



Douglas Sackett
Council for the Model
Aquatic Health Code

Update From the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code (and Why You Should Join)

Editor’s Note: NEHA strives to provide up-to-date and relevant information on environmental health and to build partnerships in the profession. In pursuit of these goals, we feature a column from the Environmental Health Services Branch (EHSB) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in every issue of the *Journal*.

In these columns, EHSB and guest authors share insights and information about environmental health programs, trends, issues, and resources. The conclusions in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of CDC.

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The last week of May is Healthy and Safe Swimming Week. Eleven years ago, public health, the aquatics industry, and academia came together to recommend that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) develop a Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC) to promote healthy and safe swimming. From the beginning, these partners also recognized the importance of keeping the MAHC up to date. To accomplish this task, the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code (CMAHC) was established. The CMAHC is

- a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization;
- a conduit for recommending data- and science-based MAHC changes to CDC; and
- comprised of public health and aquatics industry professionals committed to keeping the MAHC current, sustainable, and easily understood and implemented.

The CMAHC solicits requests for changes, updates, or improvements to the MAHC and holds a Vote on the Code conference every other year. CMAHC established a Technical Review Committee (TRC) that reviews and makes recommendations about all submitted change requests (CRs), which CMAHC members can review and comment on before the conference. CMAHC member voting results are forwarded to CDC for review and final acceptance. The second edition of the MAHC will incorporate CDC-approved changes, and we anticipate its release in May 2016.

First Vote on the Code Conference a Success

The first biennial Vote on the Code conference was held October 2015. It had more than 100 in-person attendees and more than 80 Livestream sites connected. Breakout cau-

cus sessions allowed discussion within the sectors, e.g., public health. During the conference, CMAHC members discussed and gave input on the CRs. After the conference, CMAHC the members had additional time to submit comments, which were posted online to inform voting.

CMAHC members voted on all 159 submitted CRs electronically. Voting is weighted to ensure that public health concerns are prominent: public health has 50% of the weighted vote while the other 50% is split between three aquatics sector categories (Figure 1). Ninety-two of the 159 submitted CRs passed. Of those 92, about half were of a clarifying or editorial nature. Some CRs addressing safety or health related issues did not pass. For many of these, members felt there was insufficient data to support the proposed change. The CMAHC encourages the collection of additional data, discussion, and resubmission of modified CRs to address these issues in the next Vote on the Code conference in 2017.

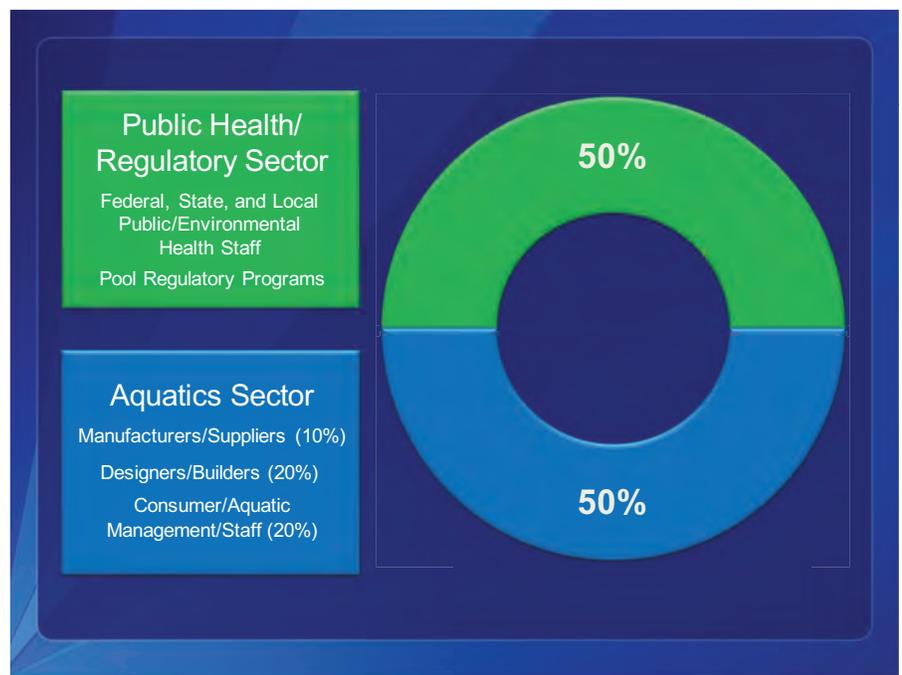
Improving and Planning for the Next MAHC Update Cycle

We have identified important areas for improvement during this MAHC update cycle.

- We need to continue to grow membership. The CMAHC is driven by member expertise, so more members mean more available expertise! We strongly encourage public and environmental health staff to become members—your perspective is needed! Even if you are not considering adopting all or parts of the MAHC, your participation is still essential in helping to make the MAHC the best model it can be.

FIGURE 1

Weighting of the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code Member Votes



Healthy Swimming and Model Aquatic Health Code Quick Links

- -Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code: www.cmahc.org
- -Healthy and Safe Swimming Week: www.cdc.gov/healthywater/observances/hss-week
- -Model Aquatic Health Code: www.cdc.gov/mahc/
- -Model Aquatic Health Code Network: www.naccho.org/programs/environmental-health/hazards/water

tion, and others. The vision committees should consider where we want U.S. aquatics health and safety to be 10, 20, and 30 years from now, with a long range goal to improve the overall system.

- We don't want to just tweak the MAHC wording. We want to consider innovative ideas, processes, and products to move it ahead. The MAHC should not be used as the basis to say, "no, that's not how we've always done it," but rather as a process to encourage and promote evidence-based progress rooted in health and safety.

- We need to reestablish technical committees (TCs) to provide subject matter expertise to the TRC. Many CRs addressed items that required in-depth expertise to thoroughly understand the proposal and assess potential impacts on other areas of the MAHC. We want to identify members with the needed expertise and have the respective TCs in place and ready to provide technical support to the TRC for the 2017 code change cycle.
- The aquatics community needs to start preparing now for developing CRs for the 2017 Vote on the Code MAHC update opportunity. As previously mentioned, we encour-

age members to identify additional data and resubmit items that did not initially pass.

- Members want the opportunity to listen in on TRC conference calls discussing and vetting submitted CRs. Allowing members to listen in will also help members be more aware of the pros and cons the TRC must consider. Members can subsequently transmit additional information to the TRC in response to issues the committee discussed on the call.
- We want a proactive strategy to advance the MAHC and are considering establishing vision committees for various topics such as water treatment, injury preven-

Join Us!

We encourage environmental health practitioners to join the CMAHC. Your input is critical and a strong voice for public health is essential. We also encourage you to join the new MAHC Network that is designed to provide health departments with resources and peer-to-peer networking to increase awareness and use of the MAHC. 🐼

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Did You Know?

You can share your event with the environmental health community by posting it directly on our community calendar at www.neha.org/news-events/community-calendar. Averaging 2,000 page views a month, you are sure to bring a lot of attention to your event. Make sure to check it often, and you might find a new event happening in your area!