NTPEP GTX/REGEO Quarterly Conference Call Minutes – 2/27/2015 (11:30 a.m. EST)


**Note:** Ed Hughes indicated that he would be retiring soon and that Scott Hughes will be his replacement.

**Agenda:**

1. **GTX Work Plan Issues**

Tony Allen began with an update of the AASHTO Subcommittee on Materials Tech Section 4e activities that are pertinent to the NTPEP Geosynthetics Committee. Tech Section 4e has set up a Task Force on definition improvements for MARV, minimum values, etc. and the relationship between these revised definitions to manufacturer QC. Tony mentioned that Tech Section 4e desires industry input on this issue, and that it expects NTPEP to facilitate getting that industry input. The industry representatives present indicated that they plan to provide the NTPEP GTX/REGEO committee their feedback on this issue by April 9th. Tech Section 4e also plans to have letter ballots sent to its committee members by this summer for technical committee voting with regard to the following:

- Adding alternative silt fence performance test values to the AASHTO M288 specification,
- Adding a Class 1+ very high survivability classification to subgrade stabilization in AASHTO M288, and
- Possibly a revision in AASHTO M288 with regard to how the MARV is defined plus related revisions.

If approved, these letter ballots could go to a full subcommittee vote. John Schuler said that the NTPEP Erosion Control Committee has already included the performance oriented ASTM D5141 slurry flow rate test to its work plan for erosion control materials, and his state is already requiring this test to evaluate silt fence materials. So it wouldn’t be too much of a stretch to add this test in the GTX work plan.

Tech Section 4e also discussed the possible use of porimetry in lieu of AOS and permittivity to characterize the hydraulic properties of a geotextile. Sam Allen provided a few more details about what is proposed in ASTM. First, there already is a test method for porimetry (ASTM D6767), and a porometer option in the current ASTM AOS and permittivity tests is currently being balloted. If the porometer option in these test methods passes, the porometer option to
determine these properties would be available within the test method cited in the NTPEP work plan. The NTPEP Geosynthetics committee will need to decide, at that point, whether or not it will allow that option for these properties, and if so, what testing for these properties will be included in the work plan.

Tony Allen also summarized the discussion topics from his meeting with GMA members at the geosynthetics conference in Portland the week before. Regarding the geotextile program, two main subjects were discussed: concerns about including unit weight testing in the work plan, and the MARV/minimum value issue mentioned above. Regarding the industry’s concern about unit weight testing and reporting, the GMA will provide the committee with a brief white paper that will express the details of their concern, why they are concerned, and what they feel NTPEP should do about it. The GMA plans to have this to us before April 9th.

2. **REGEO Work Plan Issues**

**Moving to full audit program for REGEO:** Tony Allen reported that the Geosynthetics TC task force taking the lead in the development of a draft work plan for TC consideration includes Tony Allen (WSDOT), Pete Kemp (WIDOT), John Schuler (VDOT), Joel Sprague (TRI), Doug Brown (Tensar), and John Lostumbo (Tencate). Tony has already sent a rough draft full audit work plan for REGEO using the GTX work plan as a template to the task force, but did cc the rest of the committee. The goal is to have a working draft of the work plan by the end of April and send it out for general review by the TC and industry in early May. Key issues in the work plan that will need to be addressed by the industry include:

- Product marking for geogrids, and
- Identification of the index/short-term tests used by manufacturers for QC purposes that will also be evaluated as part of the audit and testing process.

The GMA representatives present indicated that they would have their input on these issues by or before April 9th. Tony plans to have a task force conference call shortly after that to discuss all comments received (all comments should be submitted to Tony before April 9th) and the direction the TC should head, so that the next draft work plan can be completed before the end of April.

**Potential installation damage protocol changes in the future:** This issue was discussed at the GMA meeting with Tony at the Geosynthetics Conference in Portland the week before. The GMA members present at the meeting with Tony at the conference indicated that they would not be able to provide a consensus recommendation to NTPEP regarding future changes to the installation damage exposure regimen. While there is some agreement that protocol improvements could be beneficial, the problem is that the manufacturers who recently did
installation damage testing through the NTPEP program do not want to pay for new testing at this time.

**Action Items from AASHTO Materials Tech Section 4e regarding geosynthetic reinforcement:** Two action items were discussed at the Tech Section 4e conference call earlier in the week. These include:

- Conversion of AASHTO PP66 to a permanent standard – results of ballot, and
- Adding geogrids to AASHTO M288.

AASHTO PP66 is now approved to become permanent standard, as revised. The revisions are not expected to have any impact on the protocol in the work plan currently being used by TRI and NTPEP. Regarding the addition of geogrids to M288, the plan is to address geogrid reinforcement used in walls, slopes, and pavement base reinforcement, with Tech Section 4e letter ballots to be completed by this summer for a tech section vote – if approved these ballots will go to full subcommittee for a vote this fall. This means that now is the time to get input to AASHTO Materials. It is anticipated that NTPEP would tailor their work plan for geogrids used in pavement reinforcement to be consistent with the M288 specification, as amended, assuming that the Tech Section 4e letter ballot is approved by the full committee. Regarding geogrids used in walls and slopes, it is anticipated that the M288 specification will be consistent with the NTPEP REGEO work plan.

3. **Pavement Base Reinforcement**

Once we have direction from SOM Tech Section 4e on specifications for this application (i.e., in M288), the TC will need to develop separate but similar work plan to GTX or REGEO, rather than add this application to the REGEO work plan, to avoid confusion between the geosynthetic reinforcement applications, based on input from the industry already received. The GMA will provide recommendations to the TC on what properties they feel should be considered for this pavement base reinforcement application. The GMA has committed to providing their input on this matter before the NTPEP meeting in May. It was brought up that it may be important to differentiate between geogrids used for pavement subgrade reinforcement and geogrids used in pavement base course reinforcement, as the function is at least slightly different.

