

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

**Tuesday, April 3, 2007  
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT**

**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 purpose of the call was to finalize the Subcommittee members' ratings of the SP2 Research Program's long-term goals (LTGs). The agenda included a designated time for public comment, in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Dr. Harding thanked the members for completing their writing assignments for the draft report, adding that a portion still is expected from Dr. Joel Coats. Dr. Harding and Dr. Barry Ryan, Vice-Chair of the SP2 Subcommittee, will synthesize and reorganize the material once the final revisions are received.

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 provided a brief overview of progress to date and some administrative details. This call is the fifth public meeting of the SP2 Subcommittee. Three previous calls were held on January 17 and 29, 2007, and March 22, 2007, and a face-to-face meeting took place February 7-9, 2007, in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. A final conference call is scheduled for April 25, 2007. The Subcommittee currently is preparing a Draft Report that will be evaluated by the BOSC Executive Committee at its meeting in late May. Ms. Drumm reminded the Subcommittee members to track the time that they devote to SP2 Program duties—apart from Subcommittee meeting time, which Ms. Drumm is tracking—on their homework sheets, starting from the end of the February meeting through April 25.

Ms. Drumm will collect the homework sheets after the April 25 call. She asked that the Subcommittee members let her know if they have not yet received a paycheck for their previous timesheet or reimbursement for their travel expense

Ms. Drumm stated that there will be time for public comment at 12:20 p.m. She indicated that she had not received any requests for public comment prior to the call.

## **Subcommittee Discussion**

Dr. Harding began the Subcommittee discussion by sharing comments from the conversation that she and Dr. Ryan had last week with Dr. Jim Clark, Chair of the BOSC Executive Committee, and Dr. George Daston, a member of both the BOSC Executive Committee and the Rating Tool Workgroup. Drs. Harding and Ryan learned about how the rating tool was designed and the Workgroup's expectations on the outcomes and feedback that would result from the tool's use. Dr. Daston explained that it is common for the majority of a program's aspects to be rated as "satisfactory." This score means that the program's LTGs are making good progress; however, there is room for improvement, as indicated via the recommendations. The Workgroup considered "satisfactory" almost as a default score because a smaller number of the program's goals would achieve either higher or lower than satisfactory ratings. Dr. Ryan added that a satisfactory score does not necessarily mean that the program's funding will be affected.

In relation to the Subcommittee's draft report, Dr. Harding explained that she and Dr. Ryan decided to extract the recommendations from the text provided by the LTG workgroups and list them in a separate document, which the Subcommittee members received in advance of this call. Dr. Ryan stated that he extracted any points that appeared to be recommendations and categorized them by LTG. He did not make editorial changes or place the points in any type of rank order.

Dr. Judy Graham suggested that the report include a section providing feedback on the experience of using the rating tool. Dr. Harding stated that recommendations on use of the tool can be included in the report, but she and Dr. Ryan will be providing separate feedback to the BOSC Executive Committee on the process.

Dr. Graham added that it is critical to be realistic about the ratings that are assigned to set an appropriate precedent for future program evaluations. Dr. Harding stated that the draft report will be examined carefully as other Subcommittees move forward with their reviews. Thus, it is important that the ratings are consistent with the comments provided in the report. Over time, application of the ratings will become more routine.

Drs. Harding and Ryan proposed that LTG 1 be ranked as "exceeds expectations" and LTGs 2 and 3 be rated as "satisfactory," based on the number of recommendations and types of comments received. Dr. Ryan raised another point from the conversation last week—that granting the lowest rating to the newest program, LTG 3, would be neither unreasonable nor regarded as a "bad" evaluation, simply because the program is young and needs to mature.

Dr. Harding then asked the Subcommittee members to discuss each LTG separately.

### *Long-Term Goal 1*

Dr. Graham stated that she agrees that LTG 1 should not be rated lower than "exceeds expectations." To have received an "exceptional" rating, the program should have been more balanced, with fundamental exposure research represented for 1A and 1B. Although exposure research might be underway through other ORD programs, it is unclear if those separate programs are sufficient to address the risk assessment issues under the SP2 Research Program; however, this point is beyond the charge of the Subcommittee to address.

Dr. Craig Adams also agreed with the “exceeds expectations” rating. He explained that it would have been helpful to have received a listing of the peer-reviewed literature that was mapped to the individual project goals for each LTG. For LTG 1, the Subcommittee had heard inferences that the exposure research was being conducted by other programs and agencies, but it was unclear how that work was being integrated with or mapped to the toxicity research under the SP2 Program. This lack of information leaves questions and detracts from an “exceptional” rating.

