

Meeting Highlights  
Michigan Water Quality Monitoring Advisory Board  
Monday, June 10, 2002

Focus Topics: Information Reporting; Monitoring for Emerging Issues

**Members Present:** Dean Premo, Debbie Hayes, Elwin Coll, Mick DeGraeve, and Richard Rediske.

**Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Surface Water Quality Division (SWQD) Staff Present:** Dave Hamilton, Jim Grant, Jerry Saalfeld, Gary Kohlhepp, Christine Aiello, and Jason Smith.

**DEQ, Land and Water Management Division (LWMD) Staff Present:** Diana Klemans, Ralph Bednarz, and Richard Sorrell.

**Public Present:** None.

The third meeting of the Michigan Water Quality Monitoring Advisory Board (Board) was held on June 10, 2002, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Constitution Hall in Lansing. Dr. Premo of White Water Associates, Inc., chaired the meeting (agenda attached).

#### HIGHLIGHTS FROM OPENING COMMENTS

Mr. Hamilton informed the Board that House Bill 5958, recently passed by the House, would alter Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) legislation regarding the use of the Clean Water Fund (CWF) for monitoring. Mr. Hamilton indicated that the Board's involvement with the legislation was not necessary at this time, but that he would keep them informed about its status.

Mr. Hamilton informed the Board that the SWQD's programs are being audited this year (as they are every three years) by the Auditor General. The report by the Auditor General on the results of this audit is due out in 2003.

Mr. Hamilton informed the Board that pending staff retirements will result in the loss of a number of senior staff, and could present challenges to the SWQD.

#### INFORMATION REPORTING: BOARD SUGGESTIONS

(Note: See meeting highlights from February 13, 2002 meeting, for additional suggestions from Board pertaining to information reporting).

1. It's very challenging finding the DEQ's monitoring reports and related information on line.  
Reply: We are aware of this concern and are pursuing ways to make this information more easily accessible. We do intend to enable the user to access monitoring information via geographic cues such as counties, rivers, etc.
2. Investigate the EPA's "Surf Your Watershed" web site, for an information reporting model that works well for a non-technical audience.

3. Regularly send each legislator an email with a link to water quality data relevant to their district. Likewise, let legislators know when the DEQ plans to be in their district carrying out monitoring.
4. Create an informative PowerPoint presentation for the general public and make it available to teachers and others via the DEQ web site.
5. The DEQ should make as much use of historical data as possible in trend reports. All present were in agreement, however, that historical data of questionable or uncertain quality should not be used.
6. Reach the public via press releases, library displays, billboards, attendance at county fairs, etc.

## MONITORING FOR EMERGING ISSUES

### Presentations

Mr. Kohlhepp gave a presentation entitled, "Water Quality Monitoring for Emerging Issues," in which he reviewed the approach currently taken by the DEQ to date in addressing emerging issues. He explained that the DEQ uses information gleaned from outside sources, including science and the media, to help identify emerging issues, and that this approach is necessary because the DEQ is not a research organization. He also asked for suggestions from the Board on how the DEQ might better address the goal of monitoring for emerging issues.

### Board Suggestions

1. Create an expert panel that can advise the DEQ on emerging issues.
2. One approach to developing a screening program for emerging issues would be to establish regional reference sites – not minimally impacted sites, but sites that are representative of regional issues/land use activities.
3. Monitor from a whole ecosystem perspective, so if something is going on in a waterbody, you'll be more likely to see it. Broad screens exist for endocrine disruptors and these could be used in such a monitoring scheme.
4. The DEQ should be monitoring for methyl mercury. This is what bioaccumulates and water quality standards don't account for it.
5. Monitor to find out what the long-term effects are of herbicide application in inland lakes.
6. Determine the health effects of subsistence fishing. Reply: DEQ's Fish Contaminant Monitoring Project includes species typically consumed by subsistence anglers, such as carp and catfish; the project is, if anything biased toward areas where contamination is expected. The DEQ also works with the Department of Community Health to communicate appropriate consumption advisories to sensitive groups, such as subsistence anglers. Direct monitoring of human health effects, however, is outside the scope of the Strategy, and does not fall within the authority of the DEQ.

7. Look for antibiotic resistance in bacteria. Reply: The DEQ has submitted a project proposal to the Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund to analyze for the presence of antibiotics in selected surface waters, and to test for antibiotic resistance in bacteria found in those surface waters.
8. Monitor ecosystem stability and function, such as by measuring time-to-breakdown of leaf litter in a stream. Such monitoring wouldn't require counting a single macroinvertebrate.
9. Develop methods to differentiate between *E. coli* originating from human vs. animal sources. Reply: The DEQ is pursuing this through Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund grants.
10. Monitor exotic species introductions, if they are not already being monitored. Reply: DEQ staff will determine what agency (if any) is responsible for tracking exotic species in Michigan. *Follow-up: There is no mandate in state law for monitoring, except for those species regulated by the Department of Agriculture for aquaculture and agriculture. Sea Grant loosely and unofficially tracks zebra mussel infested lakes, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service keeps very close tabs on sea lamprey as part of their ongoing control efforts. Additionally, researchers have been known to develop and publish informal lists on occasion.*

#### ACTION ITEMS

1. The Board will complete its first annual report to the Governor by October 1, 2002. This report shall include the Board's evaluation of the overall Strategy ("A Strategic Environmental Quality Monitoring Program for Michigan's Surface Waters," January 1997).
2. Dr. Premo will take the lead in developing the draft annual report, which will be distributed to the group in advance of the next scheduled meeting in preparation for discussion during the meeting. In anticipation of developing this draft, Dr. Premo specifically requested that Board members provide their comments to him on the adequacy of the Strategy by August 1, 2002.
3. DEQ staff will take the lead in determining what agency (if any) is responsible for tracking exotic species in Michigan.
4. Ms. Aiello will take the lead in developing a draft of the meeting highlights.

#### NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 4, 2002.