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

DEC 16 2013

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL
AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
Committee on Science, Space and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing in response to your November 6, 2013, letter to Dr. Amanda Rodewald, chair of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Science Advisory Board Panel for the Review of the EPA Water Body Connectivity Report, and Dr. David Allen, chair of the EPA's chartered Science Advisory Board (SAB). Your letter asked the SAB expert panel to address several questions regarding the EPA's Draft Science Synthesis Report on the Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters (Report). The agency is working closely with the SAB to obtain the best scientific advice on the Report and ensure that it accurately synthesizes and assesses the available peer-reviewed literature.

The EPA will assure the expert panel members are aware of your letter at their upcoming public meeting on this matter, which is to be held December 16 through December 18. A similar action was taken with respect to your May 2, 2013, letter providing questions to the SAB on their review of the Draft Report on the Hydraulic Fracturing Drinking Study.

With respect to the questions posed in your November 6, 2013, letter, the EPA has begun an initial review and we believe many of the questions you raise are addressed in the existing charge questions provided to the expert panel. The charge questions were written broadly to encourage consideration by the expert panel members of all of the scientific information and conclusions in the Report.

Several of the questions posed in your November 6 letter go beyond the scientific review that is the expert technical panel's statutory focus. The panel is specifically charged with providing the Administrator advice on "the adequacy of the scientific and technical basis" of information supporting agency actions. 42 U.S.C. § 4365.

The EPA remains committed to meaningful consideration of Congress' scientific questions and accommodating those requests when possible and appropriate. As such, the EPA is continuing to evaluate the questions you have posed to the expert panel.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on our mutual goal of ensuring the EPA receives the best scientific advice available. If you have any further questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Laura Gomez in my office, by phone at (202) 564-5736 or by email at gomez.laura@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Laura Vaught
Associate Administrator