Dr. Ryan suggested that if the Subcommittee had received some type of crosslisting of the research projects underway or a bibliographic summary, it might indicate that exposure assessment investigators are collaborating with researchers in the SP2 Program and that they are publishing their findings jointly. Another advantage of access to the peer-reviewed literature is that scientific articles frame the importance of the research, with examples of relevant compounds and citations to other references.

According to Dr. Coats, the “exceptional” rating is appropriate for LTG 1. He had evaluated LTG 1C, which involves extensive pesticide exposure research, including studies on perfluorinated compounds, research supporting the Agricultural Health Study, and lead and asbestos exposure research. The projects also demonstrated successful collaborative efforts, such as with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Another factor to consider is that a metric for creativity is lacking. Dr. Coats explained that it is difficult to gauge how creatively the teams are conducting their research or addressing issues and to estimate how much more creativity is required. Dr. Coats added that exposure research was not adequately addressed in LTG 1A and 1B.

Dr. Elly Best expressed concern that the Subcommittee previously had rated LTG 1 as “exceptional” (Draft Report, page 2), and if this rating now is reduced to “exceeds expectations,” then all of the other ratings also should correspondingly be reduced. Drs. Harding and Ryan stated that a relative reduction in the ratings would be acceptable. Dr. Ryan added that this type of evaluation would be consistent with the discussion that they had last week regarding the rating tool. Because this is the first time that the rating tool is being applied to a program evaluation, it is difficult to judge on an absolute scale how an exceptional program should appear. Likely, all of its aspects would be looked upon positively and its progress would be occurring faster than expected. Dr. Harding concurred, adding that if the program’s Annual Performance Goals (APGs) and Annual Performance Measures (APMs) were accomplished at a faster rate than anticipated, and the program had advanced beyond its initial plans, then those would be indications of an “exceptional” program.

Dr. Graham stated that she has difficulty with the term “faster.” Because the APMs and APGs are very broad and generic, likely some of them could not be accomplished in the next 20 years even with double the resources. She added that it is important to emphasize in the report that the cup is “more than two-thirds full” for LTG 1 and that some of the Program’s work, such as the perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) research, does fall into the “exceptional” category. Dr. Harding commented that the recommendations will help the program managers be more realistic with allocating their resources in a given time frame.

Dr. Elaine Francis, National Program Director (NPD) for the SP2 Research Program, noted that the draft report should provide guidance as to what additional information the Program needed

for it to be classified as “exceptional.” Dr. Ryan stated that the Subcommittee members would do their best to provide that information.

Dr. Graham suggested that the ordering of the LTG recommendations be improved. As an example, she rearranged the recommendations for LTG 1 in the document prepared by Dr. Ryan; she e-mailed this version to him yesterday. The reordering comprises one set of recommendations to improve the clarity of the Multi-Year Plan (MYP), and the other set contains programmatic recommendations, including the need for more exposure research and validation of methodologies.

Dr. Harding reminded the Subcommittee members that they must justify the rating of “exceeds expectations” for LTG 1; their task is not to defend why it was not deemed “exceptional.”

The Subcommittee members agreed to assign an “exceeds expectations” rating to LTG 1.

### *Long-Term Goal 2*

Drs. Harding and Ryan proposed that the exceptional rating for LTG 2 (Draft Report, page 4) be modified to provide a more realistic appraisal.

Dr. Ryan observed that several of the recommendations made for LTG 2 are quite important and should improve the quality of the program. He referred to the criticism on page 4, lines 162-166, of the Draft Report (or point 4 on Dr. Ryan’s list of extracted recommendations, shown below) that refers to an apparent redundancy between research components in LTGs 1 and 2.

4. To some extent there appears to be *redundancy between LTG-2 and LTG-1* research program components, e.g., LTG-1a-12 and LTG-2-6, that both focus on physiological and behavioral studies with exactly the same fish, but one is emphasizing a short timescale (days) versus the other that conducts apparently the same work but at a longer timescale (weeks).

Dr. Graham commented that the term “redundancy” is not looked upon favorably by higher management. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that all statements in the report are accurate. It also is important to be clear about whether the redundancy is case-specific or is pervasive in the Program. Dr. Ryan agreed, adding that it is one matter if 2 projects among the group are redundant, but if 20 overlap, then that is more difficult to explain and raises a severe criticism.

