), Davidstown (Wexford), Bantry Cahernacrin (Cork), Ballymagroarty (Donegal)).

4. Irish Water updates – drinking water exceedances, Catchment Focus Group activities, Draft Interim Pesticide Strategy

- The latest quarterly update from IW (Q4 2020) was presented. The results presented by IW were in agreement with those presented by the EPA. The supplies and the corresponding number of failures and number of compliant months were briefly reviewed.
- In addition to the files on the Act list, IW highlighted 19 files from the Watch list where they are seeking the assistance of NPDWAG members. These files were selected because they had two failing months during 2020 or one failing month during Q4 of 2020.
- IW also provided an update on the activities of Catchment Focus Groups. The monitoring conducted in the Lough Forbes catchment during 2020 will inform the targeting of the monitoring programme for 2021, with a focus on the Rinn and feeder stream sub-catchments.
- The Newport Catchment Focus Group intends to start catchment monitoring in 2021. Communications initiatives were noted, including launching the NFGWS ‘Let it Bee’ project in the catchment and a focus on including a biodiversity theme in messaging on water quality protection.
- In the Cavan Catchment Focus Group area, monitoring was undertaken during the winter by some Group Water Schemes. Online awareness raising initiatives are being explored and there will be a focus on including biodiversity awareness in the messaging approach. It was noted that the IW Pilot Drinking Water Source Protection project is due to be launched in the catchment during 2021, and that there will be ongoing cooperation with the Source to Tap project.
- An update on IW’s Interim Pesticide Strategy was presented. The framework of the strategy was presented, which consists of three pillars ((1) Collaboration, (2) Understanding Risk, (3) Managing Risk) with different sub-elements within each pillar. Approaches to evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy were outlined. Feedback from NPDWAG members was requested by 24 February.
- Discussion point: Options for stakeholder actions in the Foynes/Shannon Estuary catchment area were discussed. The possibility of a combined approach, covering the Feale and Deel catchments as well, was considered.
- Action point: The existing local Catchment Focus Group covering the Feale and Deel catchments should be asked to meet again and to include the Foynes/Shannon Estuary area in its remit. IW will contact Kerry Co. Co. about this.
- Action point: LAWPRO to determine if the Foynes/Shannon Estuary area is on their Priority Areas for Action list.

5. APHA catchment monitoring results – overview of 2020, plans for 2021

- An update of the APHA catchment monitoring programme was presented.
- In the Lough Forbes catchment, winter monitoring of raw water was undertaken in November, December and January. Further samples will be taken in February and March.
- In the winter of 2019, one exceedance was reported in November with no exceedances reported for December, January, February and March. In the winter of 2020, one exceedance was reported in November and no exceedances in December

and January. Although very low levels were detected in the latter two months it was suggested that these detections are not related to legacy use. The overall pattern indicates that detections in this catchment relate mainly to contemporaneous use of pesticides, rather than to carryover of residues from previous applications.

- The 2021 water sampling plan is similar in structure to that of preceding years – weekly sampling (spring), followed by fortnightly sampling and then weekly sampling (autumn).
- The APHA programme plans to maintain the 15 sampling points in Belturbet, 18 sampling points in Lough Forbes, two to three sampling points in the Feale catchment, 11 sampling points in the Deel catchment and eight sampling points in the Newport catchment (a total of 54-55 sampling points).
- The Newport monitoring points were outlined and the justification for the sampling locations was provided.
- The APHA stewardship campaign in 2020 was heavily disrupted by COVID-19 restrictions. Notwithstanding this, relevant information continued to be provided in a variety of ways, including dissemination of point-of-sale material (e.g. posters etc.) and the use of social media.
- It was noted that APHA will deliver a presentation on pesticides and water quality as part of the Teagasc Signpost Series (scheduled for 12 March).
- It was suggested that the message on responsible pesticide use should also be directed towards amateur users.

6. Pest-Man project (Pesticide Management for better water quality) **(www.pestman.ie)**

- NUI Galway presented an overview of the project.
- The project has been running since 2020. It is co-funded by DAFM and the EPA, and is a collaboration involving NUI Galway, Teagasc and University College Cork.
- The project uses a Source, Pathway, Receptor approach and is comprised of three work packages.
- Work Package 1 (WP 1) aims to identify relevant pesticides for examination, taking into account information on pesticide usage in Ireland.
- WP 2 is looking at the effect of the soil environment on pesticide persistence and mobility, with a view to developing a GIS-based Critical Source Area model to identify areas that could be vulnerable to losses of pesticides.
- WP 3 is focused on pesticide remediation and involves the assessment of different types of media to determine their ability to adsorb pesticides.
- Passive treatment units for testing under field conditions will be developed based on lab results for the adsorption capacity of different types of media (e.g. biochars, granular activated carbon etc.).
- Three sites from the Teagasc Agricultural Catchments Programme (Corduff, Cregduff, Dunleer) will be used for the field testing of the passive treatment units. Pesticide losses to water bodies in these catchments are currently being monitored.

7. Communications activities – updates and plans for 2021

- There will be national and regional media spring pre-spraying season campaigns, which may be followed by radio interviews in some cases.
- Catchment Focus Group press releases and targeted interviews will also be provided and material added to social media and the Irish Water website.
- Ad hoc summer and autumn national and regional media campaigns will be conducted if necessary.

- Irish Water will sponsor the Green Schools Programme again this year. The focus of this programme will be on water source protection.
- As part of Engineers Week in March, there will be a sponsored broadcast on MidWest Radio on 4 March focusing on pesticides and drinking water.
- The success of last year's campaigns on DoneDeal and Facebook was noted. Funding would need to be provided by group members if it is planned to run similar campaigns this year.
- The link between water protection and biodiversity was noted as a key feature to be highlighted in messaging campaigns for this year.
- Action point: NPDWAG members to consider if they can provide funding to support NPDWAG communications initiatives for 2021.
- Action point: NPDWAG members to liaise with Ervia if planning any communications activities.

8. Planning for 2021 – general actions, priority area actions

- DAFM will circulate a table to members to note specific actions for this year. Please complete and return to DAFM.

9. Other updates and discussion

- LAWPRO informed the group about a useful Guidelines booklet from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan aimed at sports clubs (Pollinator-friendly management of Sports Clubs. All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, Guidelines 11. National Biodiversity Data Centre Series No. 23, Waterford. October, 2020). Messages about pesticides and water quality are included in this Guideline due to LAWPRO engagement with the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- LAWPRO staff have given training to private agricultural consultants on water quality (approx. 100 attendees at training event).
- It was noted that the GAA Green Club initiative is addressing water quality and biodiversity issues. LAWPRO and IW are providing assistance on the water theme. CGI also provided useful information to the GAA concerning sustainable pitch management, based on their experience of sustainable golf course management.
- The Golf 2030 initiative, being implemented by the R&A, is funding approx. 15 projects in the UK and Ireland to address issues relating to the impact of golf on the environment. Pesticide availability and use is one of the areas being looked at.

10. AOB

- No AOB items.