

ECOLOGICAL MID-CYCLE REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Conference Call Summary

Monday, July 30, 2007

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon Eastern Time

Welcome

Dr. Jim Clark, ExxonMobil Corporation, Subcommittee Chair

Dr. Jim Clark, Chair of the Ecological Mid-Cycle Review Subcommittee, welcomed the Subcommittee members and thanked them for participating on this call. He asked everyone on the call to identify themselves and a list of participants as well as the agenda for the call are attached to this summary. He stated that the purpose of this conference call was to review and approve the revised draft report for the mid-cycle review. Dr. Clark indicated that he had received comments from Dr. Giesy but he was not sure whether he would be joining the call today. Dr. Clark planned to go through the revised draft and reach consensus on the wording, recommendations, and rating. Any revisions required after this call will be made quickly so that the report can be distributed to the Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) Executive Committee before its August 6, 2007, conference call. Dr. Clark then asked Ms. Lorelei Kowalski to discuss the administrative procedures for the call.

Administrative Procedures

Ms. Lorelei Kowalski, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development, Designated Federal Officer

Ms. Kowalski explained that she would serve as the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for this call on behalf of Ms. Heather Drumm, who was unavailable. She thanked the Subcommittee members for their efforts in conducting this mid-cycle review. Because Ms. Drumm had reviewed the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) procedures in detail during previous conference calls, Ms. Kowalski only addressed some of the more important administrative procedures. She explained that the BOSC is a Federal Advisory Committee that provides independent peer review for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Research and Development (ORD), and as such is subject to the rules and requirements of FACA. The Ecological Mid-Cycle Review Subcommittee, as a subcommittee of the BOSC, is subject to FACA as well. The DFO for the Subcommittee serves as the liaison between the Subcommittee and ORD. Ms. Kowalski stated that it is her responsibility as the DFO to ensure that the Subcommittee's conference calls and meetings comply with all FACA rules. All meetings and conference calls involving substantive issues, whether in person, by phone, or by e-mail, that include one-half or more of the Subcommittee members must be open to the public and a notice must be placed in the *Federal Register* at least 15 days prior to the call or meeting. The Subcommittee Chair and DFO must be present at all conference calls and meetings. All advisory committee documents also are made available to the public. Ms. Kowalski reported that no

requests for public comment were submitted prior to the call, but the agenda allows time for public comment at 10:10 a.m. She will call for public comments at that time.

Ms. Kowalski stated that the Ecological Mid-Cycle Subcommittee was asked to respond to a set of charge questions for the mid-cycle review of the Office of Research and Development's (ORD) Ecological Research Program. The Subcommittee had three public conference calls held in April, May, and June, and met face-to-face in Newport, Rhode Island on May 23, 2007. The purpose of this call is to finalize and approve the report prepared by the Subcommittee for this mid-cycle review so that it can be submitted to the BOSC Executive Committee for review and approval during its August 6, 2007, conference call.

Dr. Clark thanked Ms. Kowalski for her DFO comments and stated that he planned to start with the summary and move section-by-section through the report. He asked if any of the members had questions or comments. Dr. Sue Thompson said that she thought the report was good and she only had a few editorial changes. She agreed to send her edits to Dr. Clark for incorporation into the report. Dr. Gene Turner said that he had a few comments on the revised report. He also agreed to send his comments to Dr. Clark following the conference call.

Dr. Clark stated that the Executive Summary sets the background for the report and should encourage people to read the entire report for more detailed comments and explanations of the recommendations. He opened the Summary section with the rating and supporting text. He asked if the Subcommittee members were all in agreement with the "meets expectations" rating, and all agreed. Dr. Clark pointed out that the criteria for the rating had not changed, just the term assigned to that criterion. He noted that a program that "meets expectations" is focusing on the right questions, doing the right work, and meeting most of its goals and deadlines. He acknowledged that the Ecological Research Program has undergone numerous administrative changes since the 2005 program review

Dr. Turner said that he liked the Summary write up but thought it should be more complimentary of the program given these administrative changes and budgetary cuts. The Subcommittee should acknowledge that the program is meeting expectations in the midst of these significant challenges. Dr. Thompson agreed, noting that such a statement is in the body of the report. She suggested adding it to the Summary section. Dr. Clark agreed to add that statement to the Summary section.

