

**SAB Science and Technological Achievement Awards Panel Draft--10/26/2011--DO NOT CITE OR QUOTE
This Draft Panel Report has been prepared for quality review and approval by the chartered Science Advisory Board.
This report does not represent EPA policy.**

[DATE]

The Honorable Lisa P. Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Subject: SAB Recommendations for EPA's FY2011 Scientific and Technological
Achievement Awards

Dear Administrator Jackson:

The EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) is pleased to transmit its recommendations for the FY 2011 Scientific and Technological Achievement Awards (STAA). The STAA program was established in 1980 to recognize EPA employees who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of science and technology as evaluated in their publications in the peer-reviewed literature. The SAB has been asked by EPA's Office of Research and Development to review EPA's nominated scientific papers and make recommendations for awards. We are pleased to continue our participation in this important program.

This year, the agency submitted a total of 134 nominations comprised of 185 papers in 13 out of 14 science and technology categories designated for review by the SAB. The SAB recommends 51 nominations for monetary awards and another 43 deserving of honorable mention. Of the nominations recommended for monetary awards, three were recommended for Level I, the highest award; 13 for Level II; and 35 for Level III. The SAB's recommendations are provided in the enclosed appendices.

The SAB appreciates the agency's implementation of the SAB recommendations from last year's review regarding nomination procedures, which has significantly improved SAB's ability to develop its 2011 STAA recommendations. In particular, the SAB concludes that almost all of the 2011 nominations adhered to existing STAA program guidelines and were properly categorized.

To further facilitate future review, the SAB recommends that the Agency ensure that external peer review is conducted on any nominated book chapters and clarify the relationship between publications within nominations comprised of multiple publications. The SAB also urges the agency to discourage submission of nominations published by standards-setting organizations as the assignment of authorship and the nature of peer review typically are not clear. Finally, the SAB stresses the guiding principle of quality over quantity, particularly as it applies to those authors who bundle and submit many similar publications (frequently in many bundles in different topical categories).

Finally, the SAB applauds the agency's public recognition of the scientific work of EPA scientists and engineers through publication in the peer-reviewed literature. This promotes the sound science and high quality research that bolsters EPA's mission. Thank you for providing the SAB with the opportunity to

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1 assist the Agency with this important program. The SAB looks forward to reviewing the FY 2012
2 nominations.

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Sincerely,

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8 Dr. Deborah L. Swackhamer, Chair
9 EPA Science Advisory Board

Dr. Taylor Eighmy, Chair
SAB Scientific and Technological
Achievement Awards Committee

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14 Enclosures

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NOTICE

This report has been written as part of the activities of the EPA Science Advisory Board, a public advisory group providing extramural scientific information and advice to the Administrator and other officials of the Environmental Protection Agency. The Board is structured to provide balanced, expert assessment of scientific matters related to the problems facing the Agency. This report has not been reviewed for approval by the Agency and, hence, the contents of this report do not necessarily represent the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor of other agencies in the Executive Branch of the Federal government, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute a recommendation for use. Reports of the EPA Science Advisory Board are posted on the EPA website at <http://www.epa.gov/sab>.

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1. BACKGROUND

EPA's Scientific and Technological Achievement Awards (STAA) were established in 1980 to recognize the Agency's scientists and engineers who published their technical work in the peer-reviewed literature. The STAA program is administered and managed by EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD). Each year, the EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) has been asked to review EPA's nominated scientific papers and make recommendations for awards. EPA announced the call for EPA nominations for the 2011 STAA program to senior managers and employees in November 2010 (Appendix A). In May 2011, ORD submitted 134 nominations for 2011 STAA awards to the SAB Staff Office (Table 1). ORD grouped the nominations into 13 out of the 14 possible science and technology categories and screened them for conformance with EPA's *STAA Nomination Procedures and Guidelines*. The Guidelines describe the award levels, eligibility criteria, and the criteria the SAB should use to evaluate the nominations for awards.

Table 1. 2011 STAA Nominations by Topic Category

Topic	Number of Nominations
Control Systems and Technology	3
Ecological Research	24
Energy and the Environment	1
Environmental Policy and Decisionmaking Studies	6
Health Effects Research and Human Health Risk Assessment	24
Homeland Security	2
Industry and the Environment	2
Integrated Risk Assessment	6
Monitoring and Measurement Methods	22
Other Environmental Research	3
Review Articles	20
Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration	0
Transport and Fate	18
Sustainability and Innovation	3

EPA's criteria for STAA Program awards are as follows:

- Level I awards are for nominees who have accomplished an exceptionally high-quality research or technological effort. The nomination should recognize the creation or general revision of a scientific or technological principle or procedure, or a highly significant improvement in the value of a device, activity, program, or service to the public. It must be at least of national significance or have high impact on a broad area of science/technology. The nomination must be of far reaching consequences and recognizable as a major scientific/technological achievement within its discipline or field of study.
- Level II awards are for nominees who have accomplished a notably excellent research or technological effort that has qualities and values similar to, but to a lesser degree, than those described under Level I. It must have timely consequences and contribute as an important scientific/technological achievement within its discipline or field of study.

