



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

MAR 13 2002

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. William Glaze
Dr. Granger Morgan
Science Advisory Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Dr. Glaze and Dr. Morgan:

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Science Advisory Board's commentary, *Improving Science-Based Environmental Stakeholder Processes*.

Clearly, EPA can make better decisions when we listen to stakeholders and when their recommendations are based on sound science and up-to-date information. The Agency's Final Public Involvement Policy, scheduled for release this spring, will reflect many of the concerns raised in your report and will recognize the role that sound science can and must play in EPA's decision-making processes. By emphasizing the use of sound science, the Policy will seek to ensure that stakeholder contributions are useful to the Agency, meaningful for the participants, and conducive to greater public confidence in EPA's decision-making.

With regard to your recommendation for a five-year research effort coordinated by the National Science Foundation, I agree that research, particularly in the area of evaluation, is warranted. EPA will fully cooperate in any NSF-funded project that promotes improved public involvement.

Striking a prudent balance in our consideration of both relevant science and public values and interests will remain largely dependent on the dedication of sufficient time and resources and on the continued improvement of public involvement activities to help define issues, develop sustainable solutions, and gather feedback. Our efforts should focus on developing skills and mechanisms for planning and conducting public involvement activities, on gathering and sharing information on successful involvement techniques, and on implementing an evaluation program as specified in the draft *Recommendations for Implementing EPA's Public Involvement Policy*. A baseline internal survey later this year will help determine how well EPA has implemented the Policy, with a follow-up survey planned for 2005. We will also be developing tools to encourage evaluation and gather feedback from those who participate in our public involvement processes.

Again, thank you for your helpful advice. My best wishes to you both.

Sincerely yours,

/S/

Christine Todd Whitman