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August 23, 2007

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Dr. George Gray

Assistant Administrator
Office of Research and Development
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Dr. Gray:

The Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) has completed a Mid-Cycle Review of ORD's Ecological Research Program (ERP), focusing on Agency efforts to enhance the program following a 2005 BOSC program review. A Subcommittee of four scientists participated in a series of conference calls, a face-to-face meeting, and program material review that started this spring. The purpose of the review was to provide general feedback on the Office of Research and Development's (ORD) efforts in program development following the 2005 review and in light of significant funding changes. This was accomplished through a set of specific charge questions that guided the BOSC Subcommittee through its review. The BOSC Executive Committee has reviewed the report generated as a result of this effort and I am pleased to transmit it to ORD on behalf of the BOSC and the Ecological Research Mid-Cycle Review Subcommittee.

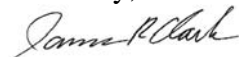
The mid-cycle review focused on ORD's detailed documentation of changes in the ERP following recommendations from the 2005 program review, recent changes in the scope and focus of research activities, and adaptations to budgetary and other programmatic changes. A rating of "Meets Expectations" was assessed for work completed to date. The BOSC recognizes that progressing development and refocusing of the ERP and meeting expectations generated in response to the 2005 review are significant accomplishments in light of the budgetary and planning turmoil that has developed over the past 2 years. The Subcommittee encourages ORD to sustain its commitment to action items and follow-ups developed as part of the 2005 program review and the 2007 mid-cycle review.

The move to focus a greater percentage of research and development effort on areas that support decision-making based on ecosystem services is substantiated in the discussions and material provided for review. The next hurdle will be deciding how the revised long-term goals and ongoing research programs will be altered to support the new focus. The BOSC thinks that for the ERP research to be successfully translated into on-the-ground positive results for the environment, it will be necessary to foster more partnerships among a wider array of stakeholders, involving them from the beginning of any project with an established system of communication that allows for meaningful input. The ERP must be prepared to listen and integrate stakeholder input into the planning process.

As an outcome of the review, the BOSC Subcommittee developed recommendations for ORD to consider based on the material provided and the discussions organized as part of the mid-cycle review. The full text of the report provides a context and detail for these comments, additional specific programmatic recommendations, as well as the full scope of the Subcommittee's efforts and detailed comments.

It is my pleasure to transmit this report to you on behalf of the BOSC and the Ecological Research Mid-Cycle Review Subcommittee. The BOSC looks forward to discussing your response to this effort, as we have done with other reviews. Please feel free to contact me if there are questions regarding the report.

Sincerely,



James R. Clark
Chair