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- Level III awards are for nominees who have accomplished an unusually notable research or technological effort. The nomination can be for a substantial revision or modification of a scientific/technological principle or procedure, or an important improvement to the value of a device, activity, program, or service to the public. It must relate to a mission or organizational component of the EPA, or significantly affect a relevant area of science/technology.
- Honorable Mention is a fourth, non-cash level award for nominations which are noteworthy but which do not warrant a Level I, II or III award. Honorable Mention applies to nominations that: (1) may not quite reach the level described for a Level III award; (2) show a promising area of research that the SAB wants to encourage; or (3) show an area of research that the SAB believes is too preliminary to warrant an award recommendation at this time.

2. SAB REVIEW PROCEDURE

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3 In response to the EPA’s request, the SAB Staff Office augmented the 2009-2011 SAB STAA
4 Committee with additional experts to review the FY2011 STAA nominations. The augmented
5 Committee was formed in accordance with the SAB process as described in the SAB 2002 publication,
6 *Panel Formation process: Immediate Steps to Improve Policies and Procedures* (EPA-SAB-EC-COM-
7 02-003). Where conflicts or potential conflicts of interest existed, Committee members recused
8 themselves from the review and disposition of the recommendations for certain nominations as
9 appropriate.

10
11 The SAB review consisted of a two-step process: an initial review of each nomination, followed by a
12 Committee discussion of all nominations at a closed meeting on August 9-10, 2011 in Washington, DC.
13 The meeting was closed to the public to protect the personal privacy of the authors. Committee members
14 reviewed 134 nominations. The initial review of each paper was conducted by two or three members.
15 Prior to the meeting, Committee members provided their individual initial ratings of the nominations
16 based on EPA’s award criteria as described under Section 1. At the August meeting, the Committee
17 discussed each of the 134 nominations and reached consensus on the evaluations and recommendations
18 for awards. The Committee grouped 10 nominations into five nominations due to topic similarities. In
19 addition to discussion of the nominated papers, the Committee discussed administrative
20 recommendations for improving future STAA nominations and processes.

3. AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 2 summarizes the awards by year since 2000, including the recommendations for 2011. The Committee recommended 51 nominations for 2011 STAA monetary awards and another 43 for honorable mention. Of the works recommended for monetary awards, three were recommended for Level I, 13 for Level II, and 35 for Level III. Appendix B lists the recommended monetary awards and nominations that deserve an Honorable Mention. The final rankings were agreed to at the meeting by Committee consensus.

Table 2. Comparison of Award Recommendations over Time

Award Level	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011*
Nominations Reviewed	102	126	140	136	146	110	90	140	130	109	121	129*
Level I	0	2	4	7	6	3	5	5	5	3	5	3
Level II	5	11	7	18	13	6	11	13	16	22	14	13
Level III	36	29	26	29	32	30	29	37	30	31	42	35
Honorable Mention	20	21	39	33	37	31	26	45	43	25	33	43
Not Recommended	41	63	64	49	58	40	19	40	36	28	27	32
Not Eligible	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1**
Not Reviewed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1***

* The SAB combined ten nominations into five nominations due to topic similarities.

**One nomination was ineligible because it included a publication from 2006 (nomination criteria required publication after 2008).

***One nomination was not reviewed because the nominated publication was from a standard-setting organization.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The SAB appreciates EPA's implementation of SAB recommendations from last year's report to the Administrator which greatly improves the nomination process and enhances the integrity of the program. In particular, the SAB concludes that almost all of the 2011 nominations adhered to existing STAA program guidelines and were properly categorized. Also, the agency's submittal of the index of STAA papers nominated during the previous five years and a table that alphabetically lists all researchers that have been nominated more than once for that year's awards provided for a much more efficient review.

The SAB has the following recommendations to further strengthen the nomination process in future years:

