



State of Utah

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Department of
Environmental Quality

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DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Agency and stakeholder water quality partners

FROM: Erica Gaddis, Assistant Director, Division of Water Quality

DATE: 04/20/2015

SUBJECT: Water Quality Health Advisory Panel

DWQ is organizing a Water Quality Health Advisory Panel whose objectives are to coordinate and communicate on water quality issues associated with specific public health concerns. The primary current focus of the Panel will be coordination around *E. coli*, mercury, and Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). However, we expect that other issues may arise in the future which would be appropriate for the Panel to address. The panel requires dissolution and consolidation of the existing *E. coli* workgroup, Mercury workgroup, and ad hoc HABs workgroup. Combining these groups into a single advisory panel will be more efficient by eliminating overlap among members of the workgroup. Also, it will help ensure that solutions to these interrelated problems are more consistent.

Panel Goals and Objectives

All water quality problems are multifaceted and this is particularly true for those with the potential to affect human health. The new panel will have two primary goals. First, the panel will facilitate interagency coordination and communication. The second goal is to ensure that the monitoring, assessment and response to water quality problems related to health effects are based on sound science; hence the proposed panel membership will be comprised of individuals with a breadth of expertise and experience. While the primary focus of the panel is human health, the Panel will consider effects of these contaminants on all beneficial uses including aquatic life and agriculture.

The objectives of the panel include several generic objectives as well as issue specific objectives.

- Develop or refine, as necessary, water quality indicators, monitoring strategies, and assessment methods related to water quality issues that have human health implications. Work with DWQ's Water Quality Standards workgroup on numeric standards, as appropriate.
- Develop consistent statewide policies outlining actions to be taken if/when indicators suggest threats to recreation and drinking water uses as well as threats to wildlife, livestock, and pets.
- Further develop the fish consumption advisory methodology, specifically how to manage annual variability of mercury concentrations at a waterbody and when to remove an advisory if the data indicate there is no longer a public health risk.
- Communicate a unified message regarding public health risks associated with specific events based on a comprehensive review of the data and relevant literature.
- Develop and refine field and laboratory Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Sample Analysis Plans (SAPs) and related data management and analytical methods.

- Review and communicate technical information about *E. coli*, mercury and Harmful Algal Blooms monitoring results.
- Develop prioritization criteria for future sampling of water bodies across the state for health related concerns including *E. coli*, mercury, and harmful algae.
- Disperse training information to local partners and provide regional training (e.g. IDEXX).
- Review public information materials, including fact sheets, pamphlets, advisory notices, and website content to inform the public about health advisories and closures of recreational waters.
- Identify and prioritize research to better understand risks to human health, livestock, and wildlife, or to solve water quality problems that are currently known.

Logistics

Meetings will be held once in the spring and once in the winter. The purpose of the spring meeting is to recommend monitoring locations and review coordination processes in the event of a health related water quality event. Alternatively, this meeting could be held the week before the Local Health Department – DEQ annual meeting to ensure a consistent message across health departments. The purpose of the winter meeting will be to review the data collected during the summer monitoring season and any public advisories that were subsequently identified. Any process improvements related to health related advisories will also be identified for work over the winter season. The Utah Department of Health has agreed to co-chair the panel with DWQ. The panel would be staffed by DWQ program coordinators including Calah Seese (*E. coli*), Jeffrey Ostermiller (Harmful Algal Blooms), and Amy Dickey (Mercury).

Membership

We have identified the following membership ‘slots’ for the advisory panel. We are soliciting participation from agencies specified in the table below, the Mercury and *E. coli* workgroups, as well as asking for nominations from broader stakeholder communities.

Stakeholder Group or Organization	Individual
Co-Chair, Division of Water Quality, DEQ	Chris Bittner, Toxicologist, DWQ
Co-Chair, Environmental Epidemiology Division, UDOH	Craig Dietrich, Toxicologist, DOH
Division of Drinking Water, DEQ	Janet Lee, Rules Section
Utah Public Health Laboratory, UDOH	Robyn Atkinson, Director UPHL
Division of Wildlife Resources, DNR	Roger Wilson, Aquatic Section Chief
Division of State Parks, DNR	Ty Hunter, Boating Program Coordinator
Utah Dept of Agriculture and Food (Fish health)	Anna Forest, Fish Health Specialist
Utah Dept of Agriculture and Food (Veterinary professional)	Chris Crnich, Field Veterinarian
Local Health Department (Urban)	Louis Cooper, Environmental Health Director, Weber-Morgan Health Department
Local Health Department (Rural)	Brandon Bradford, Environmental Health Director, Southeast Utah District Health Dept.
Tribal Representative	TBD
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Chris Cline, Ecological Services
US Geological Survey	Chris Shope, Hydrologist
US EPA	TBD
National Park Service	Mark Anderson, Aquatic Ecologist, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area
Ecology/limnology/contaminant expert(s)	TBD
Medical/Public Health Professional	TBD
Boating/Fishing recreation interests	TBD
Environmental interests	TBD
Drinking water utilities interests	TBD
Publically Owned Treatment Works (POTWs) interests	TBD
Agricultural interests	TBD
Mining interests	TBD
Industry interests	TBD