4. **Converter audits (Joel Sprague)**

Joel Sprague mentioned that he has received some comments regarding the proposed converter audit requirements. Those proposed requirements are shown below:
To: Geotextile Converters

Subject: On-Site Audit Information

The information contained within this document is to serve as a helpful guide for your NTPEP on-site audit. Below you will find each section of the audit outlined along with important details listed.

**Documentation**

Please have the following documents available for review:

- Most current AASHTO and ASTM Standards
- Training and competency evaluation records for all employees involved in quality control testing
- Most current Quality Manual
- Records of the most recent internal audit and related corrective actions
- Equipment calibration records

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Converter</th>
<th><strong>Converter Purchases Rolls of Listed Product from an NTPEP Compliant Prime Manufacturer</strong></th>
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| **Audit Req’t** | **C of A + QC Data received from the Prime Manufacturer**  
(QC via D4354, Table 1 Sampling) |
| **Audit Req’t** | **Raw Material Inventory Review:**  
Rolls from Prime Mfr must arrive with  
NTPEP-Compliant Labels and Prime Mfr’s Code Printed on Fabric |
| **Audit Req’t** | **When Rolls are Received from Prime Manufacturer,**  
Perform QA via D4354, Table 2 Sampling: |
| Converter | **Converter Cuts Rolls Into Different Sizes** |
| **Audit Req’t** | **Converter must Print Own Mfg Code on Each New Geotextile Product** |
| ???? | **Add’l QA Testing After Cutting/Rerolling/Printing ????**  
(to verify that there are no property changes) |
| **Audit Req’t** | **After Wrapping, Converter must Attach New NTPEP-Compliant Labels on Each Roll/Package of New Geotextile Product** |
| Converter | **Sells to Contractor (Contractor May Not Relabel)**  
**OR**  
Sells to Distributor/Dealer (Distributor/Dealer May Not Relabel)  
**OR**  
Sells to Private Label Distributor (Private Label Distributor May Not Relabel) |
| **Audit Req’t** | **Certification to MARV/Minimums by Converter with QA Data** |
| **Audit Req’t** | **Documentation: QA Tests/Training/Calibrations; Traceability on 3 products; Testing: Random Sampling/Testing every 3 years (standard 3-year cycle)** |
Quality Control Testing

Each manufacturer will be asked to demonstrate the quality control tests they perform on a regular basis. While performing each test, the most current AASHTO or ASTM test methods may be referenced if needed. The equipment used for each test will be examined and applicable records will be reviewed.

Warehouse and Production Line Walkthrough

A walkthrough of the manufacturing process and the associated warehouse facility will allow the auditor to observe the conditions of the lines and associated inventory. During this process, geotextile samples will be collected for split-sample testing.

- **Traceability** - A minimum of three rolls/packages – 1 each of 3 different styles - will be selected to use as examples of the availability of complete and accurate lot-specific QC documentation, including, at a minimum, Certificates of Analysis and quality control data for base geotextiles and quality assurance test reports for finished products.
- **Split Samples** – A random roll/package of each product submitted for initial listing or re-listing on its 3-year cycle will be selected from inventory and sampled for testing by the NTPEP laboratory. Two sets of samples will be taken for split sample testing. One set of samples will be packaged for shipment to NTPEP’s independent laboratory. The second set of samples will be retained and tested by the converter’s QA laboratory.

The TC voted to move forward with what Joel had proposed. However, there are some significant comments received from one converter. The plan is to have the specific converter go through the GMA to obtain a consensus industry position before taking any additional action on this matter.

5. **How to handle outsourced manufacturer QC testing in the audit work plan (Joel Sprague)**

Joel felt it was not clear in the work plan how to handle outsourced manufacturer QC testing, as they are now running into this issue in their audits. Tony Allen pointed out that this is adequately covered in Note 5, Section 8.2.10 of the current work plan. This was read during the conference call. Everyone agreed that this is adequately covered.

6. **Agenda development for NTPEP GTX/REGEO meeting in May**

The following potential agenda items were identified during the conference call:

- A 5 minute presentation on the porometer by Sam Allen
• A detailed discussion on the proposed REGEO full audit work plan, which may include separate presentations by Tony Allen (to report the progress of the task force, and by the GMA (to report on specific issues such as geogrid marking)
• Discussion of progress on developing an evaluation protocol for geogrids used in pavement base reinforcement, including a presentation by the GMA on their perspective
• Industry concerns regarding geotextile unit weight testing and reporting, plus discussion on what to do to address those concerns
• How to improve the definition of the MARV or minimum value and how that ties into the manufacturer QC. This also relates to how manufacturers establish MARV’s or minimum values for certification purposes. A presentation from industry on this matter is anticipated, as well as a discussion on next steps.
• Katheryn indicated she would like to do a Datamine 3.0 update
• Tony to report on Tech Section 4e activities that are of interest to the NTPEP Geosynthetics TC

Katheryn mentioned that the meeting agenda is due by mid-April. Katheryn also mentioned that if there is too much on the agenda, our TC could have a webinar to address agenda items that we do not have time to address in the main TC meeting – do webinar at the end of April?

7. Other Conference Call Items Discussed

Jim Curtis mentioned that he felt when manufacturers are required to mark their products was not clear. Katheryn clarified that all manufacturers are required to mark their products now. However, it is possible that there is still some product left in older inventory that has not made it out to job sites yet. The states will have to decide how they want to handle that.

It was asked if NTPEP intended to eventually start testing connection strength with modular block facings. Tony responded that this has been discussed, but no progress has been made on this. To accomplish this, a new work plan would have to be developed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m. EST (9:45 a.m. PST).