

HAPPENINGS at the SAB

...ensuring a solid technical basis for environmental protection

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This issue of Happenings contains the first in a series of guest editorials that will represent a range of topics and perspectives on the Science Advisory Board and its work. This month, the Chair of the Executive Committee, Dr. William Glaze, presents some of his thoughts on the Executive Committee's effort, now underway, to consider a possible restructuring of the Science Advisory Board.

In addition to regular updates on progress made at recent meetings and in report development, this November issue also contains an brief note on the Session on Public Involvement in EPA Science Advisory Board Activities, hosted by the SAB Staff Office on September 26, 2002.

I look forward to any feedback you may have about this issue of Happenings and ideas you may have for future issues.

Vanessa T. Vu, Ph.D.
Director, Science Advisory Board Staff Office

In this issue...

Director's Note	1
Guest Editorial	2
Tentative Calendar for November & December	4
Committee Activities in October	5
Public Involvement	7
Status of Formation of SAB Panels	7
SAB Reports in Progress	7
Computer News	8
Editor's Note	9
Bon Mot	9

GUEST EDITORIAL

The SAB: A Grand Tradition and a Great Future

Since 1978, the EPA Science Advisory Board has arguably been the most effective science advisory board in the Federal government. All who are familiar with the Board know that it has made many contributions to helping the Agency maintain a high level of science in the decisions it has made, the regulations it has promulgated, and the programs it has established. Now the SAB shares with the Agency new challenges, and it is appropriate for us to ask: can we do our job even more effectively?

Since I became involved with the SAB in the late 1980s, I have shared with many of my colleagues a deep respect for the SAB Staff who do its work on a day-to-day basis, and the many fine scientists who contribute to its panels and the standing committees as a public service. This is one aspect of the SAB that I know will never change, and whatever we do in the future, we must continue to find and retain the best people for these positions. We must admit, however, that the world is changing and if we wish to protect it, we too must change.

What are these changes and what do they portend for the way the SAB does its business? The first I want to mention is really not a change, it is a realization that all environmental problems are much more complex than we acknowledged in the past. In the early days of environmental protection, it was understandable for us to focus on the pollution that was apparent to anyone; to arrange our programs around media: air, water, and soil; to focus on single compounds rather than the ubiquitous mixtures around us; or to treat human health and ecological health as if they were unrelated. The intervening years have shown us that this strategy is neither scientifically defensible nor always conducive to good policy making. At the most general level the environment and public health has to be understood as a system, and we must always be aware of links between its various compartments as we try to make decisions to protect it. Dealing with this through a systems approach is one of our challenges, one that we must help the Agency deal with.

Fortunately, science can provide us with the ways to deal with these complex systems; but this raises another challenge for the SAB. As any science grows more deeply specialized, it becomes increasingly difficult for a non-specialist to understand, even one grounded in the basics. New science makes the work of the Agency more credible in principle, but how does the SAB face the challenge of reviewing this work of increasingly depth and complexity. There is really only one solution for the SAB: we simply must convince the best people from all of the important research areas to serve as expert reviewers if we are to give the Agency the best advice. Is the current way we do business in the SAB accomplishing this goal? If not, we must find a better way.

Another major development in environmental protection that is reflected on the SAB is this: we have come to understand that environmental protection is not only an enterprise of the physical, biological, chemical, and engineering sciences. For environmental decisions to be made and implemented effectively we must bring the economics and the social and behavioral sciences into the process sooner and more effectively. We must take into account how people make their decisions; how they value protection of themselves, endangered species, and ecosystems; and how environmental protection fits into the entire regime of economic and social development. We must acknowledge that the study of these and other human characteristics is a sophisticated scholarly enterprise that must be factored into our work. Of course, wise heads in the Agency and the SAB knew this all along, but too often our narrow professional focus cause us to omit the very factors that might make our work more effective.

Finally, in the future we must assist the Agency in anticipating the problems of the future and how the Agency might address them, often with programs that go beyond command and control. For example, we might help develop a better assessment of complex topics such as the effects of climate change on ecosystems, which will probably be rectified by education and voluntary actions rather than regulations. We should also help the Agency develop ways to assess the state of the environment, and through careful analysis suggest how this type of assessment can guide future Agency program development. And finally, we must assist the Agency to recognize, anticipate and respond to new challenges that are not anticipated at this time. The SAB, therefore, must be an agile and responsive organization while continuing its call for the very highest standards in its work and its reviews.

