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## **Charter for the Forum on Environmental Measurements**

### **Background**

Environmental measurements are used to determine compliance with Agency regulations and permits, assess the state of the human health and environmental condition, identify environmental problems that the Agency needs to address, and assess the effectiveness of Agency policies. The measurements resulting from the application of particular methods often become the basis for environmental cleanup, protection or regulation. The Agency develops, evaluates and applies a wide variety of field and laboratory methods and assesses data quality to characterize the environment and the materials entering the environment (e.g., wastes), and to support its enforcement activities. These protocols and methods encompass: sample collection, sample analysis, quality assurance, and assessment of data quality. Agency policies on environmental measurements influence which data and metadata are collected, what methods are used to collect and evaluate the data, and how the data are used in decision-making. The application of these methods and policies impacts not only the Agency's own data gathering efforts but also those of the regulated community, the States and the commercial laboratory sector.

### **Purpose and Scope**

The Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM) is a standing committee of senior EPA managers that is established to enhance EPA's measurement programs by recommending to the Agency's Science Policy Council basic principles to guide the Agency's measurement community in: validating and disseminating methods for sample collection and for biological, chemical, radiological and toxicological analysis; for developing scientifically rigorous, statistically sound and representative measurements; for employing a quality systems approach that ensures that the data gathered and used by the Agency are of known and documented quality; and for promoting development and use of innovative technologies to generate, transmit, compile, and utilize monitoring data and information to aid decision making. The Forum is established to promote consistency and consensus within the Agency on measurement issues.

To achieve these goals, the FEM will support and enhance existing activities by Agency Program and Regional Offices. Forum consensus building discussions may result in policies that Agency offices may then incorporate into their methods and measurement activities. The Forum will assist the Agency's offices in establishing procedures and policies that provide consistent, yet flexible, measurement tools to support environmental decision-making, in particular as they relate to methods and policies with implications across the Agency. Furthermore, the Forum will provide EPA and the public with a central point for addressing measurement methodology issues with multi-program impact.

While the Forum will serve as a means of developing Agency policies with regard to

measurement science issues, the FEM is neither a part of, nor does it replace or supplement the existing Agency regulatory development processes. Where the policies established by the FEM are inconsistent with specific programmatic statutory requirements, the statutory requirements prevail.

Issues and activities to be addressed by the FEM include, but are not restricted to the following:

1. Providing a central point of focus to address Agency-wide measurement issues including: evaluation of new and existing measurement protocols; application of methods to specific situations; approaches to evaluating monitoring data; determination of appropriate meta data needed to support data evaluation; employment of the performance approach when specifying monitoring requirements; enhancing both internal and external communications and coordination on measurement science activities; and addressing environmental data quality issues related to the Agency's Information Quality Guidelines.
2. Establishing an Intranet and Internet portal for access to the work of the FEM and Agency information on environmental measurements.
3. Promoting coordination in addressing measurement science issues across the Agency, including linkages with external consensus groups.
4. Recommending guidelines for: Measurement method development, validation, application and interpretation; Peer review of measurement methods; and Training and technical support for monitoring programs.
5. Promoting the consideration of the use of technical standards (e.g., analytical methods) from voluntary consensus standards bodies in order to meet the requirements of the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995.
6. Promoting innovative sensor and monitoring technologies in all media by actively assessing newly available technologies.

## **Membership**

The FEM will include a representative from each appropriate Agency Office (particularly the Office of Air and Radiation's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, and the Office of Radiation and Indoor Air; the Office of Environmental Information; the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response's Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation, Office of Solid Waste, and Office of Emergency Management; the Office of Water's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, and Office of Science and Technology; the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance's National Enforcement Investigations Center; the Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances' Office of Pesticide Programs, and Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics; the Office of the Science Advisor; the Office of Research and Development's National Exposure Research Laboratory, and National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory); at least three Regional Offices; and the Office of General Counsel. While Offices may appoint representatives as they determine appropriate, FEM representatives are, typically, senior level managers knowledgeable on measurement issues who have the authority to implement FEM policies in their organization.

## **Organization**

### ***Reporting/Authority***

The FEM is established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Science Advisor in his/her role as Chair of the Agency's Science Policy Council (SPC). The FEM reports to the Science Advisor through the SPC. The EPA's Chief Scientist will be the Science Advisor's representative on the FEM. Modifications to this Charter shall be approved by the SPC. The FEM reports are referred to the SPC Steering Committee for consideration of policy and procedural issues. The FEM products or recommendations become Agency policy upon acceptance by the SPC and concurrence by the Science Advisor as Chair of the SPC. FEM develops policies and guidance that are consistent with the EPA Information Quality Guidelines.

The SPC, generally, will review and reapprove the FEM's charter every three years.

### ***Officers***

#### *Co-Chairs*

The Co-Chairs of the FEM are appointed by the Science Advisor in his/her role as Chair of the SPC, and they serve as liaisons to the SPC.

#### *Executive Director*

The Executive Director for the FEM works under the direction of the Co-Chairs and manages assigned resources to assure that logistical and operational needs are met.

### ***Action Teams***

Action Teams may be commissioned by the Forum to address specific issues. The Forum may commission an Action Team after motion by any FEM representative and agreement by the Forum. Action Teams may be disbanded by the Forum when their assigned objectives are accomplished or for other appropriate reason such as subsuming under a different team, etc. The Forum provides oversight and approval of the charge and action plans for each Action Team. Action Teams, working with the Forum staff, are responsible for processing their reports and for timely presentation to the full Forum. Reports from Action Teams will be submitted to the SPC after FEM review and approval. On occasion, the Action Teams may solicit independent advice from the external scientific community on specific method issues by convening activities such as workshops and seminars.

## **Location and Support**

The FEM will be organizationally supported by the Immediate Office of the Assistant

Administrator for Research and Development and will be organizationally responsible to the Chair of the SPC.

Certain projects will require the allocation of extramural funds or other resources to support investigations, analyses or other major activities such as conferences and symposia. The basis of these requirements should come from the annual operating plan of the FEM. The FEM Co-Chairs are to develop a draft action agenda and operating plan and submit the drafts to the Forum within 4 days of approval of the FEM Charter. After approval by the Forum, it will be submitted to the SPC for review and approval. Generally, thereafter, at the beginning of each Fiscal Year and after review by the Forum, but no later than by October 30 of each year, an agenda and plan will be submitted to the SPC for review and approval.