Dr. Carlos Blanco agreed that aspects of LTG 2 are unsatisfactory. He suggested that improved communication between the LTGs could reduce the apparent redundancy. Dr. Best added that recommendations 1 and 8 on Dr. Ryan’s list (shown below) would help improve the program substantially.

1. [W]e also feel that the prospective vision of the **empirical-modeling linkages needs to be greatly enhanced and expanded** to accommodate the expected pace of scientific progress, and to be commensurate with the scope and timing of client needs and requests.

8. Research in LTG-2 largely focused on empirical and analytical methods to reduce the uncertainties associated with strict reliance on population measures. We feel strongly that there is a great need to *begin movement towards an “eco” systems approach* that fully and accurately assesses population and community risks associated with various aspects of SP2

Dr. Harding asked Dr. Francis to clarify the issue relating to redundancy.

Dr. Francis explained that projects LTG 1A-12 and LTG 2-6 are distinct research endeavors that both happen to use medaka as the fish model for testing chemical effects. Project LTG 1A-12 involves the development of a faster screening tool to assess developmental neurotoxicity. Traditionally, EPA has used a laborious rodent model for this testing. Project LTG 2-6 is focused on developing short- and long-term tests to assess reproductive effects. In response to Dr. Francis, Dr. Best stated that the report’s claim of redundancy in the SP2 Program only is made in relation to projects LTG 1A-12 and LTG 2-6.

Dr. Ryan commented that use of the same fish model appears to be more of a coincidence than a redundancy in research efforts. For this reason, Dr. Harding added, that point might be removed from the list of recommendations.

Dr. Adams stated that he does not have a strong position on the rating for LTG 2, but holds that a rank between “satisfactory” and “exceeds expectations” would be suitable, based on the discussion so far.

For the time being, the Subcommittee members agreed to rate LTG 2 as “satisfactory.”

### *Long-Term Goal 3*

Dr. Harding commented that LTG 3 been the most difficult to evaluate because it is very new. She and Dr. Ryan are proposing to rate the program as “satisfactory” because it is less developed than LTGs 1 and 2.

Dr. Coats summarized his recent e-mail message to Drs. Harding, Best, and Blanco, in which he stated that either “satisfactory” or “exceeds expectations” were the ratings he would recommend for LTG 3. In his view, the program’s newness makes it difficult to assign a rating. Good research is expected and that would warrant a “satisfactory” rating. Although the LTG 3 research is highly relevant and of top quality, Dr. Coats believes that the projects still must prove their excellence over a longer time period before being classified as “exceptional.” The same principles would apply if the rating were changed from “satisfactory” to “exceeds expectations.” Overall, Dr. Coats is pleased with the research and the pace at which it is being conducted, considering it is addressing an urgent area.

Dr. Ryan noted that the comment made in the draft report on page 20, lines 833-835, provides evidence that LTG 3 is making satisfactory progress. The statement reads: “Only sixteen percent of the scheduled work has a 2006 date, while the rest is work planned for the future and, consequently, difficult to evaluate.”

Dr. Graham stated that she would appreciate it if the evaluation of LTG 3 would remain independent from the fact that it is a new program. She emphasized that a very young program also can be “exceptional.” Dr. Ryan gave the example of the Carolina Environmental Bioinformatics Research Center (project LTG 1-15), which is new but is demonstrating excellent progress. He added that although the research for LTG 3 is impressive, nothing has yet been produced that is “exceptional”; thus, a “satisfactory” rating is reasonable.

Dr. Best pointed out that a young program is not the same as a new program. The LTG 3 program is difficult to rate because it is young and because some of its aspects are very new. For example, plant-incorporated protectant (PIP) crops are relatively new and not many results have emerged yet from research in this area. Dr. Best agreed with the rating of “satisfactory” for LTG 3 because of the limited amount of information currently available for the program.

The Subcommittee members agreed to rate LTG 3 as “satisfactory.”

#### *General Comments/Draft Report Revision Plans*

Dr. Graham suggested that future iterations of the draft report include the date on the draft. Drs. Harding and Ryan agreed.

Dr. Ryan asked the Subcommittee workgroups to extract their own set of recommendations from their respective sections and, if possible, prioritize them. Drs. Harding and Ryan then will insert those recommendations back into the appropriate places within the summary assessment for each LTG. They also will take the major recommendations from each section and place them in a summary table at the beginning of the document.

