



SMALL COMMUNITY  
ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE  
(SCAS)  
Meeting Summary

May 3, 2019

**Small Community Advisory Subcommittee (SCAS)**  
**Friday, May 3, 2019 8:00 a.m.-9:30 a.m.**  
**Washington, DC**

**I. Welcome and Call to Order**

**Chairman Commissioner Dr. Robert Cope** called the meeting to order and did a round of introductions. He welcomed everyone to the public meeting of the Small Community Advisory Subcommittee (SCAS) which is subcommittee of the Local Government Advisory Committee representing the perspectives of small communities under 10,000.

**II. EPA Remarks**

Elizabeth (Tate) Bennett started by saying that EPA is expanding traditional audiences of the agency to reach rural Americans better. The Environmental Education Office has a grant program for rural priorities that are eligible for funding. The projects must be educational in nature. The solicitation language emphasizes water quality projects. Integrated pest management projects are also eligible. Food waste projects known as 'local food, local places,' and farm to table projects are eligible. These projects have positive environmental impacts. They are perhaps better placed in rural places. We are focusing on the needs of rural America through this competitive grant process.

By serving on the SCAS, you are dedicating your personal time and service. EPA is not a marketing agency, but the agency is trying to emphasize to rural America that while EPA is a regulatory agency, EPA also gives grants as well.

She stated that in her office they award the Environmental Education Presidential Youth Awards that are announced by the White House. This is a statutory program. Annually, EPA hosts a ceremony in July with Future Farmers of America (FFA) leadership and other interested members to join us here. The Administrator signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU for the first time with the FFA leadership for a cooperative agreement for this program.

EPA just wrapped up the Food Waste Reduction Month. The President declared the month of April to recognize the importance of the environmental and economic benefits of reducing food waste and reducing wastes that go into landfills and promoting healthier communities. One of the goals is to look at reprogramming excess food that's not going into the trash and give it to those in need. It's a rural prosperity issue too. There are a series of programs that local officials and local governments are eligible to engage with in addressing food waste.

Reducing food waste in your offices is one way. There is an endorser program where you can go out and get credit for spreading the good word. It's the Food Recovery Endorser Program. For example, the city of Nashville connected their resources with local homeless shelters and some local barbecue restaurants, which spread to other types of good Southern food across the city. This excess food would

otherwise go in landfills was going into local homes right outside of Nashville, Tennessee. This is an example of a program that champions reducing food waste.

We can only do so much on the federal level to reduce food waste. The message on reducing food waste needs to get out to the states, tribal and local levels of government so that everyone can work together. Secretary Jeff Witte and Vice-Chair of the LGAC was at the event at the signing ceremony in April where pledges were signed by local commissioners, one governor and many others. Throughout the course of the year, we will continue to call on state and local governments to partner with EPA and help get the word out and to join the program. She asked for the committee to help spread the word in their community.

The larger metropolitan cities have more infrastructure and bandwidth. We really must work to get rural communities involved which will collectively make a difference.

The Administrator has made a lot of agricultural accomplishments over the past year.

**Secretary Jeff Witte** asked if the State of New Mexico was engaged in the food waste initiative. She said that Individual state representatives have reached out. She said that it can be a personal pledge as long as you represent a constituency of individuals that could benefit from it. Each state is different. She said that she was interested in compiling all of whom are interested. There is a food waste website that have a lot of food waste resources identified.

**Chairman Cope** stated that it was good to have an EPA agriculture advisor in place who has the ability to bring a lot of enthusiasm to agricultural issues.

**Secretary Jeff Witte** commented that a lot of things are done at the State Department on food waste. It is amazing how something that's so simple can be done to make environmental improvements. The research shows that about 30 to 40 percent of the food is wasted at every level, not just in total, but at every level of the supply chain, from the transportation to the consumer. One of the things done at the state level, and the Department of Agriculture across the country, we all work to put local food in school programs or senior centers. Food for the future is a big concern, and how it will be produced for the growing populations. It is significant. Without changing one thing of technology you've got that opportunity to grow 30 to 40 percent more by wasting less. A lot is spent on farm school programs and there's no hard statistics to show the benefits. However, school cafeterias have told us that when we feature local foods, food waste goes way down, because the kids connect and enjoy it more. The feedback that he has received in working with the school systems specifically on this project has been tremendous. He encouraged everybody to take a good and hard look at it. "If you can wrap that next generation of eaters and consumers into that process, it will make a difference."

