

**Recap of Quality Review Committee (QRC) and Other Board Review  
for FY 2005 Reports**

QRCs:

- a) Air Toxics; Dom Grasso, Chair  
Members: James Bus, Linda Greer, Philip Hopke, Jill Lipoti
- b) Environmental Economics Research Strategy, Dom Grasso, Chair  
Members: Trudy Cameron, Myrick Freeman, Rebecca Parkin
- c) 3MRA, Dom Grasso, Chair  
Members: Gregory Biddinger, Michael McFarland, Robert Twiss, Lauren Zeise
- d) ROE, Dom Grasso, Chair  
Members: Ellis Cowling, Ken Cummins, James Galloway, Gene Matanoski,  
Deborah Swackhamer
- e) CrEAM, Bob Twiss, Chair  
Members: Greg Biddinger, Ken Dickson
- f) ICA, Rob Stavins, Chair  
Members: Trudy Cameron, Larry Goulder

Also other reviews:

STAA 2004 - Letter review

Full Board Reviews:

Contaminated Sites-RCRA MYPs, Granger Morgan, Chair  
Drinking Water Research Strategy, Granger Morgan, Chair

## Draft Report Review Process

### 1. Background on Quality Reviews

**a) The Review Requirement:** The quality review of draft SAB Committee or Panel reports is conducted in accordance with the advisory laws, regulations, EPA policy, the SAB Charter, and the SAB's own "Implementation Plan" (EPA SAB 2003) that states that "Draft reports prepared by SAB Committees or Panels are to be reviewed and approved by the Board before transmittal to the EPA Administrator" and that a Quality Review Committee (QRC) will be established to review each SAB *De Novo* Review Panel's draft report.<sup>1</sup>

The quality review process, whether conducted by the Board alone, or with the assistance of a Quality Review Committee, evaluates draft reports to identify ambiguities or inconsistencies that might complicate the use or interpretation of the report. Substantive issues in the report are the purview of the experts who have conducted specific reviews and authored draft reports while the exposition of these expert conclusions is a primary concern of those doing the quality review (whether by QRC or directly by the Board).

Each quality review involves a public discussion which is announced in the Federal Register. The focus of the discussion is on aspects of the report as they relate to the charge to the quality reviewers. This public meeting could be either a meeting of a specific QRC or a meeting of the Board. If the draft report is discussed in a public meeting of a QRC, it will also receive a final public discussion by the Board itself during one of its periodic meetings, or in a telephone conference meeting called for this specific purpose.

**b) The Charge for the Review:** The specific purpose of a quality review of draft reports (i.e., the Charge to the reviewers) is to determine:

- i) whether the original charge questions to the SAB Standing or Ad Hoc Committee are adequately addressed;
- ii) if the draft report is clear and logical; and
- iii) if the conclusions drawn, and/or recommendations made, are supported by information in the body of the draft report.

Quality reviewers should be alert to errors in the report; however, they are not responsible for identifying all errors and omissions in a report. Reviewers should highlight and seek resolution of any issues that are caused by technical errors or omissions that they identify during their review of SAB Committee or Panel draft reports.<sup>2</sup>

**c) Disposition of Reports:** Generally, disposition recommendations, from a QRC or a full Board review, take one of the following forms:

- i) approve the Review Panel's draft report as written;
- ii) return the report to the review panel for a limited editorial revision;
- iii) return the draft report for substantial revision and;
- iv) return the report for reconsidered by the Panel with a new report to be drafted in the future; or

- v) establish an entirely new review panel to repeat the work.

Issues identified during a quality review are communicated to the Chair and DFO of the original review committee/panel for appropriate action. Once issues are resolved, the draft report (with any needed revision) is returned to the Board for final approval. Final approval can be accomplished in a variety of ways each of which reflects the disposition decision of the Board.<sup>3</sup>

#### REFERENCES:

EPA, SAB (2003). *Implementation Plan for the New Structural Organization of the EPA Science Advisory Board* (EPA-SAB-04-002, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> FACA authorizes the establishment of advisory committees to provide advice to government officials (e.g., reports) and prescribes certain requirements for the advisory practice. FACA gives authority to GSA to prescribe “administrative guidelines and management controls applicable to advisory committees”. FACA also requires agencies to “establish uniform administrative guidelines and management controls for advisory committees established by that agency.” FACA Regulations define a Subcommittee as a group “...that reports to an advisory committee and not directly to a Federal officer or agency, whether or not its members are drawn in whole or in part from the parent advisory committee.” In its simplest form, the requirement relevant to the EPA SAB is contained in EPA’s FACA handbook which states that “...regardless of the meeting product category, subcommittees may not provide advice and recommendations to EPA without going through the parent committee.” Further, the SAB Charter allows the formation of committees, etc., for purposes consistent with the Charter, but states that “Such committees, panels or workgroups may not work independently of the chartered committee and must report their recommendations and advice to the SAB for full deliberation and discussion. Committees, panels, and workgroups have no authority to make decisions on behalf of the SAB and may not report directly to the Agency.”

<sup>2</sup>It is important to note that the QRC nor the Board review are responsible for identifying all possible technical errors or omissions in a draft report. This substantive issue is the purview of the experts who authored the report.

<sup>3</sup> For example the Board could approve a report subject to changes being made by the Panel and then the revised report (letter to the Administrator, Executive Summary, and/or body of the report) being submitted for a final check and concurrence by one or more vectors from the Board. In this case, the role of the vector is to evaluate revisions made to specific components of a report to ensure that the changes conform to the decisions of the Board during the approval process. Once the revisions meet this requirement, the report is considered complete and the SAB Staff Office delivers the report to the Administrator.