

Toxics Advisory Committee (TAC)

Meeting Highlights

January 21, 2026

Members and Alternates:

Delaware

John Cargill (DNREC)

New Jersey

Roop Guha (NJDEP)

New York

Jason Fagel (NYSDEC)

Pennsylvania

Harmonie Hawley (PADEP)

EPA Region 2

Kathryn Flynn

EPA Region 3

Taylor Krolak

U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Sean Bugel

Academia

David Velinsky (Drexel/ANSDU)

Agriculture

Scott Sheely

Environmental/Watershed (2 members)

Tracey Carluccio (DRN)

Diana Oviedo-Vargas (Stroud)

Industry

Scott Northey (Chemours)

Public Health

Eric Bind (NJDOH)

Municipal

Jason Cruz (PWD)

Other Attendees:

Jason Fry (CCMUA)

Melanie Knezich (City of Philadelphia)

Tara Ortiz (Suspected Spam)

Bhanu Paudel (DNREC)

Kristen B. Kavanagh (DRBC)

Elaine Panuccio (DRBC)

Jeremy L. Conkle (DRBC)

Namsu Suk (DRBC)

Matt Amato (DRBC)

Naomi Mendelsohn (DRBC)

Tomas Amidon (DRBC)

Li Zheng (DRBC)

Pam Bush (DRBC)

Kate Schmidt (DRBC)

Andrew Thuman (HDR)

Brenda Gotanda (Manko, Gold...)

Dan Milleman (NJDEP)

Stephen Seeberger (NJDEP)

Brent Gotsch (NYC DEP)

Zachary Salada (PFBC)

Matthew Fritch (PWD)

Linda O'Donnell (PWD)

1. Call to Order and Introductions – Scott Northey, Chair (DNREC)

Namsu Suk announced John Yagecic's retirement from DRBC at the end of December 2025.

Conkle read DRBC's webinar security statement and committee members introduced themselves. See attendance listed above. He then stated that there were 5 openings for the TAC and that information on those openings would be posted on the DRBC TAC website.

Northey called for the passing of the January 21, 2024 meeting highlights. The motion passed.

2. DRBC Toxics Water Quality Criteria

Conkle stated that DRBC is working to update its toxics criteria to better align with the estuary basin states (DE, PA and NJ) and the EPA-recommended criteria. The current criteria were last updated in 2010 and need revision to reflect the latest science. Based on discussions with co-regulators, DRBC will update existing criteria and adopt new criteria where the estuary basin states have adopted the EPA-recommended criteria for Table 5 (Aquatic Life) and Tables 6 & 7 (Human Health) in their Water Regulations. Additionally, Tables 6 and 7 will be combined into one table to more closely match the format of the estuary basin states and EPA. CAS numbers will also be added to the updated tables.

Tracey Carluccio (Delaware Riverkeeper Network) asked if there will be two separate rulemakings due to the multiple phased approach. Conkle answered that there would be more than one rulemaking to update all of the criteria.

Carluccio also asked whether the adoption could be expedited to adopt missing toxics criteria to meet the Clean Water Act. Suk responded that DRBC is not governed by the Clean Water Act. However, in the mainstem Delaware River, states defer/refer to DRBC's criteria. If DRBC does not have criteria, states default to their criteria. So there is no gap in the presence of Water Quality Criteria. However, problems could arise when neighboring states, like NJ and PA have differing criteria. During the rulemaking process the comment period is 45 days and up to 60 days.

Pam Bush (DRBC) commented in the chat: "Just FYI, the 45-60 days of written comment overlap with (do not all follow) the 45 days preceding the public hearing."

3. Freshwater ammonium criteria updates – Jeremy Conkle

Conkle briefly discussed that DRBC will be including ammonia with these proposed updates to its Aquatic Life criteria. He shared that NJ, PA and DE are aligned in criteria but that NY has not adopted the criteria, although they have been working on them.

4. DRBC Toxics Monitoring Updates – Jeremy Conkle

DRBC has recently finished a few projects. First, Conkle discussed their PFAS PA Coastal Zone Management (PACZM) program's Yr 2 (water, sediment, fish). He stated that there were increasing concentrations of PFAS in the water column when moving from upstream to downstream. DRBC also recently completed and released a report for the PDE BIL Toxics grant. This project included sampling of 12 tributaries from Trenton to Wilmington, with chemicals analyzed including organochlorine insecticides, PCBs, PFAS, dioxins/furans, and others. DRBC also helped with sampling for a USEPA and University of Rhode Island study using passive samplers in air and water at four sites from Easton to Trenton. This monitoring took place monthly for 12 months.

Conkle also said several DRBC projects were nearly complete. The first discussed was the third year of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) PFAS study, for which he is currently working on the final report. Conkle also assisted the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) with a passive sampling study of PFAS in the Delaware & Raritan Canal. The fieldwork and analytical results were complete, but NJWSA and DRBC are still working on the final report. That study consisted of eight passive samplers deployed along the canal within the Basin, and 8 deployed at sites in the canal outside of the Basin. Concentrations and the suite of PFAS compounds were consistent at canal sites within the Delaware River Basin. The sites outside of the basin indicate that PFAS levels increase along some stretches of the canal, but the source of PFAS is not yet known.

