

Fw Independent Peer Review of JAG Products Sogge thoughts on Steve's questions
Fw: Independent Peer Review of JAG Products: Sogge thoughts on Steve's questions
----- Forwarded by Mark K Sogge/DO/USGS/DOI on 09/10/2010 03:01 PM -----
From: Mark K Sogge/DO/USGS/DOI
To: Steve Murawski <Steve.Murawski@noaa.gov>
Cc: Benjamin.Shorr@noaa.gov, Hernan.Garcia@noaa.gov, Jeff.Napp@noaa.gov,
Jerry.Galt@noaa.gov, Jerry_L._Miller@ostp.eop.gov, Jim.Farr@noaa.gov,
Kurtz.Jan@epamail.epa.gov, ldecker@asascience.com,
Rik.Wanninkhof@noaa.gov, Robert Haddad <Robert.Haddad@noaa.gov>, Robert
Pavia <Robert.Pavia@noaa.gov>, Rost.Parsons@noaa.gov, Russ.Beard@noaa.gov,
Sam.Walker@noaa.gov, schaeffer.blake@epamail.epa.gov,
Venosa.Albert@epa.gov, wainberg.Daniel@epamail.epa.gov,
Wilson.gregory@epa.gov
Date: 06/13/2010 11:15 AM
Subject: Re: Independent Peer Review of JAG Products: Sogge thoughts on
Steve's questions

Steve et al. -

After even a relatively short time on my current FRTG assignment, I am convinced that peer-review is an important step for (a) maintaining/improving the scientific quality of our products before release, and (b) assuring decision-makers and the public that they can trust the work. I have seen times when something needs to be released without external peer-review, and that can work... but I think it should only be done when absolutely necessary. Although it is certainly tempting to consider our within-team expertise as an analog for peer-review, it lacks the independence that many people will be looking for. If we come up with an effective approach, delays should be minimal and manageable.

As a practical reality, outside peer-review may be unavoidable if we intend to engage JAG members who work for agencies that mandate such review for any coauthored reports and other products. USGS is in that category; others in this group may be as well.

Given the importance of this topic, and the array of possible solutions, I recommend discussing options and firming up a basic approach through a conference call. Until that occurs, here are initial thoughts on your specific points.

(1) I think we need an independent peer review process. The implications of our findings on O2 are every bit as important as the flow rate calculations. I want to make sure we are appropriately cautionary with respect to the issue of tipping points in O2. Accordingly, I propose that we establish an independent peer review panel of three independent experts (academics or industry) with appropriate expertise in oil chemistry and oceanography to look at our draft reports and provide comments. In order to avoid FACA concerns they cannot operate by consensus and will provide independent input to us. I have not resolved in my own mind if they are to be treated as confidential to us or make public. I would appreciate your comments on the approach and if so some names of candidates. We will want to discuss criteria for which one would be disqualified.

You are absolutely right about the importance of the JAG's topic, which is why the products it generates will receive broad and intense scrutiny. Even "preliminary and subject to change" analyses will be in the white-hot spotlight (we learned that lesson well in the FRTG). A strong reason for peer-review.

We can either establish a set panel of experts as you suggest, or look for the best reviewers for each product as the time comes. There are strengths and

Fw Independent Peer Review of JAG Products Sogge thoughts on Steve's questions weaknesses to each approach, with considerations on funding (needed or not?), rapidity, etc. Academics are frequently the best choice, but agencies (ours and others) often have some of the best people; so I recommend we include those folks in the pool of reviewers.

In terms of confidentiality of reviewers, I recommend "yes." USGS policy is to maintain the confidentiality of its peer-reviewers and the actual reviewer response (though summaries of the reviewers' points can be provided). Because that is standard practice in scientific journals and many other agencies, that has been supportable. In my experience, reviewers feel more comfortable with this approach and can provide more honest and direct feedback.

(2) All data and analyses of information collected by the vessels supported by the government or the firm would be subject to inclusion in a unified JAG database so that we can start pulling the picture together. This includes oceanography, bottle samples fluorometry and acoustics. We will encourage all others that are sampling to include their data as well and be part of the analysis

Seems like a good approach.

