



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD

May 3, 2005

Note to Members of the Chartered SAB

Subject: SAB Administrative Meeting, May 12, 2005 in Dallas

From: Vanessa Vu

I am looking forward to seeing you at the SAB administrative meeting in Dallas that will be held on May 12th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Fairmont Dallas Hotel. The goals of the administrative meeting are to: a) discuss preliminary plans for FY06, including SAB self-identified projects for FY06 and membership for FY06; b) discuss plans for an assessment of the processes and performance of the SAB and of the support provided by the SAB Staff Office; and c) identify administrative changes that can be implemented by the SAB and SAB Staff Office to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. A draft agenda for the administrative meeting is attached.

I have asked for this administrative meeting to review our recent accomplishments, to brief you on the challenges facing the SAB Staff Office and the Agency, and to gain your insights on a self-assessment planned for the SAB and the SAB Staff Office over the next year. To be effective, all organizations benefit from periodic assessments of their performance. Since we have introduced many changes in SAB organization and processes over the past few years, the time is opportune to review Board structures and processes, recognize successful features, and "fine-tune" aspects that may be preventing the Board from providing the highest quality advice in an efficient, timely manner to the Agency. It is especially important this year, given current budget realities for the SAB Staff Office and the Agency and likely new activities for the SAB resulting from implementation of OMB's peer review bulletin. Additionally, as you may know, evaluating performance is required for all activities in the Executive Branch of the federal government and the SAB Staff Office is scheduled for formal review by OMB in FY 2008.

I am attaching a brief background paper with initial thoughts on the scope of this planned self assessment, as well as background documents that describe the mission and current operation procedures for the SAB. I ask all members, as background for the retreat, to familiarize themselves with the background documents, which describe the mission and current operating procedures for the SAB.

On May 11th I will be providing you with briefing books with additional background information on the SAB Staff Office budget and operating plan to help focus our discussions at the administrative session on May 12th.

I anticipate a valuable discussion in Dallas. For those not attending the meeting who wish to provide input to me by phone or email in advance of May 12th, I welcome their calls and emails.

Attachment: Draft Agenda

Background Paper: Initial Thoughts on the Scope of a Self Assessment for
the SAB and SAB Staff Office

**US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Science Advisory Board (SAB)
Administrative Meeting**

**The Fairmont Dallas Hotel
1717 North Akard St.
Dallas, Texas 75201
Phone: 214-720-2020**

**May 12, 2005 Administrative Meeting, 10:00 a.m. - 3:30
(All Times Central Daylight Saving Time)**

Purpose of the Meeting: to: a) discuss preliminary plans for FY06, including SAB self-identified projects for FY06 and membership for FY06; b) discuss plans for an assessment of the processes and performance of the SAB and of the support provided by the SAB Staff Office, including a possible retreat; and c) identify administrative changes that can be implemented by the SAB and SAB Staff Office to enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

10:00 - 10:20	Purpose of the Meeting and Review of Agenda	Dr. Granger Morgan Chair, Science Advisory Board Dr. Vanessa Vu, Director, SAB Staff Office
10:20 - 11:00	Highlights of SAB Activities, Challenges for the Future; Initial Staff Office Perspective on Self-Assessment	Dr. Vanessa Vu
11:00 - 12:00	Discussion of SAB Self-identified Projects for FY06	
12:00 - 1:00	Working Lunch and Discussion of Membership Issues for FY 06	
1:00 - 3:30	Discussion of Priority Issues for August Retreat	
3:00 - 3:30	Discussion of Next Steps	Dr. Granger Morgan
3:30	Adjourn the Meeting	

Background Paper: Initial Thoughts on the Scope of a Self Assessment for the SAB and SAB Staff Office

Why Start a Self Assessment in FY 05?

The SAB has a history of conducting periodic self-assessments. A self-assessment over the next year is timely to review the impact of changes introduced in SAB organization and processes over the past few years (see text box), recognize successful features, and "fine-tune" aspects that may be preventing the Board from providing the highest quality advice in a timely manner to the Agency.