William H. Glaze, Ph.D.
Chair, SAB Executive Committee

TENTATIVE SAB MEETING CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

Several of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) meetings noted below have been announced in the Federal Register (FR), together with additional background information. Readers can automatically receive e-mailed copies of FR Notices by subscribing to the SAB Listserver; see Section Updates below.

If a series of meetings is anticipated, the number of the meeting in the series is indicated in parentheses; e.g., "(#2)".

NOVEMBER



20-21

Committee: Environmental Health Committee's (EHC) Human Health Research Strategy Review Panel
Topic(s): Human Health Research Strategy (HHRS)
Purpose: To review the HHRS document.
Location: Doubletree Hotel, RTP, NC
Chair: *Dr. James Klaunig, Indiana University*
DFO: *Dr. Suhair "Sue" Shallal*
Email: shallal.suhair@epa.gov

22F

Committee: Executive Committee's (EC) Contaminated Sediments Science Plan Panel (CSSP)
Topic(s): Contaminated Sediments Science Plan, Teleconference
Purpose: To review the first draft of the CSSP.
Location: Ariel Rios Building, Room 6013
Chair: *Dr. Michael McFarland, Utah State University*
DFO: *Mr. Lawrence Martin*
Email: martin.lawrence@epa.gov

DECEMBER



2 (Non-FACA)

Committee: EPA SAB EC Reorganization Subcommittee
Topic(s): Reorganization of the SAB
Purpose: To solicit input from key stakeholders and interested members of the public to solicit public input on the Reorganization Subcommittee's activities.
Location: TBA
Chair: *Dr. William Glaze, University of North Carolina*
DFO: *Mr. Fred Butterfield*
Email: butterfield.fred@epa.gov

5F

Committee: Executive Committee (EC)
Topic(s): TBD
Purpose: TBD
Location: Ariel Rios Building, Room 6013
Chair: *Dr. William Glaze, University of North Carolina*
DFO: *Mr. A. Robert Flaak*
Email: flaak.robert@epa.gov

COMMITTEE
ACTIVITIES
IN OCTOBER



On October 1-2, the SAB Executive Committee (EC) met and approved, subject to adoption of EC comments, three draft reports: 1) "Underground Storage Tanks (UST) Cleanup and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Subtitle C Program Benefits, Costs, and Impacts Assessment: An EPA Science Advisory;" 2) "Review of Draft

Trichloroethylene;" and 3) the Metals Assessment Panel report. The EC also participated in a "Consultation on Data Quality and Reproducibility," held at the request of EPA's Office of Environmental Information, and received a briefing on EPA's progress in developing a "State of the Environment" report.

The Executive Committee also met with the EPA Deputy Administrator, Ms. Linda Fisher and with Dr. Paul Gilman, EPA Science Advisor and Assistant Administrator, Office of Research and Development. The Executive Committee then addressed matters of Board business. They finalized the SAB project agenda for FY2003 agreed to the establishment of an EC Sub-to Reexamine the Structure, Organization and Composition of the EPA SAB."

On October 23, the Human Health Research Strategy (HHRs) Panel held a teleconference in preparation for the November 20-22, 2002 face-to-face meeting at the Research Triangle Park. The Human Health Research Strategy presents the strategic directions for ORD's core research program in human health risk assessment over the next five to ten years. The research strategy discusses the major environmental problems, the principal scientific issues, and priority research areas that need to be addressed to resolve the problems. It also describes the research approach and expected impact that the research will make to strengthen the scientific foundation for human health risk assessments across EPA. The strategy does not describe ORD's entire research program on human health; rather, only that portion for which the results will have

broad Agency applicability. Efforts are made in the document to cross link other ORD media-specific or problem-driven research programs.

The panel received a briefing on ethics, discussed the charge and the review materials. They were also briefed by Agency staff on the draft HHRs document. Panel members were placed in one of the four groups associated with the research areas highlighted in the document (i.e., harmonization, susceptible populations, public health outcomes, aggregate and cumulative risk); they were then asked to comment on the charge questions from the perspective of their assigned research area. The charge questions can be found on the SAB's website, <http://www.epa.gov/sab>, which also includes a link to the Agency's draft HHRs document.

