

# GenX health goal gets stamp of approval

Posted Aug 20, 2018 at 2:36 PM Updated Aug 20, 2018 at 5:46 PM

The 140 parts per trillion health goal has been a point of concern since DHHS lowered it in July 2017.

RALEIGH -- The Secretaries' Science Advisory Board (SAB) has deemed North Carolina's provisional GenX health goal of 140 parts per trillion appropriate, according to a draft report released to the public and reviewed by the board on Monday.

"The board commends the use of the current reference dose and provisional health goal developed by (the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services) as the foundation for protecting affected and sensitive populations and providing corresponding risk assessments and advice," the SAB wrote in its draft report.

Monday's report marks the conclusion of nearly 10 months of review of DHHS' health goal, which was originally set at nearly 71,000 ppt in June 2017 before [being lowered in July 2017](#) to 140 ppt after a different set of risk assumptions were used to set the number. Several revisions were proposed during the meeting, which will be incorporated into the report before it undergoes a 30-day public comment period, potentially resulting in additional tweaks.

Fayetteville Works is a sprawling manufacturing site along the Cape Fear River about 100 miles upstream from Wilmington. Three companies have operations there -- Chemours, DuPont and Kuraray America.

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The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) rechartered the SAB last year after GenX emerged as a potential threat to public health, tasking it with reviewing scientific data about new substances. Made up of scientific experts and public health professionals from across the state, the board has also been tasked with reviewing hexavalent chromium and trichloroethylene.

"It's a long journey with GenX, it is not necessarily easy, and we've reached an end point of some sort," Jamie Bartram, chairman of the Secretaries' Science Advisory Board, said during Monday's meeting. Bartram is the director of The Water Institute at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Earlier this year, Damian Shea, an N.C. State University professor of environmental chemistry contracted by Chemours, [asked the SAB](#) to raise the health goal, saying DHHS used short-term

studies to set the level rather than a two-year chronic study that, Shea argued, provided superior data. Using the chronic study to set the health goal would have resulted in a significant increase.

Among the other recommendations in Monday's report is to design and deliver local advice to GenX and other per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) due to the higher risks the chemicals pose to children and pregnant women and the routes of exposures.

The SAB also called for DEQ and DHHS to work with the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to better understand how GenX could impact health through food; what regulation could be necessary to protect against a mixture of PFAS substances that have come from the Chemours plant about 100 miles up the Cape Fear River from Wilmington; and to continue monitoring environmental conditions.

Additional health information about GenX could come as early as September. During a PFAS community engagement event in Fayetteville last week, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials [said they hope](#) to release a human health toxicity value for the chemical as early as September.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- **June 12, 2017:** N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issues memo stating GenX is safe up to 70,909 parts per trillion (ppt).
- **July 14, 2017:** DHHS lowers GenX provision health goal to 140 ppt.
- **Aug. 1, 2017:** Gov. Roy Cooper recharter the Secretaries' Science Advisory Board, orders it to focus on new or unregulated chemicals.
- **Dec. 4, 2017:** SAB holds meeting in Wilmington.
- **Aug. 20, 2018:** SAB endorses DHHS' provisional health goal of 140 ppt.
- **September 2018:** Environmental Protection Agency intends to release toxicity value for GenX.

"We're concluding this almost weeks before a more authoritative and detailed report is coming out. That's an awkward position," said Bartram, calling for an update to the SAB report after the EPA's document is released.

## Another development

Also Monday, state Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, said he wants Gov. Roy Cooper to revoke the discharge permit at the company's Fayetteville Works plant if Chemours does not hold a public meeting in Wilmington.

"In the event that Chemours refuses to do so," Davis wrote in his letter to Cooper, "then I respectfully ask that you have (the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality) revoke their permit and shut them down until they can absolutely guarantee that they can operate without endangering the quality of our drinking water."

Responding to an identical request from City of Wilmington and New Hanover County officials, Chemours announced in early August it would not be holding a public meeting in the city.

In a statement in response to Davis' letter, Ford Porter, a Cooper spokesman, "We're disappointed that legislative Republicans continue to fail to fund the state regulators in charge of monitoring and protecting our water. The administration has stopped Chemours from discharging GenX into the Cape Fear River and is moving forward with a court order to stop the company from additional impacts to air and water."

Monday's letter echoes comments Davis made during last week's EPA forum, in which he asked why Chemours refuses to meet with community representatives.

"We need answers, and we deserve answers," Davis wrote.

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