



Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor • Chuck Hartke, Director

Office of the Director

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September 25, 2007

M. Granger Morgan, Ph.D., Chair
Chartered Science Advisory Board (1400F)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

RE: Science Advisory Panel Draft Report
Hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico

Dear Dr. Morgan:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Hypoxia Advisory Panel Draft Advisory that evaluates the updated science regarding the causes and extent of hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the scientific basis of possible management options in the Mississippi River Basin.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture is a member of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force for which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requested this science review. Although we are attaching several detailed comments on the draft report, I am asking for the Chartered Science Advisory Board to extend the period for public comment for the hypoxia advisory panel draft report until October 26, 2007. It is imperative that all affected parties have adequate opportunity to review and comment on this 300-page report. The current draft is the first version released for public review that reflects consideration by the full panel in entirety and is properly referenced for scientific review.

I am also asking that the Chartered Board re-convene the hypoxia advisory panel to review and fully consider public comments on this important document. The short deadlines for public review and comment as well as the limited time the panel has to consider those comments and refine the report may jeopardize the value of this information and reduce the impact panel members' reviews have on the document.

In our quick review of the report we have identified several areas which need additional analysis and discussion among the panel members. Some of those include include the economic impacts within the Basin, the water quality impacts of bio-fuels, the effects of fall application of fertilizer and the long-term sustainability of soil resources if nitrogen applications are reduced.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles A. Hartke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles A. "Chuck" Hartke
Director, Illinois Department of Agriculture

Enclosure

Cc: Stephen L. Johnson, EPA
Benjamin H. Grumbles, EPA
Dennis McKenna, Illinois Department of Agriculture