On October 30-31, the Executive Committee's (EC) Contaminated Sediments Science Plan Review Panel heard briefings from the EPA Science Policy Council and the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER), received public comment, discussed drafts prepared by panel members addressing the Panel's charge questions, and sought consensus on a number of points pertaining to the charge questions. The EPA was well represented throughout the meeting by staff from OSWER, the Office of Research and Development, Office of Water, and the Regions, who responded to questions for clarification on various matters concerning the Science Plan, and the EPA's new science planning process. The Chair identified key points raised in discussion and summarized them for consensus by the Panel. The points of

consensus will be used in conjunction with revisions to the draft responses to the charge questions in preparation of a draft report. The draft report will be circulated to the Panel and discussed on a conference call scheduled for November 22. The Panel expects to forward a final draft of the report to the Executive Committee for review at its January 2003 meeting.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) Staff Office Session on Public Involvement in EPA Science Advisory Board Activities

The EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) Staff Office held a public session on public involvement in SAB activities in Washington, D.C. on September 26, 2002. The session was the first in a series of semi-annual public sessions that the Office of the EPA SAB Staff plans to hold with the public as part of its ongoing effort to improve policies and procedures at the Board. The day-long session was designed to focus on two topics: 1) public involvement in SAB meetings and report development and 2) the SAB Public Access Website. SAB Staff sought participants' views about the most valuable aspects of those mechanisms for informing and involving the public and participants' suggestions for additions or changes. Participants also raised a number of questions and made many suggestions about the Board's Panel Formation Session.

A summary of the session appears on the SAB website at through the "Meeting Minutes"

sidebar, then click "FY2002 Minutes" or at the following url address: <http://www.epa.gov/sab/02minute.htm>. For additional information about the meeting or the upcoming meeting planned for the Spring of 2003, please contact Dr. Angela Nugent of the SAB Staff at nugent.angela@epa.gov.

STATUS OF FORMATION OF SAB PANELS

The Board has developed a revised Panel Formation process for the recruitment of *ad-hoc* review panels. For the latest detailed information, please visit our website, www.epa.gov/sab/panels/paneltopics.html.

SAB REPORTS IN PROGRESS



PROJECTS DUE FOR THE DEC 5 EC TELECONFERENCE

DWC

- 1) Long Term Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule Proposal and Stage II Disinfection/Disinfectant By-Product (DBP) Rule Proposal Report

EC Subcommittee

- 2) Scientific and Technological

Achievement Awards Report

RAC

- 3) Multi Agency Radiological Lab Analytic Protocols Reports (MARLAP)

EEAC

- 4) Affordability

COMPUTER NEWS



b **PROJECTS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE EC APPROVAL (CASAC & COUNCIL)**

There are none at this time.

c **PROJECTS THAT HAVE RECEIVED EC APPROVAL AND AWAIT COMPLETION**

EHC

- 1) Review of Draft Trichloroethylene Health Risk Assessment: Synthesis and Characterization: An SAB Report

EC Subcommittee

- 1) Underground Storage Tanks (UST) Cleanup and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Subtitle C Program Benefits, Costs, and Impacts Assessments: An EPA Science Advisory Board Advisory
- 2) Review of Metals Action Plan

(1) SAB Website is within the EPA Home Page. You are invited to visit the SAB Website at URL: <http://www.epa.gov/sab>

The site offers such features as:

- (a) Full-text reports for FY1994-FY2002
- (b) Background information about the structure, function, and membership of the SAB
- (c) A projected six-month calendar of SAB meetings
- (d) Recent issues of HAPPENINGS
- (e) Draft/final agendas of upcoming meetings and draft/final minutes of past meetings.

(2) SAB Listserver - By subscribing to the free SAB Listserver, you will automatically receive copies of all Federal Register notices announcing SAB meetings, together with brief descriptions of the topics to be covered at the meetings. These notices will be e-mailed to you within 24-hours of their publication in the Federal Register.

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BON MOT



EDITOR'S NOTE

We would like to involve our readers in enhancing the EPA SAB newsletter. One idea is to introduce a Guest Editorial each month. The editorial would be from a person whose views and insights will be of interest and of use to the Members and Consultants of the Science Advisory Board and to those who follow news about the Board through Happenings. Sometimes the Guest Editorials will feature a view from the Agency; another time the view of an SAB member or Consultant; and at other times the views of those who are keen observers of the science advice that affects the Agency.

We look to you, our readers of Happenings, to assist us in finding potential guest editors each month. Our aim is to make our newsletter as informative and attractive as possible for our readership. And for the witty and wise, we are also accepting bon mots. To do this, we need to hear from you. So please send all potential Guest Editorial submissions, bon mots and ideas about what you would like to see in Happenings to me, Vickie Richardson, at richardson.vickie@epa.gov. All submissions will be considered.

As you go through life, just remember, there are 3 kinds of people: those who can count & those who can't.