

**SAFE PESTICIDES/SAFE PRODUCTS (SP2) SUBCOMMITTEE
CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY**

**Thursday, March 22, 2007
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EST**

Welcome

Dr. Anna Harding, Oregon State University, Chair, Safe Pesticides/Safe Products (SP2) Subcommittee, Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC)

Dr. Anna Harding, Chair of the Safe Pesticides/Safe Products (SP2) Subcommittee of the Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC), welcomed the participants to the teleconference and reviewed the agenda. She explained that the call would include an overview by Dr. Jim Clark, Chair of the BOSC Executive Committee, of the summary assessment rating tool and how it applies to mid-cycle reviews. In accordance with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), the agenda included a designated time for public comment. The call concluded with a discussion of the status of the Draft Report that will be submitted to the BOSC Executive Committee in May.

Dr. Harding then asked Ms. Heather Drumm to provide an overview of the administrative procedures.

Administrative Procedures

Ms. Heather Drumm, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the SP2 Subcommittee, Office of Research and Development (ORD), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Ms. Drumm introduced herself as the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the SP2 Subcommittee and then reviewed the key rules and administrative procedures affiliated with the meeting. As DFO, Ms. Drumm serves as the liaison between the Subcommittee and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), ensuring that the meetings comply with FACA requirements. The SP2 Subcommittee is a federal advisory subcommittee that has been asked to respond to charge questions as part of a program review of the SP2 Research Program of EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD). The Subcommittee currently is preparing a Draft Report that will be evaluated by the BOSC Executive Committee before it is submitted to ORD. FACA meetings, whether by phone, e-mail, or in person, must be open to the public; this rule applies to any meeting that is attended by more than one-half of the Subcommittee members. In addition, documents received by the Subcommittee must be made available to the public. Notice of the public meetings must be placed in the *Federal Register* 15 calendar days in advance. This call is the fourth public meeting of the SP2 Subcommittee. Two previous calls were held on January 17 and 29, 2007, and a face-to-face meeting took place on February 7-9, 2007, in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. The call included a time for public comment at 12:45 p.m., with 3 minutes permitted per comment. So far, Ms. Drumm has not received any requests for public comment.

Dr. Harding then asked Dr. Clark to give an overview of the summary assessment.

Overview of Summary Assessment

Dr. Jim Clark, Chair, BOSC Executive Committee Chair, ORD, EPA

Dr. Clark began by providing background information on the genesis of the SP2 Subcommittee and the summary assessment rating tool. He explained that the BOSC Executive Committee works with ORD to help evaluate programs. Specialized subcommittees are formed to address specific items for program activities, and the SP2 Subcommittee was asked to review the SP2 Research Program. The goal in providing the rating tool to subcommittees that are completing program reviews is to reach consensus on how to evaluate the performance of programs. The results of the SP2 program review will help the Agency comment on the productivity, relevance, and outcomes of the program. The results also will be used in a Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) review of the program, conducted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). For this reason, it is important that the language of the rating tool be suitable for both OMB and the BOSC. The BOSC Executive Committee had considered both numerical and textual ratings, but concluded that categorical ratings might be optimal. The designated categories seemed to suit the comfort level of refinement in ratings for the BOSC Executive Committee and OMB.

Dr. Clark mentioned that he was Chair of the Human Health Mid-Cycle Review Subcommittee in January 2007. That Subcommittee was asked to use the rating tool to review the progress of the Human Health Research Program (HHRP) in responding to the BOSC program review that was conducted in 2005. Because the Subcommittee members were familiar with the HHRP from the 2005 review, it was relatively easy for them to arrive at ratings using the new tool.

Dr. Clark then welcomed questions from the participants.

Discussion

Dr. Judy Graham stated that she is uncomfortable with the use of the term “all” in the rating categories. Specifically, each definition under the categories of “exceptional” and “exceeds expectations” refers to “meeting all” of the program goals; the former category also indicates that a program is “exceeding some” of its goals. She asked how it would be possible to exceed Annual Performance Goals (APGs) if they are quite broad. For example, if the available resources are doubled, the program’s goals still need to be attained. Moreover, because the Subcommittee did not receive a formal breakdown of the resources allocated to the SP2 Research Program, it is difficult to provide an appropriate rating. Attainment of the goals would depend on, for example, the speed at which the investigators work; if they had double the resources, it would be expected that they could work faster. Dr. Graham added that otherwise she is pleased with the rating of the work under Long-Term Goal (LTG 1) as exceptional.