Elizabeth Bennett commented that local grocers are already participating in food waste reduction efforts. Money is being spent at most major grocery chains throughout the country on this initiative We are trying to collect research on that. Folks aren't necessarily used to coming forward to the EPA and talking about their successes.

We've been going through a lot of the National Restaurant Associations and the National Grocers' Associations to also take inventory. We want to know who's doing good work. And, we have a recognition program for those major companies that can pledge by 2030 to cut their food waste in half.

A lot of them are already doing that. That's something your constituents may or may not already know about that they can get credit for. You all are in a position to be mobilizers. Help us bring this champion home. It's one of the issues that I think everyone can agree that it should be a bigger priority than I think it's been made in the past. And we've made inroads with FDA on this front. The deputy commissioner of USDA was at that event and that is a good starting place.

### **III. Public Comments**

There were no public presenters.

### **IV. Community Revitalization, Chitra Kumar, Office of Policy (OP)**

Chitra Kumar thanked Chairman Cope and the SCAS. She said that she talked to the SCAS at the in November 2018 meeting to brief the SCAS on overall programs and shared some slides. We had also given SCAS a charge in November.

Over the past decade the Office of Policy has worked with small communities especially focused on rural communities to look at strategies that have worked and could be used across the country. Small towns play a really important role in the American economy. There are a lot of challenges including environmental ones that can be tackled. There is a range of technical assistance programs that can be offered. The Office of Policy has aided hundreds of small towns and rural communities. There is a partnership with USDA on the flagship program "Local Foods, Local Places". The focus of the work is revitalizing downtown areas and looking at how to diversify the economy. Also, there is a priority to address the environmental challenges such as reusing vacant buildings and properties on their main streets and other revitalization efforts.

The 'Local Food, Local Places' programs there is a new round of opportunities that will be announced soon. There is also a program called 'Healthy Places For Healthy People' where we've worked with health as the organizing factor, and health care facilities to revitalize downtown places using that as the anchor for redevelopment. There will be another round of applications in the fall. There is a new program (just announced) for Recreation Economy For Rural Communities. This is a partnership with USDA's Forest Service and the Northern Border Regional Commission. There is a lot of excitement about the outdoors generating economic boosts for communities. There will be a webinar on May 7th. She encouraged everyone to apply and take advantage of the technical assistance available. She said that on the charge they were interested in strategies you use that technical assistance is needed or any kind of case studies and specifics around how you access capital. Her office would like to hear about challenges communities faced and how they were overcome especially in getting capital to implement those ideas.

The Office of Policy would like to have continued dialogue about revitalizing communities. A lot of folks look at the small towns and rural communities, economic development strategies documents that we've put together, which provide valuable information to other communities. Also, as local government officials, we would like to hear more ideas on new themes that you're seeing. The Office of

Policy is flexible to have the ability to get to stakeholders and help. The Office of Policy has also been working with the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council on opportunity zones to try to work to make sure that rural communities and small communities have the ability take advantage of tax incentives. We're considering ways to help with marketing plans for a number of communities that are working to build the capacity in their communities.

The question of how 'rural and small' communities are defined. USDA, for example, has different definitions some have a population of 500 people, some agencies define it as 25,000 and greater.

Chairman Cope commented that some define rural communities or small communities as fewer than 50,000.

Terri Goodmann commented that she appreciated this great work. She said that that by preserving existing buildings it can be an essential tool for revitalization. The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit is the only way small towns and rural communities can fill the gap when it comes to restoring an older building. She expressed a hope that this administration would continue to maintain that as an essential tool for revitalizing communities and avoiding waste that would go to landfills, and subsequently help with better accounting and redevelopment.