(3) The JAG may, as appropriate add sub-groups but the overall JAG reports would still be issued by the group for vetting through the NIC and JIC.

The subgroup approach has worked well for the FRTG, with different subgroups tackling the same question from different approaches. However, there have been challenges in deciding how best to fit together and time the release of different subgroup results, products, etc. Something to think about if the JAG will have concurrent subgroup working on closely related issues.

(4) Membership in the JAG data and analysis function could be open to externals with the provisions that they not release or report on these findings until the JAG reports are issued.

I am not sure what "externals" means in this context... non-Feds? If so, then should think carefully about who and for what purpose. Based on the FRTG experience to date, inclusion of non-Feds has brought great expertise and credibility, but also major challenges with data use and confidentiality, coordinated release of results, etc. So this one to discuss thoroughly before deciding.

(5) The JAG will provide guidance on sampling areas and priorities to internal USG and externals as appropriate and upon request.

Sounds good.

To harp on an earlier point, this topic and your specific questions are really important... I recommend setting up a conference call to talk this through.

Mark

Mark Sogge
Chief of Staff, USGS Western Region
2255 Gemini Drive, Flagstaff, AZ 86001
Cell: 928-606-1286; FAX: 928-556-7266
mark_sogge@usgs.gov

Fw Independent Peer Review of JAG Products Sogge thoughts on Steve's questions

From: Steve Murawski <Steve.Murawski@noaa.gov>
To: Robert Pavia <Robert.Pavia@noaa.gov>, Wainberg.Daniel@epamail.epa.gov, Wilson.gregory@epa.gov, Venosa.Albert@epa.gov, Kurtz.Jan@epamail.epa.gov, schaeffer.blake@epamail.epa.gov, ldecker@asascience.com, Hernan.Garcia@noaa.gov, Rost.Parsons@noaa.gov, Jeff.Napp@noaa.gov, Rik.Wanninkhof@noaa.gov, Sam.Walker@noaa.gov, Russ.Beard@noaa.gov, Benjamin.Shorr@noaa.gov, Jerry.Galt@noaa.gov, Jim.Farr@noaa.gov, mark_sogge@usgs.gov, Jerry_L._Miller@ostp.eop.gov, Robert Haddad <Robert.Haddad@noaa.gov>
Date: 06/13/2010 11:40 AM
Subject: Independent Peer Review of JAG Products

All,

I hope you all are having a somewhat restful weekend so far. I expect the pace of the JAG will quicken as we start to get more results in. There will be additional bottle samples from many R/Vs, the B-M data continuing, as well as acoustics and additional fluorometry.

I know our review process was fairly ad hoc last week, but the imperative to get a product out really forced the system to confront how we are operating. I await something from the other side of the review process, we will see. Anticipating more reports and the issues of Agency review, I would like to suggest that we establish some ground rules for these data and reports

(1) I think we need an independent peer review process. The implications of our findings on O2 are every bit as important as the flow rate calculations. I want to make sure we are appropriately cautious with respect to the issue of tipping points in O2. Accordingly, I propose that we establish an independent peer review panel of three independent experts (academics or industry) with appropriate expertise in oil chemistry and oceanography to look at our draft reports and provide comments. In order to avoid FACA concerns they cannot operate by consensus and will provide independent input to us. I have not resolved in my own mind if they are to be treated as confidential to us or make public. I would appreciate your comments on the approach and if so some names of candidates. We will want to discuss criteria for which one would be disqualified.

(2) All data and analyses of information collected by the vessels supported by the government or the firm would be subject to inclusion in a unified JAG database so that we can start pulling the picture together. This includes oceanography, bottle samples fluorometry and acoustics. We will encourage all others that are sampling to include their data as well and be part of the analysis

(3) The JAG may, as appropriate add sub-groups but the overall JAG reports would still be issued by the group for vetting through the NIC and JIC.

(4) Membership in the JAG data and analysis function could be open to externals with the provisions that they not release or report on these findings until the JAG reports are issued.

Fw Independent Peer Review of JAG Products Sogge thoughts on Steve's questions
(5) The JAG will provide guidance on sampling areas and priorities to
internal USG and externals as appropriate and upon request.

I would very much appreciate your reaction to above.

Steve Murawski