Dr. Clark explained that for each LTG, the Multi-Year Plan has laid out an expectation that ORD will address problems, generate tools, and that EPA or stakeholders will find the ratings from the program review useful in qualifying actions taken. If the Subcommittee has found that the program is progressing toward achieving its goals at a faster rate than projected (e.g., controls are in place and exposure-response relationships have been elucidated), it could be ranked as exceptional or exceeds expectations.

Regarding resources, Dr. Clark stated that the BOSC does not have the review teams in place to determine the amount of resources that are required (e.g., person years) for the program, an estimation that involves many factors. Thus, if a program is deemed as not advancing toward its expectations, then the program manager will need to determine the next steps to advance the program. He explained that the program review can indicate where the program is deficient (e.g., lacking extramural resources). If the program is ranked as exceeding expectations, then the program manager might determine that the program involves too many people and decide to reallocate resources to benefit a program with fewer staff. Dr. Clark added that the role of the BOSC is to determine whether the pace, quality, and scope of the program are adequate or not. The Subcommittee can comment on the appropriateness of the program's timeline for achieving its goals. For example, it might be concluded that waiting until 2011 to achieve a goal is unacceptable. On the other hand, if the timeline is considered appropriate, and the deliverables are of good quality, then the program might be ranked as exceptional.

Dr. Harding commented that the summary assessment portion of the Draft Charge (page 6) should be provided for each LTG and consider three questions:

1. How appropriate is the science used to achieve each LTG (i.e., is the program asking the right questions, or has it been eclipsed by advancements in the field)?
2. How good is the scientific quality of the program's research products?
3. How much are the program results being used by environmental decision makers to inform decisions and achieve results?

Dr. Harding pointed out that none of the three questions address the pace of the program. She asked if the Subcommittee should focus its ratings solely on these three questions, or consider other factors that were raised in the report. For example, the workgroup for LTG 1 commented that a number of the Annual Performance Measures (APMs) may not be achieved as stated. Should this point have any bearing on the responses to the summary assessment questions?

Dr. Clark replied that the responses given for the summary assessment should focus solely on the three questions; other factors can be introduced through the comments and discussions of the review panel. If the Subcommittee finds that the rating tool is not useful or all encompassing, it can report back to the BOSC Executive Committee that the tool also should incorporate other factors.

Dr. Harding asked about the appropriate number of recommendations for a given rating.

Dr. Clark responded that review panels typically find areas for improvement, and recommendations are welcome as long as they are framed in a suitable way. For example, the review might conclude that a program is meeting its goals, but then suggest ways in which it could improve. If the rating stated that there are major deficiencies and that various steps must be taken, this type of qualification would be inconsistent with a rating of exceptional.

Dr. Graham observed that the program review involves two integrated steps. One step is to respond to the charge questions and provide recommendations. The second step is to link the results with the summary assessment for OMB's PART review. She noted that the audiences for these two steps are different in terms of the level of technical detail required in the responses. Also, the summary assessment would be light on recommendations, which would fall mostly within the responses to the charge questions. Dr. Clark agreed with this description, adding that the summary assessment tool resulted from a discussion of a common goal between the BOSC

and OMB. Thus, both bodies are interested in the overall ratings of the LTGs and the comments and recommendations that are made.

Dr. Graham asked about the length of the summary assessment for the HHRP Mid-Cycle Review. Dr. Clark responded that the assessment represented three paragraphs in the 12-page report. Ms. Lorelei Kowalski, DFO, BOSC Executive Committee, added that a mid-cycle review is intended to comment on the progress that a program has made since its last review. Although the mid-cycle review is not technical in nature, it involves the same rating terminology as discussed here, but applies only to the progress of the program.

Dr. Clark explained that discussions were held about the specificity of a potential rating tool. Initially, only three categories were designated: satisfactory, unsatisfactory, and exceptional. The category of exceeds expectations was added later. He recommended that the Subcommittee begin its discussion at the extreme categories. For example, if one member believes that the program is unsatisfactory, then that rating would be ruled out. The members could then move toward the mid-level ratings to work out the nuances. Dr. Harding responded that the Subcommittee members began at the lowest rating level and worked their way up.

Dr. Clark thanked the Subcommittee members for their commitment and diligence. He praised them for asking the right questions and being on the correct path during the evaluation.

Dr. Harding then welcomed comments from the Subcommittee on the status of the Draft Report.