- *Conduct external peer review on any nominated book chapters.* The selection of peer review mechanism is critical for enhancing a scientific or technical work product so that the product has a sound, credible basis. Independent peer reviewers should be selected primarily based upon the reviewers' expertise, knowledge, skills and experience. EPA should always make every effort to use peer reviewers who do not have any conflict of interest or an appearance of a lack of impartiality and who are completely independent of the product being reviewed. External peer reviews are generally preferred for influential scientific information and assessments. Since book chapters are considered highly influential scientific information and assessments, the SAB recommends that book chapters must undergo external peer review prior to being nominated for a STAA award.
- *Discourage submission of nominations from standards-setting organizations.* Nominations of methods papers published by standards-setting organizations are commendable but difficult to ascertain and ascribe authorship contribution. The level of credit and responsibility linked to each author's contribution is often unclear because standards-setting organizations generally require extensive reviews of standards before considering them final, and the final product frequently incorporates input from a large number of peer reviewers after an initial draft standard is developed. The SAB thus urges that the nomination guidelines be updated to discourage nomination of methods papers published by standards-setting organizations.
- *Clarify the relationship between publications within nominations comprised of multiple publications.* The agency encourages nominations of a body of work (up to three publications) where the publications have similar subjects and authors. The SAB recognizes the importance of recognizing contributions made through the total output of EPA authors, and encourages EPA to ensure that the justifications for nominations comprising more than one publication clarify the relationship between publications within such nominations. For example, the justification could describe how one publication builds on the results of a second publication.
- *Continue preparation of an index and table noting multiple nominations of papers involving the same EPA author.* The agency's submittal of the index of STAA papers nominated during the previous five years, and table that alphabetically lists all researchers that have been nominated more than once for this year's STAA, was very helpful to the SAB during its deliberations. The

1 SAB encourages the agency to continue to develop and submit this index and table with each
2 year's nomination package. The five-year index should be updated annually and separately list
3 any author who has been nominated more than once during the previous five years with the titles
4 of that author's nominated papers. The table should alphabetically list all authors nominated
5 more than once for the current year's STAA, and identify all nominations and paper titles that
6 the author wrote or assisted in writing.

- 7
- 8 • *Bundling of papers.* There is still a tendency for certain authors to submit multiple bundles of
9 like papers. Though these works can be associated with fine journals and reflect excellent
10 science, this practice of submitting many bundles actually can detract from the review process
11 rather than enhance the opportunity for an award. The notion of quality over quantity is an
12 important guiding principle that participating authors should be encouraged to follow.

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APPENDIX A. CHARGE TO THE SAB

November 18, 2010

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The 2011 Scientific and Technological Achievement Awards (STAA) Program

FROM: Paul T. Anastas
Assistant Administrator (8101R)

TO: Assistant Administrators
Associate Administrators
Regional Administrators

It is a pleasure to announce this year's call for nominations for the 2011 Scientific and Technological Achievement Awards (STAA) program. STAA is an Agency-wide competition, judged by the Science Advisory Board (SAB), which recognizes outstanding published scientific and technical papers by the Agency's staff. This year's nominations will be accepted via electronic submission to nomination.STAA@epa.gov.

It should be noted that upon the recommendation of the SAB STAA review committee, the pilot program for EPA Project and Research Reports nominations has been discontinued.

Attached are (1) nomination procedures and guidelines, (2) program schedule, and (3) nomination forms. Official 2011 nomination forms are available for your convenience in MS Word and screen fillable Portable Document Format (PDF) at <http://epa.gov/ncer/staa/>. All nominations must be received no later than midnight ET Thursday, January 27, 2011. Instructions for completion and electronic submission of nomination packages are attached. Should questions arise, please contact Dr. Thomas O'Farrell at (202) 343-9639 or o'farrell.thomas@epa.gov.

cc: EPA Science Advisory Board
EPA Program Offices
EPA Regional Offices
ORD Center/Laboratory Directors

November 18, 2010

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The 2011 Scientific and Technological Achievement Awards (STAA) Program

FROM: Paul T. Anastas
Assistant Administrator

TO: All EPA Employees

I am pleased to issue this year's call for nominations for the EPA's prestigious 2011 Scientific and Technological Achievement Awards (STAA). Each year, EPA recognizes outstanding papers written by the Agency's staff and published in scientific and technical journals. STAA is open to all EPA employees. Nominations are judged by the EPA's Science Advisory Board (SAB), and managed by the Office of Research and Development.

Nominations can be submitted in the following categories:

- Control Systems and Technology
- Ecological Research
- Health Effects Research and Human Health Risk Assessment
- Monitoring and Measurement Methods
- Transport and Fate
- Review Articles
- Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration
- Integrated Risk Assessment
- Environmental Policy and Decision-Making Studies
- Homeland Security
- Industry and the Environment
- Energy and the Environment
- Sustainability and Innovation
- Other Environmental Research

STAA winners are eligible for monetary awards.

The pilot program for the EPA Project and Research Reports nominations has been discontinued, based upon the recommendations of the SAB STAA review committee.

This year's nominations will be accepted via electronic submission to nominations.STAA@epa.gov. You can find the nomination forms and guidelines and additional information about the STAA program at www.epa.gov/ncer/staa/. Nominations will be accepted until midnight ET on Thursday, January 27, 2011. Should questions arise, please contact Thomas O'Farrell at (202) 343-9639 or o'farrell.thomas@EPA.gov.

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APPENDIX B. NOMINATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR STAA AWARDS

[Note: The Appendix B list of Recommendations for 2011 STAA Program Awards is not provided for the Quality Review by the Chartered SAB. This list will be appended to the final letter to the Administrator after completion of the quality review.]