The workgroup leaders agreed to revise their sections of the summary assessment in the report and share it with their members. The leaders will aim to provide their workgroups with the revisions by April 5, 2007. The final versions from each workgroup will be submitted to Drs. Harding and Ryan by April 12, 2007. The revision writing assignments were as follows:

- ✧ Dr. Graham will revise the summary assessment for LTG 1A and 1B.
- ✧ Dr. Coats will revise the summary assessment for LTG 1C. He also will contribute to the summary assessment for LTG 3, which Drs. Best and Blanco will help polish.
- ✧ Drs. Blanco, Adams, and Ault will revise the summary assessment for LTG 2. Dr. Blanco will share the Subcommittee’s comments for LTG 2 with Dr. Richard Di Giulio.
- ✧ Dr. Ryan will provide the revised section on Coordination and Communication to Dr. Harding by April 5, 2007.

Dr. Graham commented about the statement on page 19, lines 763-765, of the draft report: “Does the current process give ORD the appropriate latitude to study new emerging problems (e.g., nanoparticles), or is the process only responsive to substances identified by its clients?” She asked if Dr. Francis could provide more background information on the process to permit the Subcommittee members to judge better its appropriateness.

Dr. Francis explained that the purpose of LTG 1C is to be responsive to the needs of the program office, which approaches ORD with research requests pertaining to specific chemicals. This differs from the research conducted under 1A and 1B, for which ORD selects the chemicals to study. ORD has a separate research program under development on nanotechnology. It is not yet decided if that nanotechnology research program will be folded into the SP2 Research Program; if so, it will be placed as a separate LTG on nanotechnology within the SP2 Program.

Dr. Francis added that the program office knows when it needs to obtain more information; for example, if there is considerable public interest on a topic (e.g., chromated copper arsenate [CCA]-treated wood), more research will be requested. The Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances (OPPTS) is the client and main driver for LTG 1C. After examining the information already available and identifying data gaps, OPPTS can approach ORD to conduct the necessary research to fill those gaps. As an example, OPPTS might need particular data before it can modify a given chemical standard.

Based on this explanation, Dr. Graham commented that there appears to be much more latitude under LTG 1A and 1B than 1C in determining areas of research focus.

### **Public Comment**

At 12:22 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 hard work on the report and adjourned the call at 1:43 p.m.

### **Action Items**

- ✧ Ms. Drumm will collect the homework sheets after the April 25 conference call. Subcommittee members should let her know if they have not yet received a paycheck for their previous timesheet or reimbursement for their travel expenses.
- ✧ Drs. Harding and Ryan will ensure that future iterations of the draft report include the date on the document.
- ✧ The Subcommittee members agreed to rate the LTGs as follows: “exceeds expectations” for LTG 1; “satisfactory” for LTG 2; and “satisfactory” for LTG 3.
- ✧ The Subcommittee workgroups will extract their own set of recommendations from their respective sections and, if possible, prioritize them. Drs. Harding and Ryan will insert the recommendations back into the appropriate places within the summary assessment for each LTG. They also will take the major recommendations from each section and place them in a summary table at the beginning of the document.

- ✧ The workgroup leaders will provide their members with revised versions by April 5, 2007.
- ✧ Dr. Graham will revise the summary assessment for LTG 1A and 1B and share it with her workgroup.
- ✧ Dr. Coats will revise the summary assessment for LTG 1C and share it with his workgroup. He also will contribute to the summary assessment for LTG 3, which Drs. Best and Blanco will help polish.
- ✧ Drs. Blanco, Adams, and Ault will revise the summary assessment for LTG 2. Dr. Blanco will share the Subcommittee's comments for LTG 2 with Dr. Richard Di Giulio.
- ✧ Dr. Ryan will provide the revised section on Coordination and Communication to Dr. Harding by April 5, 2007.
- ✧ The final materials from each workgroup will be submitted to Drs. Harding and Ryan by April 12, 2007.
- ✧ The next SP2 conference call is scheduled for April 25, 2007, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. EDT.

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**APPENDIX A:**  
**Meeting Agenda**



**SAFE PESTICIDES/SAFE PRODUCTS (SP2) SUBCOMMITTEE**

**AGENDA**

**April 3, 2007**

**12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT**

**CONFERENCE CALL**

**Participation by Teleconference Only**

12:00 – 12:15 p.m.	Welcome – Roll Call – Overview of Progress	Dr. Anna Harding Subcommittee Chair
12:15 – 12:20 p.m.	Administrative Procedures	Ms. Heather Drumm Subcommittee DFO
12:20 – 12:30 p.m.	Public Comment	
12:30 – 2:00 p.m.	Subcommittee Discussion – Summary of Draft Report Progress – Draft Report Discussion	Dr. Anna Harding Subcommittee Chair
2:00 p.m.	Adjournment	