Subcommittee Discussion

Dr. Barry Ryan commented that the Draft Report requires editing and formatting to ensure consistency. He added that most of the questions posed to the Subcommittee were answered or at least addressed. He noted that additional work is required in some portions of the report.

Dr. Graham stated that the report contains a great deal of discrepancy in the level of detail provided and does not include statements under the recommendation sections. She noted that some of the recommendations are embedded within the text of the responses and that they could be placed in the appropriate sections within the report. Dr. Graham suggested that the Subcommittee set criteria for the recommendations given so that the Agency will be guided to expend energy on the most critical areas, rather than addressing many less significant concerns. Dr. Graham added that she is concerned about the level of positive ratings of the summary assessment for LTG 2. Although the research under LTG 2 was rated less positively than that under LTG 1, it seemed to make a better impression on the Subcommittee members at the face-to-face meeting in February. She suggested that perhaps the description could be modified to stress the positive rating of the LTG 2 program overall, followed by the recommendations.

Dr. Graham stated that the phrasing in the Draft Report on page 4, line 133, "To some extent there appears to be redundancy between LTG-2 and LTG-1 research program components . . . ," would not be looked upon favorably by budget managers. The Subcommittee must verify that such statements are true before including them. Dr. Graham suggested that ORD could clarify the relationships between projects that are mentioned as having overlap. Once the differences between the projects are clear, the Subcommittee members could better decide whether any program changes are in order.

Dr. Harding expressed concern that the number of recommendations for LTG 2 (page 4) does not appear to be consistent with a LTG that is granted a rating of exceptional. Dr. Graham pointed out that the summary assessment may not be the appropriate place for recommendations. Dr. Ryan commented that he does not view the description on page 4 as a summary assessment for LTG 2. A summary assessment provides a description on the status of the program, but the information given on page 4 under LTG 2 is a list of recommendations. In his view, a long list of recommendations is not inconsistent with an exceptional rating. That is, it is possible to give a favorable rating but still point out that there are various ways in which the program could improve.

Dr. Graham commented that the Draft Report will require correction for internal consistency. For example, the report recommends on page 4, lines 131-132, an improvement in communication; however, the section on communication rates the program as performing well in this area and gives a few recommendations (page 26). She asked for clarification on how the Subcommittee members might continue their work on the report via e-mail. Ms. Drumm stated that only technical changes to the report would need to be conducted in a public forum. Ms. Kowalski reminded the participants that the document being produced is a consensus report requiring that all Subcommittee members be in agreement. Wordsmithing and grammatical editing are permitted, but any additions to the report or changes in concepts must be discussed publicly. Ms. Kowalski also reminded the Subcommittee members that any technical decisions made on this call would require a quorum.

Dr. Graham pointed out that the report requires some substantive edits. For example, on page 5, line 163, weak evidence is given to support the exceptional rating of the work under LTG 3. Dr. Harding agreed that the summary assessment for LTG 3 will need to be fleshed out with more examples provided to justify the rating. Dr. Carlos Blanco stated that he would address this issue further. Dr. Harding noted that the Subcommittee still is deliberating the rating for LTG 3, which currently falls between exceeds expectations and exceptional.

Dr. Harding stated that more technical details are required for the LTG 2 summary assessment. In addition to working on LTG 3, Dr. Blanco stated that he would address LTG 2 and that he also would ask for assistance from his workgroup member, Dr. Jerry Ault. Additional work is required on the portion by Dr. Joel Coats on the emerging chemicals topic (page 14). Dr. Coats stated that he also would contribute to the section on LTG 3.

Drs. Harding and Ryan will edit the report for consistency and format. They also will review the report and extract recommendations for proper placement in the report. Also, for the LTG 2 and coordination and communication sections, answers will be extracted from the paragraphs provided to address the Draft Charge questions. Drs. Harding and Ryan also will identify areas that require more detail and will ask the respective workgroups to address those portions.

Dr. Blanco pointed out that there are many research examples to choose from for LTG 1, fewer examples for LTG 2, and the least number of examples for LTG 3, for which research began relatively recently. Thus, it will be more difficult to provide supportive evidence and elaborate on details for the research under LTG 3. This would not matter, Dr. Harding replied, because the final version of the responses to the charge questions will not be given per LTG, as they are now; they will all be merged per question. She added that it would be evident that much more work has been done for LTG 1.

