

# Water Quality and Health Advisory Panel

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The Utah Division of Water Quality and the Utah Department of Health are organizing a Water Quality Health and 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.

### Membership

Members of this panel were selected through a nomination process in Spring 2015. We received multiple qualified nominations for nearly all of the identified stakeholder and expertise slots (non-agency positions). We also added several slots to accommodate requests for additional perspectives in the group. We aimed to select people with broad geographic distribution, diverse expertise, expertise that aligns with current DWQ and DOH issues/focus, gender balance, and where possible we selected individuals that are not already or have not recently served on another DWQ workgroup. We were surprised and pleased by the level of interest from the community in this new workgroup. We expect that this will translate into additional partnerships related to water quality and health issues. We also envision the WQHAP to work as currently configured for 3 years at which time we will revisit whether the make-up of membership slots is appropriate and provide opportunities for new participants to replace some of the current panel members. In the meantime, as always, we encourage all stakeholders and partners to attend our panel meetings, contribute to the discussion, and review the documents that are developed as part of this process.

<b>Stakeholder Group or Organization</b>	<b>Individual</b>
Co-Chair, Division of Water Quality, DEQ	Erica Gaddis, Assistant Director, 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
Fish health expertise	Anna Forest, Fish Health Specialist, UDAF
Veterinary professional	Chris Crnich, Field Veterinarian, UDAF
Local Health Department (Urban)	Louis Cooper, Weber-Morgan Health Department
Local Health Department (Rural)	Jason Garrett, Utah County Health Department
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Chris Cline, Ecological Services, USFWS
US Geological Survey	Chris Shope, Hydrologist, USGS
US EPA	Sandi Spence, Region 8, EPA
National Park Service	Mark Anderson, Aquatic Ecologist, NPS
Utah Poison Control Center (UPCC)	Barbara Crouch, Utah Poison Control Center (UPCC)
Epidemiologist	Cindy Burnett, UDOH, Bureau of Epidemiology
Ecologist/limnologist	Wayne Wurtsbaugh, Watershed Sciences, USU Theron Miller, Jordan River/Farmington Bay Water Quality Council
Public health expertise	Jim VanDerslice, Director Office of Public Health, U of U
Boating/Fishing recreation interests	Paul Dremman, Utah Anglers Coalition
Environmental interests	Melissa Stamp, Red Butte Gardens and Friends of Great Salt Lake
Drinking water utilities interests	Michelle Deras, Weber Basin Water Conservancy District
Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs)	Lee Rawlings, South Valley Water Reclamation District
Agricultural interests	Joel Ferry, Little Mountain Cattle Co.
Mining and industry interests	Jeff Davis, Cardno

### Logistics

We envision that meetings will be held once in the spring and once in the winter, though the group may need to meet for frequently at the outset. 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

*Organized by: Utah Division of Water Quality and Utah Department of Health*

July 21, 2015

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*), Benjamin Holcomb (Harmful Algal Blooms), and Amy Dickey (Mercury).

Contact Information

For more information about this group please contact:

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