## **V. SCAS Business Meeting**

**Chairman Cope** introduced Lee Forsgren, Office of Water, to talk about the draft harmful algal blooms letter. Lee Forsgren thanked the SCAS for the opportunity to come back and talk about the harmful algal bloom letter. The Office of Water would like to do a briefing for the LGAC bringing all the scientists that the Office has gathered on HABs. There are a lot of programs not cited in the letter that the committee may want to consider.

**Chairman Cope** said that on the last conference call we didn't have a problem with saying that there are increased phosphorus levels in water and it does seem to influence HABs. He asked: How do you identify where that phosphorus is and how do you decide that we need to regulate fertilizer runoff? Sources of phosphorus are more complicated to trace to source.

Lee Forsgren commented that both phosphorus and nitrogen are both nutrients loading the system that are presenting significant problems. In some parts of the country phosphorus is a bigger problem. In some parts of the country nitrogen is a much bigger problem. He offered again to do a briefing to talk about all the HABs activities underway. There are a lot of nutrient problems nationwide. The Office of Water offered to work with the Committee before sending the advice letter forward.

**Mr. Brian Holter** said that water sampling in Alaska has shown harmful algal blooms. Outreach and education are key to this issue.

Lee Forsgren agreed that this is part of the problem which wasn't really covered in the letter. After working a number of years with the Alaska delegation, and working in and around Florida, the manifestations of nutrient loading and harmful blooms that follow on to that are markedly different in cause. We need more time with our scientists to better understand and differentiate what approaches might be done regionally that might make some difference.

**Chairman Cope** asked: How much time are we talking about? A week, a month, six months? Sometime in government there is a tendency for things to be delayed.

**Bill Youngblood** commented that there are unintended consequences created by EPA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in regard to algae blooms. We never had the problem before. We're beginning to have it in our wastewater treatment plants, because the agency is requiring us to use less and less chlorine, so there is no residual. When you put an ultraviolet light to the water, there is a 25-foot stream of algae between July and August in our treatment plants. I've been trying to work with Region 3 now for about four months on this issue.

Lee Forsgren said that he would like to discuss this issue with the Region 3 Administrator and the wastewater and our drinking water office directors in the next couple weeks.

**Susan Hann** said that she is confused procedurally in that the letter has been thoroughly vetted through the Water Workgroup and the LGAC work groups. The letter has valid advice to the administrator, and all the actions discussed could certainly come back to the LGAC as a response. The LGAC can update the letter as the science moves along. Certainly, we're open to additional information. We've written more than one letter on many topics. Procedurally, it seems awkward to delay this action once the work group has acted on it. It was discussed, and input was solicited from our members. "I'm concerned about why we would not move this forward at this moment in time, understanding that science is progressing, and maybe there's something in there that is our opinion that isn't scientifically valid." EPA can certainly respond to that. So, I'm not ready to table this issue. I'm ready to move it forward. What I'm hearing this morning is not dissuading me from that this perspective.

Lee Forsgren commented that maybe there are some issues in the letter outdated scientifically in the letter. The letter will be directed to the Office of Water and we'll provide our response and our guidance. And, we just think there's a lot of opportunity here to do good and not send each other off into the corners.

**Susan Hann** commented that the Office of Water and the LGAC have worked very well together over the past several years in a collaborative way. We have differing points of view as local officials, but we have all learned from each other. We worked very well with EPA. This advice letter can also be ignored. But she commented that she did not understand why this letter would impede progress on HABs.

**Chairman Dixon** reminded everyone that the LGAC is a policy advisory committee not a scientific or technical committee. All of the workgroups have worked hard on this letter and they have also brought in experts. The advice and recommendations are of vital importance. Lee Forsgren agreed.

**Chairman Dixon** said that he appreciated Lee Forsgren coming to meet with the LGAC. The LGAC has worked hard in providing our local perspectives and examples. If the LGAC moves the letter forward, it is advisory in nature. EPA sets policy. He commented that this is his last LGAC meeting.

