



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

SEP 14 2009

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Deborah L. Swackhamer
Chair
Science Advisory Board
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Subject: Response to the Science Advisory Board's comments on the President's Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Request for EPA Research (EPA-SAB-09-15)

Dear Dr. Swackhamer:

I would like to thank you and the members of the Science Advisory Board Executive Committee for your comments on the President's Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Request for U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Research. Annual review of the Office of Research and Development budget by SAB is a valuable step in helping the Agency develop its research priorities. In addition, I appreciate SAB's continuing interest in ORD's Integrated Multidisciplinary Research efforts, which will enable ORD to apply its unique and diverse expertise to help solve EPA's highest-priority scientific challenges.

In your letter, you highlighted three issues that you believe deserve special notice. Below, I respond to each of them in turn:

- *FY10 budget for Human Health and Ecosystems research.* EPA's HH&E Research programs are responding to constrained budgets and changing priorities by strategically leveraging their resources and expertise. This includes forming partnerships across the federal government, academia and the private sector. For example, ORD co-funds the Children's Research Centers with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. In addition, ORD is collaborating with the National Geographic Society to map ecosystem services at a national scale.

- *Lack of Agency research activity and staff expertise in the behavioral, social and decision sciences.* EPA recognizes the importance of the behavioral, social and decision sciences. I know that ORD staff recently shared examples of research activities that employ some of these areas of expertise with the SAB. ORD will continue to supplement its internal expertise in these disciplines through a variety of mechanisms, including intra- and extra-Agency partnerships. As part of its emphasis on IMD research, ORD will increasingly involve these disciplines in its research program, from the problem formulation stage through to the communication of research results. Creating a dedicated research program in the behavioral, social and decision sciences is an issue that merits further Agency discussion. I will ask EPA's Science Policy Council to assess the use of these disciplines across EPA's program and regional offices to determine whether there are ways to better deploy our resources to meet the challenges identified by the SAB.
- *Rising personnel costs relative to ORD's overall budget.* ORD's increased personnel expenses reflect the Agency's policy of maintaining personnel compensation and benefits to keep pace with the rising cost of living. The SAB is correct in its observation that rising personnel costs, without attendant increases in ORD's overall budget, can have a wedging effect on the resources that are available to conduct both extramural and intramural research. We are aware of this challenge and will continue to pursue creative solutions.

In response to your suggestion about the need to include other EPA offices in the SAB's research program reviews, I agree that it is time to do so. EPA's scientific activities are spread across our program and regional offices, and the Agency would benefit from SAB advice both on the science underway across the Agency and, informed by this broader context, on the ORD research program. I look forward to working with the Board to make these discussions a reality.

Lastly, I appreciate the specific programmatic recommendations provided in the attachment to your letter. These suggestions will be taken into consideration as the Agency develops its longer-term strategies for research, which I understand will be discussed in November during the SAB's face-to-face meeting with ORD staff. If my schedule permits, I would like to join you to provide my perspective on EPA's strategic science directions.

Thank you once again for your feedback on the Fiscal Year 2010 President's Budget Request for ORD. I am grateful for your ongoing efforts to ensure scientific excellence at EPA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa P. Jackson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lisa P. Jackson