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

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THE ADMINISTRATOR

EPA-SAB-08-008

Dr. M. Granger Morgan
Chair
Science Advisory Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Subject: Response to *Comments on EPA's Research Budget for Fiscal Year 2009: A Report of the Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board*

Dear Dr. Morgan:

I thank you and the members of the Science Advisory Board Executive Committee for your advisory report titled *Comments on EPA's Research Budget for FY 2009* (EPA-SAB-08-008). The Board's review of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's FY 2009 Annual Performance Plan and Congressional Justification complemented last fall's SAB review of the strategic research directions of these programs. Annual review by the Board is a valuable step in the Agency's priority-setting process and provides important advice to EPA's Office of Research and Development, which carries out the Agency's research activities.

I am delighted that the Board recognizes the dedication and quality of EPA's workforce. EPA's regulatory actions depend on high-quality, relevant science and innovative environmental technologies, both of which rely on the talents of our employees. The Agency's success in improving our environment and quality of life over the last three decades is a testament to the competence, commitment, and hard work of the hundreds of scientists and engineers at EPA. The Agency is committed to providing the support necessary for our scientific workforce's continued success.

EPA – our Office of Research and Development in particular – is considering the Board's specific programmatic recommendations, which will guide the Agency as it prepares its Fiscal Year 2010 budget and long-term research strategies. EPA agrees with many of the Board's recommendations. In recent years, our air quality research program has made significant progress in emphasizing integrated and multi-pollutant approaches, including revision of the multi-year plan to better address air pollution from a source-to-outcome approach. We also are increasingly approaching environmental problems from a life-cycle perspective. For example, our sustainability and global change research programs are studying not just the implications of greater alternative fuel use (e.g. ethanol fuel blends), but also the environmental impacts of the

production of these fuels. The Agency also strongly supports the Board's goal of communicating research results as effectively as possible, both within the Agency and to public stakeholders.

However, I respectfully disagree with the Board's conclusion that EPA is under-investing in forward-looking research. EPA, as a mission-driven organization charged with protecting public health, does make near-term, programmatic research needs a high priority. But the Agency also considers conducting research on future environmental issues a high priority. For example, EPA has established two new interdisciplinary research organizations the National Homeland Security Research Center and the National Center for Computational Toxicology to enhance our ability to address current and long-term scientific needs in these increasingly important areas. In addition, the Agency has steadily expanded research to understand the environmental risks of engineered nanomaterials, and the Agency's annual budgets continue to include substantial funding for our leading-edge ecological and human health research.

The Agency's more program-driven research is also responsive to emerging and long-term environmental issues. For example, our drinking water and global change research programs, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy, are initiating efforts to study the effects of geologic sequestration of carbon dioxide created from electricity generation. As I reference above, our sustainability and global change research programs are focusing on the environmental implications of greater reliance on, and increased production of, alternative fuels.

This evolution within EPA's program-driven research is due in part to the mechanisms EPA has put in place to ensure that we do not lose sight of the science that is needed to address emerging human health and environmental issues. EPA's national research program directors coordinate long-term research planning across EPA's national laboratories and centers in collaboration with the Agency's program offices and regions, which ultimately use the results of the research to inform their decisions. Also, the Agency's Board of Scientific Counselors frequently reviews EPA's research programs to evaluate whether they are addressing both short- and long-term, high-priority science questions.

Thank you again for the Board's advisory report on the Agency's Fiscal Year 2009 research budget. The Board's thoughtful recommendations will be invaluable in our annual and strategic planning discussions over the coming months. As always, I am grateful for your efforts to ensure that EPA's research programs effectively support the Agency's mission to protect human health and the environment.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Johnson