February 17, 2026
Meeting – HMA Density Subcommittee (2026-1)

Location:	Teams Meeting / In-Person (Galena Room @ Truax Madison)
Date:	2-17-2026
Time:	10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Attendance

- Albert Kilger
- Brian Jandrin
- Casey Wierzchowski
- Deb Schwerman
- Erik Lyngdal
- Taylor Christianson
- Bryce Cibulka
- David Hose
- Michelle Gehrke
- Jeremy Barron
- Joe Kyle
- Jon Wixom
- Justin Hoffman
- Dan Kopacz
- Neil Atanasoff
- Zach Lemke

Agenda Items

1. Uncorrelated Nuclear Gauge Use
    - **Current Status**: New AWP specifications originally required only correlated nuclear gauges or cores, but the Department acknowledges scenarios where uncorrelated gauges remain appropriate.
    - **Regional Decision Making**: Rather than providing an exhaustive list in the FDM, the department will rely on regional judgement to identify applications for uncorrelated gauges during the design phase.
    - **Consistency and Design**: Casey W. and Dan K. emphasized that these decisions must be made during design and included in the mixture use table so consultants can account for required equipment and personnel in their bids.
    - **Application Scope**: Taylor C. and Albert K. clarified that uncorrelated gauges would primarily apply to Department Acceptance testing, not PWL, which typically use correlated gauges or cores.
    - **Contractual Limitations**: Taylor C. noted that once a contract is let with

cores specified, switching to gauges is difficult because consultants may not have gauges available.

- **Industry Concerns**:
  - **Workload**: Deb S. and Zach L. expressed concern that moving toward more core-based testing increases lab time, potentially requiring split shifts or late-night work.
  - **Safety**: Deb S. highlighted the safety risks of technicians performing coring operations near live traffic compared to the speed of gauge readings.
  - **Reliability**: Deb S. argued that Wisconsin's rigorous calibration and block-testing protocols make their uncorrelated gauges more reliable than those in neighboring states.
- **Turn Lanes and Shoulders**: Discussion occurred regarding whether to lump small turn lanes together for testing. Albert K. noted that critical turn lanes with high truck traffic might still require individual assessment.

2. Differences between Contractor Core Testing and Department Verification
   - **Tolerance Issues**: Currently, a 0.5% tolerance exists between the average contractor and department core results on test strips; if the difference is greater, department values are used.
   - **CoreDry Impact**: Jeremy B. presented data suggesting that repeated cycles in the CoreDry may cause micro fissures in cores, leading to increased water absorption and decreased "weight in water", which negatively impacts density results.
   - **Verification Data**:
     - Taylor C. and Bryce C. reported frequent discrepancies in underwater weights between QC and QV labs.
     - Neil A. noted that his review of core-only projects showed the "confirmation of dry" cycle rarely fails, suggesting the first CoreDry notification is typically accurate.
   - **Proposed Investigation**: Albert K. proposed a "shadow" study for the upcoming season where the same set of cores would be tested by the contractor, the region, and BTS to identify where discrepancies arise.
   - **Best Practices**: Dan K. reminded technicians that cores must be physically removed and weighed between drying cycles to follow the constant mass procedure properly.
3. Core Dispute Resolution
   - **Suspect Cores**: In test strips, cores are flagged as "suspect" if the average of four gauges differs from the core density by more than 1%.
   - **Production Limitations**: This process does not exist for production because multiple gauges are not typically used to provide feedback on a single core, nor are they present on the job for core-only projects.
   - **Dispute Potential**: Dan K. and Albert K. noted that any formal dispute

process would likely require pulling a second or third core for third-party testing, which increases workload and storage needs.

- **Alternative Ideas**: Industry suggested exploring “growth curves” or using gauges already correlated to the same mix design on different projects as potential efficiency compromises.

4. Department Acceptance Incentive Calculator Worksheet
    - **New Tool**: Albert K. introduced a new internal worksheet to standardize incentive and disincentive calculations for department acceptance, addressing previous regional confusion.
    - **Key Features**:
        - The sheet distinguishes between standard department acceptance (incentive possible) and PWL-prescribed department acceptance (no incentive possible).
        - It automatically handles “remove and replace” scenarios so contractors are not penalized twice.
        - It calculates the lot average based on individual tests rather than averaging sublot averages.
    - **Availability**: The worksheet is available on the Pantry website for regions, consultants, and contractors.
5. Announcement and Timeline
    - **PWL Spreadsheet Update**: A significant update to the PWL production and test strip worksheets – including VMA pay adjustments and SMA support – is expected by early March 2026.
    - **Final Spec Timeline**: Decisions on topics discussed must be finalized by February 2027 to be included in the spec book for the 2028 construction season.
    - **Next Meeting**: A full tech team meeting will be scheduled within the next two months.

New Action Items

Department Action Items

- **Shadow Study**: Organize and conduct a shadow study for the upcoming construction season. This study will involve the contractor, the region, and BTS testing the same sets of cores to pinpoint where discrepancies in underwater weight and density results are occurring.
- **Worksheet Updates**: Finalize and release the updated PWL production worksheet.
- **Design Guidance**: Create/modify FDM language regarding the use of uncorrelated nuclear gauges.

Industry and Joint Action Items

- **Core Investigation**: Industry representatives and the department will continue investigating the impact of multiple CoreDry cycles on core integrity.
- **Spec Finalization**: Both parties must reach a consensus on the uncorrelated gauge and core dispute resolution language by February 2027 to ensure inclusion in the 2028 spec book.

Previous Action Items

1. **Industry Action Item:** Jeremy B. will provide data showing differences between initial core tests and region verification testing.
    - Jeremy B. presented data during the meeting [see section 2 in notes].