Dr. Graham stated that she would e-mail Dr. Harding some points regarding an overall summary of the program. Dr. Harding stated that she and Dr. Ryan will extract overall messages from the report and place them into a summary section. They also will create a table displaying the major recommendations from the report. Dr. Ryan agreed to address these tasks next week.

Dr. Harding asked the Subcommittee members about their comfort level in preparing a summary assessment rating for each LTG. Dr. Graham responded that she is concerned mainly with rating LTGs 2 and 3; LTG 1 already has been addressed for the most part. She added that a smaller program still can be rated as exceptional in nature.

Dr. Harding explained that she is concerned with rating all three LTGs as exceptional. Because the SP2 Research Program is the first to use the rating tool, the Subcommittee members must give their rating assessments as accurately as possible. She emphasized that the text of the summary assessment has to justify the LTG ratings. Also, the comments given must be consistent with the language in the rating tool. She asked that the members carefully read the next iteration of the report and determine if some areas of the program still require more work.

Dr. Harding asked that Dr. Richard Di Giulio review the section on leadership and determine if it requires any further additions or changes. She added that the portions of the report for LTGs 1A and 1B are fine as is. She requested that the Subcommittee members provide her and Dr. Ryan with their revisions within the next few days.

Dr. Harding stated that the next teleconference is scheduled for April 3, 2007. The plan is to distribute another draft of the report by the next call; at that time, the Subcommittee members will need to reach a consensus on the rating for each LTG.

Dr. Graham asked about the possibility of requiring a third conference call. Drs. Harding and Ryan agreed that this is a good idea. Ms. Drumm stated that she would try to schedule a call that is agreeable with the schedules of all of the Subcommittee members.

Ms. Kowalski noted that the Draft Report typically is included in the binder containing background materials for the BOSC Executive Committee meeting. The next BOSC Executive Committee meeting is set for May 24, 2007. Materials for inclusion in the binder must be received 2 weeks in advance of the in-person meeting. The option to send materials electronically will be available, if needed. The Subcommittee members agreed that a third call should be scheduled for late April.

Public Comment

At 12:45 p.m., in accordance with FACA requirements, Ms. Drumm called for public comment. There were no members of the public present on the conference call and no comments were offered.

Adjourn

Dr. Harding thanked the members for their participation and adjourned the call at 1:19 p.m.

Action Items

- ✧ Dr. Blanco will lengthen the section of the Draft Report on LTG 3. He also will address LTG 2 and will ask his workgroup member, Dr. Ault, to contribute.
- ✧ Dr. Coats will improve the report's section on LTG 1C, including the portion on emerging chemicals. He also will contribute to the section on LTG 3.
- ✧ Drs. Harding and Ryan will edit the report for consistency and format. They also will extract recommendations from the text in the report and place them in the appropriate places. Answers given in the LTG 2 and coordination and communication sections will be extracted to address the Draft Charge questions. Another task is to extract overall messages from the report and place them into a summary section. In addition, they will identify areas that require more detail and will ask the respective workgroups to address those portions. Finally, they will create a table displaying the major recommendations from the report. Dr. Ryan agreed to start on these tasks next week.
- ✧ Dr. Graham will e-mail Dr. Harding some points regarding an overall summary of the program.
- ✧ Dr. Richard Di Giulio will review the section on leadership and determine if it requires any further additions or changes.
- ✧ The Subcommittee members will aim to submit their materials to Drs. Harding and Ryan within the next few days.
- ✧ The Subcommittee members will have received the next iteration of the Draft Report at the next conference call. The members will read the updated report and determine if any areas of the program still require more work.
- ✧ The next SP2 teleconference is scheduled for April 3, 2007, from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. A following teleconference is scheduled for April 25, 2007, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

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APPENDIX A:
Meeting Agenda

DRAFT

SAFE PESTICIDES/SAFE PRODUCTS (SP2) SUBCOMMITTEE

AGENDA

March 22, 2007

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., EST

CONFERENCE CALL

Participation by Teleconference Only

12:00 – 12:15 p.m.	Welcome – Roll Call	Dr. Anna Harding Subcommittee Chair
12:05 – 12:10 p.m.	Administrative Procedures	Ms. Heather Drumm Subcommittee DFO
12:10 – 12:45 p.m.	Overview of Summary Assessment BOSC Perspective	Dr. Jim Clark BOSC Executive Committee Chair
12:45 – 1:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Subcommittee Discussion – Summary of Draft Report Progress – Draft Report Discussion	Dr. Anna Harding Subcommittee Chair
2:00 p.m.	Adjournment	