

RAF Ecological Risk Assessment Communication Technical Panel Work Plan May, 2011

The Risk Assessment Forum (RAF) is initiating a new project through the Ecological Risk Oversight Committee. The RAF will undertake a project to explore how the results of Ecological Risk Assessments (ERA) are used in Agency decision making; and to provide guidance to risk assessors and decision makers on how to better communicate and enable the use of ERA information.

During RAF Ecological Colloquium (September 2009) and a SETAC confabulation (November 2009), the Agency ecological risk assessors identified the use of the results of ecological risk assessment by Agency decision makers as an issue that should receive attention to ensure the Agency uses best available science. The *Framework for Ecological Risk Assessment* published in 1992, and recent reports (SAB October 2007, NRC 2008) urge the Agency to make better use of ecological risk assessment findings, and note the use of ecological risk assessment results is not consistent across programs.

The RAF proposes that the new workgroup will develop multiple products.

(1) A summary of surveys and interviews with ecological risk assessors. An illustrative question is:

- Is ERA information being used in Agency decisions, policy, guidance, etc. that you are familiar with?

(2) A summary of surveys and interviews with decision makers. Illustrative questions include:

- What ERA results are useful to you?
- What aspects of ERA may have limited their value for your decisions?

(3) Depending on the results of the findings the workgroup will prepare:

- Guidance to risk assessors on how to engage decision makers in ERA design so the results of ERAs will be of greater value to them.
- Guidance to risk assessors on how to present ERA information in a manner that makes it useful and important to decision makers.
- Guidance to decision makers on how to use ERA information in decision making.
- A tutorial for managers on the nature of ecological risks.

The Workgroup will be composed of scientists and other staff with expertise in ecological risk assessment, communication, and risk management from the Program and Regional offices, as well as scientists and researchers specializing in ecological risk assessment communication. The co-chairs are Mary Reiley in the Office of Water, and Marc Greenberg, in Region 3. RAF staff for the project is Lawrence Martin.