



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JUN 7 2010

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Deborah L. Swackhamer
Chairwoman, Science Advisory Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Dr. Swackhamer:

I offer my sincere thanks to you and the members of the Science Advisory Board for your comments on the President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's research programs. As you are aware, the \$10 billion proposed for the EPA heeds the President's call to streamline and find efficiencies in the agency's operations while supporting my seven priorities to guide EPA's work. The Science Advisory Board's expertise helps to ensure that the EPA's research programs continue to provide the scientific foundation necessary for meeting the nation's environmental challenges.

I certainly appreciate the board's comment that the EPA submitted "a thoughtful and prudent budget request that supports science as the foundation for EPA decision making and that invests in research as a resource to address future environmental needs and issues." In particular, I am pleased that the board highlighted as appropriate the increased investment in the Science to Achieve Results Program to help address pressing science and research needs, including an increase to nearly double Science to Achieve Results graduate fellows to support the administration's priority for science and technology education.

It also is gratifying that the SAB expressed approval of increased funding for advanced air-quality monitoring research. The EPA's goal for this research is to ensure the appropriateness and credibility of methods to support defensible air-quality standards and to advance the design of effective air-pollution control strategies. Advanced air-monitoring technologies will improve our understanding of the spatial characterization of air pollution, air-pollution exposures, atmospheric chemistry and precursor emissions, both at lower cost and with greater spatial coverage.

I applaud your recommendations on hydraulic-fracturing research within the EPA. This increased investment is critical to producing sound, scientific support for decisions relevant to hydraulic fracturing and providing a transparent process that will inform the public, as well as industry and regulatory officials, on the potential public health and environmental risks and mitigation options. In addition to the EPA, others are working in this area, and we will continue

to promote information exchange and look for partnerships. I believe this will minimize duplicative research efforts and costs associated with this extensive effort.

Your letter specified four areas that you believe deserve special attention: clean air and global change; ecosystem services; environmental justice; and social, behavioral and decision sciences.

The SAB observed that the increase in clean-air and global-change research is not sufficient because of the “substantial need for new knowledge to support regulatory strategies, as a result of the agency’s endangerment finding on greenhouse gases.” The EPA agrees there is a need for greater research in air quality and global change, especially climate change. The EPA will continue to leverage investments in the Office of Research and Development’s Clean Air and Global Change research programs through partnerships with EPA program offices such as the Office of Air and Radiation and the Office of Water, federal agencies such as the U.S. Global Change Research Program, and private organizations such as the Health Effects Institute. These partnerships also help to ensure that we undertake the most relevant scientific activities and that science informs decision making.

The Ecosystem Services Research Program continues to make important contributions to the agency’s priorities, partly because of the program’s numerous partnerships. However, I acknowledge your concern about the proposed reductions to this program. I would like to reassure you that these reductions are the result of realignments to improve efficiency in program support and operational costs. We will consider your comments about the Ecosystem Services Research Program during the 2012 budget process.

The EPA appreciates and concurs with your concerns about directing sufficient attention to researching children's health and protecting vulnerable populations. We continue to place a high priority on children's health research as evidenced by our Centers for Children's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research Program, known as Children's Centers, which has been operating since 1998. A new round of Children's Centers will be announced in 2010 and jointly funded with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences for the next five years. Much of this research is focused on children living in disadvantaged and disproportionately impacted communities. Additionally, the Human Health program is supporting the development of tools to evaluate cumulative health impacts of exposures to environmental contaminants and other stressors, such as social and economic, at local scales. Much of the EPA’s intramural and extramural research on children and community health is conducted in partnership with impacted communities and our regional offices.

In March 2010, Office of Research and Development and the EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice co-sponsored the groundbreaking symposium, “Strengthening Environmental Justice Research and Decision Making.” The EPA is developing its 2011 portfolio of Requests for Assistance to fund research grants. We are exploring ways to incorporate recommendations from this symposium to fund research that addresses environmental health disparities.

Given your concern that the 2011 President's budget shows a \$1.1 million decrease for cumulative risk, I would like to clarify that this results from shifts of resources across long-term goals but does not equate to a net reduction in human-health research. Specifically, the \$2.1 million decrease in the susceptible population's long-term goal results from a 2010 congressional add-on that increased the 2010 enacted budget but was not sustained in the 2011 request. In general, such congressional add-ons are not sustained in subsequent budget requests. Therefore, the EPA is maintaining its base program for children's health research in the FY 2011 budget request at its FY 2010 requested level.

We appreciate and concur with the SAB's concern about research in social, behavioral and decision sciences. The EPA strongly believes that social, behavioral and decision sciences should be integrated throughout the agency's programmatic and research activities. To that end, the EPA's Science Policy Council plans to assess the use of these disciplines across the agency. In response to your recommendations, we already are working to advance social, behavioral and decision sciences at the EPA. For example, the Office of Research and Development's National Homeland Security Research Center and National Center for Environmental Research recently announced a grants competition for risk communication. In addition, the EPA is taking aggressive steps to leverage our ability to conduct integrated, transdisciplinary research that will draw upon these disciplines to develop sustainable solutions for our environmental problems. We look forward to additional discussion on these efforts with the Science Advisory Board.

Thank you again for providing your comments and recommendations on the FY 2011 President's Budget Request for EPA research programs.

Sincerely,



Lisa P. Jackson