Text Box 1: Recent Changes Introduced in SAB Organization and Processes

Introduction of new panel assessment processes	May 2002
Reorganization of the SAB announced	November 2003
Implementation plan for the new structural organization Of the EPA SAB announced	November 2003
Reorganization of SAB Staff Office	Summer 2003

Additionally, there are legal and institutional reasons to assess performance at this time. The Government Performance and Results Act, passed in 1993, requires all cabinet departments, independent agencies, and government corporations to report on performance and results. The performance of the SAB Staff Office is now scheduled to be rated through the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) process in FY 2008. A self-assessment now will help the SAB Staff Office ask the right questions and collect the right information that will make the PART review successful. Budget constraints for Fiscal Year 2006 also require that the SAB Staff Office identify ways to support federal advisory committees that enhance efficiency in providing advice. Finally, OMB's new Peer Review guidance places increased demands on the Agency for high quality peer review and may increasingly involve the SAB in the review of highly influential Agency science products.

Listed below in Text Box 2 are background documents (along with web addresses or file citations) that describe: 1) the mission and current operating procedures for the SAB; 2) recent accomplishments; 3) current advisory projects; 4) and the new OMB peer review requirements. Many of these documents have been distributed to you at earlier times in hard copy. Hard copies of all documents will be provided to you on May 11th.

Text Box 2: Background Documents Providing Context for the Self-Assessment

1. *Reorganization of the EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB): A Report of the EPA Science Advisory Board Staff Office*
<http://www.epa.gov/sab/pdf/sab04001.pdf>
2. *Implementation Plan For The New Structural Organization Of The EPA Science Advisory Board: A Report Of The EPA Science Advisory Board Staff Office*
<http://www.epa.gov/sab/pdf/sab04002.pdf>
3. *Overview of the Panel Formation Process at the Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board, September 2002*
<http://www.epa.gov/sab/panels/paneltopics.html>
4. *Advisory Committee Meetings and Report Development: Process for Public Involvement*
http://www.epa.gov/sab/pdf/sabso_04_001.pdf
5. *Crossroads: Meeting Challenges for Credible Science -- The EPA Science Advisory Board Accomplishments Report for Fiscal Year 2002 (EPA-SAB-03-007)*
<http://www.epa.gov/sab/pdf/sab03007.pdf>
6. *The EPA Science Advisory Board Staff Office and Science Advisory Committees Accomplishments Report for Fiscal Years 2003-2004; Science Advice for EPA: The Path Forward (EPA-SABSO-05-001; in press; file attachment)*
7. *Current Advisory Projects Supported by the SAB Staff Office As Of May1, 2005 (file attachment)*
8. *Office of Management and Budget: Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review*
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/memoranda/fy2005/m05-03.pdf>

Initial Thoughts on the Scope of the Self Assessment

The Staff Office has identified initial questions for the self-assessment for discussion.

1. Does the SAB provide technically and scientifically sound, independent, balanced, and useful to the Agency and is it recognized as doing so?
2. Are there ways to improve the mix of SAB projects so the SAB can give high quality advice to the agency on the most significant projects?
3. Does the chartered SAB have the appropriate mix of expertise given current and likely project requests?
4. Do standing committees have clear and appropriate roles?
5. Are there ways to improve information flow across the chartered SAB, standing committees, *ad hoc* committees, and *de novo* review panels to maximize the quality of advice provided to the Agency?
6. Are there ways to reduce and better share burden on chartered SAB members?
7. Are there ways to improve processes for reviewing SAB draft reports?
8. Are there ways to clarify and standardize the roles and responsibilities for SAB chairs and members?
9. Are there ways the SAB Staff can better support the SAB?
10. Are there ways the SAB Staff Office can better help members comply with ethics and Federal Advisory Committee Act Requirements?