**Mr. Tom Sloan** thanked Chairman Dixon and said that many of the Members have invested a year or more on this letter, and its iterations. He stated that Members come from states that have major problems with HABs, and who are working on trying to abate the issue. He agreed with what Chairman Dixon said. He also stated that it was last meeting also along with several of the leaders of the Water Work group. If you want to take weeks to get back with the group, or month with

suggestions, we're already into warm weather and the HABs problem. The Chairman's comment that you're free to reject or accept any of the suggestions that are in there, and there's some that are calling for collaboration in very specific ways. So, with that he said that he would like to move it forward.

**Mayor Elizabeth Kautz** also agreed with her colleagues. She said that it is her last meeting also. She thanked Sue Hann and her leadership on the Water Work group, and to everyone who have contributed to it. We've invested a lot of time as it has been mentioned. We've served for 10 years, and we always work by collaborating with one another by moving forward. We've heard from EPA experts and these are our collective thoughts and examples to present to EPA. We're vested in giving the administrator a good product.

**Mr. Brian Fulton**, SCAS Vice-Chair, commented that out of respect for everyone that has worked on it and put years into doing this letter, I don't see any harm in going forward.

**Terri Goodmann** said that this the first letter that staff members of EPA have not agreed with. This is unusual. She endorsed moving the letter forward for the EPA leadership to review, and maybe come back and collaborate. She said that she does not agree on holding it back because people don't like the content.

**Commissioner Ron Poltak** said that HABs is a serious issue. The nutrient issues have come to this point. We're looking for nothing more than a recognition of the severity of the problem, and the opportunity to work with you in the future. This letter is advisory in nature, and from my perspective, in recognition to the work that's gone into it, in recognition of the magnitude of the need, the magnitude of the problem, I support this letter. I represent those in the northeast and this is a serious issue. e).

## **VI. Concluding Remarks**

Chairman Cope said that no action is needed. All of the Workgroups have signed off and the Executive committee. He thanked Lee Forsgren for his taking time to meet with the SCAS. He thanked all of the speakers. He reminded everyone to sign the food waste pledge. He thanked Brian Fulton, Vice-Chair. And he thanked Members of SCAS for their dedication over the years.

## **VII. Adjournment**

Chairman Cope adjourned the meeting.

We hereby certify that, to the best of our knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

**Commissioner Dr. Robert Cope, DVM**  
**Chairman**  
**Small Community Advisory Subcommittee**  
**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**



**Date: July 25, 2019**

**Frances Eargle**  
**Designated Federal Officer**  
**Local Government Advisory Committee**  
**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**



**Date: July 25, 2019**

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## **Meeting Participants**

### **SCAS Members**

Dr. Robert Cope, DVM, Chair  
Mr. Brian Fulton  
Bob Dixon  
Secretary Jeff Witte, Vice-Chair  
Mayor Jose Aponte Dalmau  
Commissioner Libby Szabo  
Mr. William Youngblood  
Mr. Brian Holter  
Mr. Tom Willsey

### **LGAC Members**

Commissioner Kitty Barnes  
Dr. Hector Gonzalez  
Ms. Terri Goodmann  
Ms. Susan Hann  
Mayor Elizabeth Kautz  
Commissioner Ron Poltak  
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt  
Secretary Michael Scuse  
Mr. Tom Sloan  
Mr. Jai Templeton

## **Others**

Carolyn Berndt, National League of Cities (NLC)  
Julie Ufner, National Association of Counties (NACo)  
Lisa Lonefight, MHA Nation

## **EPA Participants**

Britt Carter, Director, Intergovernmental Relations  
Robin Richardson, Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations (OCIR)  
Jack Bowles, Director, State and Local Relations, OCIR  
Fran Eargle, DFO  
Elizabeth Bennett, Agricultural Advisor to the Administrator  
Chitra Kumar, Office of Policy  
Lee Forsgren, Office of Water  
Greg Spraul, Office of Water  
Portia Banks, OCIR  
Sonya Scott, OCIR  
Becky Cook-Shyovitz, OCIR  
Demond Matthews, OCIR