



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D C 20460

SAB-EC-86-004

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OFFICE OF
THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Dave Durenberger
U. S. Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Durenberger:

The Executive Committee of the Environmental Protection Agency's Science Advisory Board (SAB) has had the opportunity to review the amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act enacted by the House of Representatives and the Senate as they pertain to the additional scientific review responsibilities envisioned for the SAB. The Executive Committee is pleased that both houses of the Congress have confidence in the Board to provide for its expanded participation in the development of drinking water regulations and standards.

SAB will strive to provide its technical evaluation prior to proposal of maximum contaminant level (MCL) goals and national primary drinking water regulations. Our preference is to review EPA's scientific documents as early as possible in the regulation development process because of the advantages of greater flexibility in addressing and resolving technical issues before the Agency has formally proposed a regulatory decision.

In behalf of the Executive Committee I would like to convey to you two of the operating principles that would govern the Board's implementation of these amendments. These include:

- o The EPA has traditionally asked the SAB to provide its advice on the scientific adequacy of documents used to assess human health or environmental risk. The SAB concurs with this role. It prefers to focus on issues pertaining to scientific assessment rather than comment on rulemaking, recognizing that the latter involves the weighing of many other factors besides science. In keeping with this approach, the SAB does not plan to evaluate EPA's policy goals when it reviews the technical basis of maximum contaminant levels and primary drinking water regulations.

- o In addition to reviewing the scientific basis of risk assessments for individual pollutants, the Board plans to examine general scientific criteria used by the Agency in developing drinking water goals and standards, and the research needed to support this regulatory activity.

The Board plans to carry out its scientific reviews in a timely manner, and it is confident that its participation in the process for developing drinking water goals and standards will not delay EPA in reaching decisions in an expeditious manner.

The Science Advisory Board hopes that its independent scientific reviews will strengthen EPA's ability to further protect the public health from contaminants in drinking water and improve the Agency's capability and credibility in scientific assessment.

Sincerely,



Norton Nelson, Chairman
Executive Committee
Science Advisory Board

cc: Lee M. Thomas
A. James Barnes