Conkle next discussed the NFWF 6PPD-Q project. He had found concentrations of the compounds in Valley Creek that may be at levels toxic to Brook Trout fry. He said the next steps were to wait for more studies to better understand sub-lethal thresholds for things like impacts to growth and survivorship in brook trout before doing additional studies.

Conkle last provided a look at upcoming projects. In October, DRBC submitted a PACZM proposal to conduct a trackdown of PFAS in five tributaries. A decision on whether the funding will be awarded is expected in October 2026. DRBC has also been working to synthesize publicly available PFAS data from the Delaware River Basin and to share it in a web app so anyone can view it on a map. Lastly, Conkle mentioned that DRBC was adding PFAS monitoring to the Boat Run in 2026 and that the plan would be to continue sampling PFAS for the next few years.

Matt Amato (DRBC) then demonstrated the yet-to-be-released PFAS web app. Dan Millemann (NJDEP) noted that NJDEP has a similar effort underway to summarize all water and tissue data. Millemann asked whether DRBC's web app would update automatically. Amato explained that updates would be manual, requiring a few clicks and a quick data review. Diana Oviedo-Vargas (Stroud) asked whether the app was public yet. Amato replied that it has not been shared publicly, but a test link could be provided for feedback. She then asked whether 6PPD-Q samples were collected during storm events and whether the highest concentrations corresponded with them. Conkle responded that the high values in Valley Creek were from rain events, and everything else was relatively low. The sampling design did not capture the first flush. Oviedo-Vargas recommended sampling across a storm.

Carluccio commented on the PFAS air samples about how they will be telling when those results are interpreted. Conkle replied that he was not sure when the results would be released since it is the work of a University of Rhode Island graduate student. Carluccio also asked when the PFAS web app would be released. Conkle stated that more internal reviews and clearances were needed. Suk commented that some internal review and QC were still needed. Carluccio then asked when the NJWSA report on PFAS in the Delaware & Raritan Canal might be made public. Conkle mentioned that NJWSA was working on a round of edits but he did not know when it would be released. He also mentioned that NJDEP was also working with NJWSA to identify sources of PFAS in the Canal.

Matt Fritch (Philadelphia Water Department) asked if PFAS were summed regardless of method. Conkle responded that the sum of PFAS includes everything detected in that sample regardless of method used.

5. TAC Member Updates

NJDEP: Milleman stated that NJ was currently wrapping up PFAS sampling project on the Musconetcong River specifically targeting a sludge disposal site at Rt 431. Roop Guha is leading the update for 94 toxics, which now includes PFAS and 1,4-dioxane. While there is no set timeline yet, triennial meetings are planned for late summer/early fall. Guha also stated that a stakeholder meeting (in person and virtual) will be held on February 3rd to discuss "Category 1" water nominations, focusing on exceptional ecological, recreational, and water supply significance.

DNREC: John Cargill stated that Delaware completed annual fish sampling for the fall rotation in Army Creek and Appoquinimink. This year's rotation moves to Shellpot and Christina to test for the "full gambit" (PCBs, pesticides, mercury, PFAS, dioxins). They wrapped up the 2nd year of the tidal resilience study in the Christina and Brandywine. Delaware also initiated a hydrodynamic study for

the lower Christina and Brandywine to support future sediment remediation. The USEPA approved a restoration plan for the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal in September 2025 as an alternative to a TMDL. This plan focuses on removing pollution sources and disrupting the pathways that carry them. Delaware recently conducted a survey that showed ~45% of residents are still unaware of PFAS risks. DNREC's current Equus database is incompatible with WQX, preventing automatic toxics data uploads (though Boat Run data is automated). Last, DNREC is funding a joint project with ANS & DRBC to analyze archived sediment cores (previously analyzed for PCBs) for PFAS and microplastics.

NYSDEC: Jason Fagel said New York adopted Guidance Values for 40 PFAS compounds and 1,4-dioxane in 2023. New York has established a long-term program (2022–2026), where they sample 40 lakes and 40 streams selected randomly across the state. All data is being uploaded to WQX. New York's Division of Materials Management is paying for PFAS analysis for municipalities and providing the necessary sampling bottles. To make all this information more accessible, New York maintains a "PFAS & 1,4-Dioxane Information Portal" as a primary public resource. <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/2a5c1a31514c4965882917e74ec31c1f>

Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture: Scott Sheely discussed how the society was founded in 1785 and now focuses on turf management and soil expertise. They have a virtual webinar scheduled for February 5th on the History of Nitrogen Fertilizer (featuring a professor from Kansas State). They also have a field trip scheduled for March 5th to visit Lincoln Financial Field to discuss fertilizer and water management with the head groundskeeper. Last, on June 4th, they will have a field trip to the Philadelphia Cricket Club to study fertilizer impacts on water quality.

PWD: Fritch stated that they were currently sampling PFAS at Schuylkill River intakes and effluent, specifically evaluating GAC (Granular Activated Carbon) performance. They were also working on establishing a clear baseline for PFOA and PFOS in surface waters above drinking water intakes on the Schuylkill to measure the effectiveness of future reduction efforts.

6. Other Updates

Millemann added that NJDEP was working on a BAF study along the Delaware and other research projects. However, the data isn't all in WQC, and they are working to upload it.

7. Motion to adjourn

John Cargill moved to adjourn the meeting, and Tracy Carluccio seconded.