

Drinking Water and Wastewater Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 8, 2020 – GoTo Meeting

The meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

1/ Welcome and opening remarks – Paul Miller, P.E., Director, Division of Water opened the meeting with an introduction to his education, experience, and role at the Division and with the Advisory Councils, and recognized the important work that the groups have done in the past.

2/ Introductions and announcements – Amanda LeFevre, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. for Environmental Protection welcomed EEC Secretary Goodman, Deputy Secretary Lyons, and all attendees.

- There is ample interest in working towards a more organized framework for the DWAC and WWAC for better and more efficient use of its time in working on important issues. Committee chairpersons were asked to list their names and committees in the GoTo meeting chat.
- The impending change in federal administrations has delayed several potential policy changes, including WOTUS and PFAS limits. In the interim, the Department has been working on Kentucky's infrastructure needs, a revised Nutrient Reduction Strategy, considering further changes to 401 KAR Chapters 8 and 11, and continuing operator shortage issues.

3/ Division of Water and Department for Environmental Protection updates

Jory Becker, Manager, DOW Water Infrastructure Branch

- Prior to the pandemic, DOW received about 20 – 25% of construction permit applications electronically, now 99+% of applications are electronic. Despite the pandemic, 2020 has been at least an average year, if not above average, for construction.
- 2022 call for projects closed on December 4. The DOW will work with utilities to update profiles by mid-January before ranking begins
- Drinking water needs a survey to help determine funding levels for State Revolving Funds, but COVID-19 delayed data collection. A status call is scheduled on Dec 14.

Sarah Gaddis, Manager, DOW Field Offices Branch

- Even though the pandemic required changes to how work is performed, standards have not been compromised. DOW staff are practicing all safety protocols when they are visiting facilities to keep everyone as safe as possible.
- While the pandemic has affected several utilities from operations to offices, all have been great at utilizing available networks and resources.
- New protocols, including “virtual” sanitary surveys are being developed; these may include online meetings in advance of the survey, receiving electronic records rather than requiring site visits to inspect them, etc.

Jason Hurt, Manager, Surface Water Permitting Branch

- March presented several permitting challenges when two General Permit renewals resulted in a large number of applications at the same time that offices were closing due to the pandemic. The branch was able to remain effective, and so far this year has issued 1800 final decisions; of which about 1500 were general permit applications.

- The branch is moving towards expanded electronic submittal of individual permit applications. It can receive documents via email and web portal, while staff are still processing mailed applications a few times per week.
- The EPA guidance regarding PFAS limits only applied to states that do not have permitting authority (MA, NH, and NM), but the branch is currently reviewing the guidance for any insight to future PFAS policy.

Alicia Jacobs, Manager, Drinking Water Branch

- The Drinking Water Primacy Package received EPA approval, which was years-long in the making.
- Though DW electronic reporting is new, still under development, and has challenges with staffing and workflow, 68% of systems reported electronically in November.
- The proposed Lead & Copper Revised Rule and other federal rules are currently on hold; the Division is waiting to see whether/how the EPA moves forward.

Jessica Wilhoite, Manager, DCA Operator Certification Branch

- The pandemic forced in-person testing to cease from March through July which created a backlog. Between July and early November, 250 operators were tested which eased the backlog, but due to high infection rates, in-person testing stopped again at least through December. Resuming in-person testing will depend on infection rates.
- Test prep has been recorded and is available online for free, most materials are now available online, license renewals were extended from July 30 to September 30 (renewal rate is about 84% which is about average); and continuing to work with UK on a wastewater treatment and collection manual
- Amanda LeFevre added that the Division is working towards an online testing pilot program

4/ Subcommittee status and reports

Compliance and Regulations (Kim Padgett) – has met four times and is currently working on electronic Monthly Operating Reports. Issues that affect increased participation in electronic reporting are computer issues including limited connectivity/broadband access in rural areas; implementation still requires manual data entry so a process for direct upload of data needs to be developed, etc.

Water Reuse (Valerie Lucas) – Next Round Brewing received EEC's 2002 Resource Caretaker Award and Kentucky ACEC's Grand Award. Clean Water Professionals is hosting a Water Reuse webinar on December 12 at 12:30 which will include a presentation by Jory Becker, Manager, DOW Water Infrastructure Branch.

Recruitment and Development (Amanda LeFevre) – A Recruitment and Development Summit to share ideas on how to get more candidates into the industry is planned for 2021.

5/ Open Discussion

- COVID-19 vaccination distribution priorities – Vaccine distribution is within the purview of the Kentucky Department for Public Health, which has already submitted a draft Vaccine Distribution Plan available at <https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-covid-vaccine>
- Healthy At Home Utility Assistance Fund – The administration is making all the outreach efforts that it can with the December 30 application deadline quickly approaching. All parties were encouraged to publicize the availability of funds. PSC is reaching out to its regulated community.

- DW and WW Advisory Council and Subcommittee Framework – The history of the Councils and their work was briefly discussed. The joint meetings were originally scheduled to prevent people who were members of both Councils from having to expend extra time/travel for separate meetings, but with current web-based options, some separate meetings may be more useful now. Different options were mentioned and will form the basis for future discussion.

6/ DW and WW Advisory Council 2021 meeting schedule (interim meetings will probably be scheduled as streamlining the Councils and committees takes shape):

Tuesday, March 9

Tuesday, June 8

Wednesday, September 7

Tuesday, December 14

The meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m.