On page 4, Dr. Turner suggested deleting the words "monitoring programs" in line 7 of the second full paragraph. He did not want to define EPA's programs only as monitoring programs. These words also should be deleted from the body of the report where this sentence appears again. Dr. Turner also expressed concern about the wording "costly data generation" on line 5 of that same paragraph. He suggested rewording that sentence to as follows "move away from the focus of the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP)..." The Subcommittee members agreed with that change.

Dr. Clark noted that during the Executive Committee meeting in Newport, Rhode Island, the members asked that the long-term goals (LTGs) be defined each time they are mentioned in the report to remind the reader of the goals. Dr. Clark tried to do that in this version of the report.

Dr. Clark asked if there were any comments/edits on the response to Charge Question #1. There were none.

Dr. Clark then asked for comments on the response to Charge Question #2. He mentioned that Dr. Turner did an excellent job of drafting this section and documenting what ORD did in response to the 2005 program review. For the sake of balance and to keep the report more concise, Dr. Clark tried to shorten it some. Dr. Turner noted that something is missing from the last sentence in that section on page 8 (“Yet these kinds of changes take several years to implement, if only because of the stability of institutional behaviors and the already demanding nature of the work, whose responsibilities...”). Dr. Turner said to delete the word “whose,” insert the words “and as,” and delete the word “annually” in that sentence.

Dr. Clark noted that some of the metrics are part of the changing culture at the Agency (e.g., formalizing and documenting outreach to stakeholders).

Dr. Turner noted that the sentence from the Summary that he mentioned earlier regarding the “move away from the previous, costly data generation focus” appears on page 8 and should be edited the same way as suggested for the Summary. He also asked that the words “monitoring programs” be deleted from line 6 in the first paragraph under the response to Charge Question #3.

Dr. Thompson asked that the word “of” be inserted after “discussion” (which should be changed to singular) and before “options” in line 4 of the second paragraph of the response to Charge Question #3.

Dr. Clark asked for comments on the response to Charge Question #4. Dr. Giesy thought the last sentence was a good addition to the report.

At 10:25 a.m. Dr. Clark paused the discussion so that Ms. Kowalski could call for public comments. No comments were offered so the discussion of the report resumed.

Dr. Clark asked if there were any comments on the response to Charge Question #5. Dr. Clark said that Dr. Thompson did a good job writing this section. There were no additional comments.

Dr. Clark called for comments on the response to Charge Question #6. Dr. Turner noted that the first sentence in the first full paragraph on page 11 should be added to the Summary section. Dr. Clark said that he would insert that sentence in the Summary. Dr. Thompson said to search for the word “moral” and change it to “morale.”

Dr. Clark noted that the Executive Committee will be reviewing this report during its August 6, 2007, conference call. He mentioned that there may be some changes to the report following that review. He asked the Subcommittee members to send their comments to him via e-mail. He stated that he was pleased with the report and thought that it provided some useful advice to ORD concerning the program. He asked Ms. Kowalski to express the Subcommittee’s appreciation of the program’s responsiveness. The program staff was helpful in answering questions and was very forthcoming with information the Subcommittee needed to conduct the review. Dr. Thompson added that the presentations from the program staff were outstanding and the staff was very cooperative.

Dr. Clark thanked the Subcommittee members for their excellent work on the report. In closing, he informed the members that they will receive a copy of the final version of the report after it is approved by the Executive Committee. He then adjourned the call at 10:32 a.m.

Action Items

- ✧ Subcommittee members will e-mail their comments on the revised report to Dr. Clark by noon on July 30, 2007.
- ✧ Dr. Clark will incorporate the comments and generate a revised report that will be sent to the DFO for distribution to the BOSC Executive Committee for review on August 6, 2007.

PARTICIPANTS LIST

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ECOLOGICAL MID-CYCLE SUBCOMMITTEE

AGENDA

July 30, 2007

10:00 am – 12:00 noon Eastern Time

Participation by Teleconference Only

866-299-3188

code: 2025648239#

10:00-10:05 am	Welcome	Dr. Jim Clark, Subcommittee Chair
10:05-10:10 am	Administrative Procedures	Lori Kowalski DFO, BOSC Executive Committee
10:10-10:15 am	Public Comment	
10:15-12:00 noon	Subcommittee Discussion - Draft Report	Dr. Jim Clark Subcommittee Chair
12:00 noon	Adjourn	