Summary Minutes of the
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Superfund Benefits Analysis Advisory Panel
Public Teleconference
February 11, 2005

Committee Members: Dr. Rick Freeman
Dr. Robin Autienrieth
Dr. Kathleen Segerson
Dr. Anna Alberini
Dr. Horace Keith Moo-Young
Mr. Tim Thompson
Ms. Kate Probst
Dr. Mark Miller
Dr. Ted Gayer

Date and Time: 2:00pm – 4:00pm, February 11, 2005

Location: Teleconference

Purpose:

SAB Staff: Dr. Holly Stallworth, Designated Federal Officer

Other EPA Staff: Kelly Maguire

Other: Terry Suomi, E2
Hagai Nassau, E2
Alex Farrell, E2
Keith Belton, OMB
Glenn Farber, OSWER

Meeting Summary

The discussion followed the issues and general timing as presented in the meeting agenda (Attachment A).

Opening of Public Meeting

Dr. Holly Stallworth, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for EES, opened the meeting with a statement that the EES is a standing subcommittee of the Advisory

Council on Clean Air Compliance Analysis, a chartered federal advisory committee whose meetings are subject to the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Dr. Betsy Southerland, Director of OSWER's Assessment and Remediation Division, introduced the project to panelists. Dr. Southerland said it was a privilege to have such a distinguished panel to review this study. The context for the project is that there are lots of discussions about the cost of the program and very little discussion of the benefits. OSWER's benefits study is designed to "counter" some of the extreme discussion of the cost of Superfund. OSWER turned to contractor E2 and their principal Alex Farrell. The study looks at a baseline scenario of no Superfund and no substitute for that program. It also includes a lot of non-EPA activities to evaluate the program. About 70% of Superfund's remedial activities are done by responsible parties and do not come out of taxpayer funds. 30% comes out of the Fund, but that expired in '95 so now the 30% comes out of general taxpayer funds. The study follows the spirit and intent for regulatory analysis as closely as possible. We're grateful for Dr. Freeman who chaired the UST/RCRA review panel who gave us good recommendations about how we should proceed with doing a benefits analysis for Superfund. The limitations of the current study are that monetized benefits presented in Ch. 4 may underestimate the total benefits. Even with narrow interpretation of benefits, we conclude that benefits exceed costs by an order of magnitude.

The members discussed the comparison between costs and benefits and whether the cost side was included in the report. Some concern was expressed about a benefits only report. In response to members' questions, Dr. Southerland clarified that the report was strictly for the communications of benefits.

Discussion also focused on the technical aspects of the charge questions and whether the Panel could comment with a more general opinion of the report. One member voiced a desire for the Panel to discuss the possibility of recommending that health and ecological benefits not be further explored and that analysis that would support future decisions be favored.

One member expressed concerns with the indicators used to capture ecological benefits. This member wanted to address the question of whether the report was using the right data set.

The Chair asked for volunteers to take the lead in writing potential responses to particular charge questions and using those drafts to lead the discussion in the face-to-face meeting. The following assignments were agreed upon.

Question 1 -- Segerson, Moo-Young, Probst
Question 2 -- Probst & Thompson for first half, Gayer, Thompson & Alberini for second half
Question 3 -- Alberini & Gayer

Question 4 -- Freeman for 4b, Miller for 4a and 4c, Autenrieth for 4d and 4e.
Freeman will look at valuation part of 4e.
Question 5 -- Thompson, Segerson & Boyd
Question 6 -- Amenities --- Gayer
Materials -- Alberini
Empowerment -- Autenrieth, Probst
Deterrence -- Segerson & Probst
Emergency Preparedness -- Segerson & Probst
Info. and Innovation -- Thompson
Int'l Benefits -- Autenrieth

OSWER also agreed to look at adding bookmarks to the PDF of the report and to write a charge question on groundwater that Rick Freeman and Keith Moo-Young will review.

Respectfully Submitted:

/Signed/
Holly Stallworth, Designated Federal Officer

Certified as True:

/Signed/
A. Myrick Freeman
Chair

NOTE AND DISCLAIMER: The minutes of this public meeting reflect diverse ideas and suggestions offered by the Panel members during the course of deliberations within the meeting. Such ideas, suggestions, and deliberations do not necessarily reflect definitive consensus advice from the panel members. The reader is cautioned to not rely on the minutes to represent final, approved, consensus advice and recommendations offered to the Agency. Such advice and recommendations may be found in the final advisories, letters or reports prepared and transmitted to the EPA Administrator following the public meetings.