

Update on SAB Committee on  
Science  
Integration for Decision Making

Chartered SAB Meeting

April 5, 2010

# Background

- October 2008 – Administrator Johnson requested study “to develop independent advice on how EPA can strengthen scientific assessments for decision making”
  - To build on SAB 2000 report, *Toward Integrated Environmental Decision Making*
- January 2009 – release of the NRC “Silver Book,” *Science and Decisions; Advancing Risk Assessment*
- Spring 2009 – Administrator Jackson reaffirmed support for the SAB Science Integration for Decision Making study

# Charge

- To evaluate the extent to which EPA's scientific assessment practices are integrated into environmental decision-making practices as recommended by the NRC and SAB
- To identify barriers to implementing recommendations
- To suggest immediate and future actions to promote integration, considering
  - Scientific leadership
  - Scientific practices
  - Collaboration across disciplines
  - Scientific expertise
  - Workforce

# Activities to date

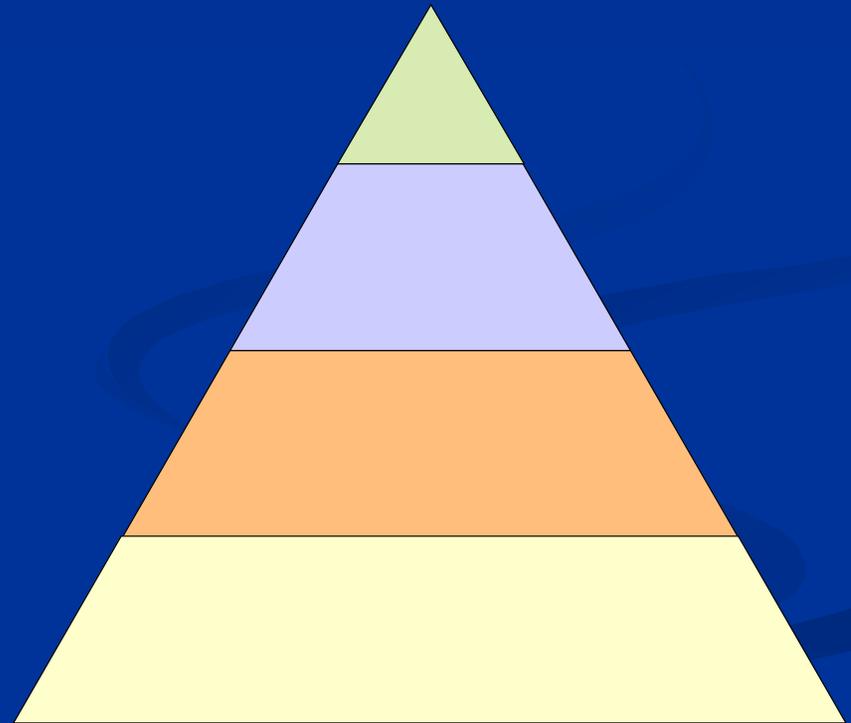
- July 2009 meeting to discuss the charge and receive briefings on decision making at the national program and regional office levels
- September 2009 teleconference to develop a Preliminary Study Plan
- Initial fact-finding interviews (October 28 - February 4)
- March 30-31<sup>st</sup> meeting to discuss preliminary findings and next steps

# Fact-finding interviews

- 73 interviews conducted by committee members
  - Multi-level interviews: leaders, managers and scientific staff
  - Ten regions
  - National Program Offices
  - ORD and other offices supporting decision makers
  - Over 450 interviewees
- Interviews focused on the **practice** of science integration to support decision making
  - Consideration of public, stakeholder, external scientific, and other input in science assessment
  - Drivers and impediments to implementing past recommendations for science integration
  - Ways program receives feedback on how science is used in decision-making
  - Workforce to support science integration for decision making

# Key themes emerging (1)

- Decisions requiring science occur at all levels of EPA
  - From the Administrator
  - To mid-level managers
  - To branch chiefs in Program Offices and permit writers at the regions



# Key themes emerging (2)

- Science integration practices vary widely
  - Some programs and types of decisions have well-developed processes to integrate science and explicitly use a problem formulation process
  - Others lack clear processes and resources for science integration
  - Some leaders/managers actively promote science integration
  - Much of EPA's science to support decisions, especially in the regions, comes from outside ORD

# Key themes emerging (3)

- EPA's scientific workforce estimated at 6,000; only 1,200 in ORD
  - Questions raised about the capacity and roles of regional and program staff in science integration and available resources and technical support for them
  - Challenges and opportunities presented by impending retirement of large numbers of EPA scientists – need for strategic workforce planning

# Key themes emerging (4)

Consistent messages from regions:

- Interest in more effective engagement in ORD research planning
- Interest in more IRIS assessments and more assessment of scientific knowledge that would evaluate external literature and address "how do you apply it to a practical problem?"
- Interest in more technical assistance from ORD

# Key themes emerging (5)

- ORD's Transformation Process holds promise of promoting science integration by emphasizing customer focus and teamwork
  - Success of ORD's Vision may depend on a shared vision of science integration across all of EPA

# Next steps

- Additional limited fact-finding
- Committee teleconferences to develop draft white papers on key findings and key recommendations
- Workshop in Fall 2009 to obtain EPA and stakeholder input on the committee's initial findings and preliminary recommendations.