

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Board of Scientific Counselors

Executive Committee

Virtual Meeting Minutes

July 7, 2020

Dates and Times: July 7, 2020, 11:00 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. Eastern Time

Location: Virtual

Executive Summary

On July 7, 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) Executive Committee (further referred to as the Committee) convened in a virtual meeting. The goals of the one-day meeting were to hold discussions about the Chemical Safety for Sustainability and Health and Environmental Risk Assessment (CSS and HERA) and the Sustainable and Healthy Communities (SHC) subcommittee draft reports. Additionally, the Committee discussed results of the BOSC Executive Committee Topics Survey and future topics for deliberation. The meeting format allowed for subcommittee presentations, open dialogue, program comment, Committee deliberations and questions, and EPA responses to questions.

Dr. Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, the Office of Research and Development's (ORD's) Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science, thanked everyone for their flexibility to meet virtually due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) gathering restrictions. She highlighted the EPA Facilities Status Dashboard, allowing EPA employees to view all 125 facilities across the United States and map conditions surrounding each facility to determine when EPA facilities can safely reopen. Dr. Orme-Zavaleta emphasized the Committee's partnership with EPA and value to help ensure ORD research is conducted in ways that add credibility and confidence in science used to inform Agency decisions.

Deliberation on Chemical Safety for Sustainability and Health and Environmental Risk Assessment Subcommittee Draft Report

Dr. Katrina Waters, Chair, and Dr. James Stevens, Vice Chair, CSS/HERA subcommittee, provided a summary of the HERA research program's review focus. Dr. Waters then outlined the charge questions for the subcommittee and presented the draft subcommittee recommendations under Charge Questions 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d. Finally, she outlined the subcommittee's draft conclusions.

Following the summary, the Committee discussed the CSS/HERA draft report. Topics discussed included risk assessments involving chemical mixtures and risks to vulnerable populations. There was also discussion about Figure 1 in the HERA Strategic Research Action Plan (StRAP). The CSS/HERA subcommittee found Figure 1 to be unclear, as it focused on the effects of exposure without considering exposure characterization. The HERA program responded that conducting a risk assessment does not fall under their purview, but they consider exposure assessment to develop and interpret toxicological studies.

Dr. Samantha Jones, National Program Director (NPD), HERA Research Program, thanked the subcommittee for the draft recommendations and thorough review, deliberations, and development of the draft subcommittee report. She confirmed that ORD would evaluate the draft subcommittee recommendations, and the BOSC's recommendations, partner input, and stakeholder input would inform future StRAPs. She noted that HERA might not be able to fully address some recommendations immediately, such as mixture assessment concerns.

After Dr. Jones' response, the Committee discussed topics such as merging overlapping recommendations and future directions of the HERA program, in addition to its purpose and scope of work. Further, the Committee discussed the guiding role of the BOSC and how involved the organization should be in guiding ORD's direction and future StRAP planning. However, the Committee agreed to remove the recommendation sections which they felt overstepped. They did this to maintain the financial and managerial independence the Committee has been mindful to respect historically.

Deliberation on Sustainable and Healthy Communities Subcommittee Draft Report

Drs. Courtney Flint, Chair, and Matthew Naud, Vice Chair, SHC subcommittee, explained that the subcommittee reviewed the SHC program's outputs and products within Research Areas 9 and 10, resulting in differing charge questions from the CSS/HERA subcommittee. They then reviewed the subcommittee's draft report, including Charge Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4, draft subcommittee recommendations, and an outline of the subcommittee conclusions.

Following the review of the draft report, Dr. Michael Slimak, NPD of the SHC program, explained that the program uses BOSC reports to help refine and manage the program. He added that SHC program leadership shares the report with researchers and uses it to make appropriate program changes. Overall, Dr. Slimak said he agrees with the SHC subcommittee recommendations and the SHC research program would work to address them.

Members of the Committee applauded the SHC subcommittee's draft report and liked that there were three recommendations per charge question. The Committee held discussions on topics related to environmental justice and short-term versus long-term research. The Committee appreciated the environmental justice recommendation and is optimistic that the SHC program would focus on the issue. Dr. Slimak noted that the SHC program must meet its short-term needs within ORD but will make attempts to focus more on long-term research.

Discussion on Future Topics for BOSC Executive Committee Deliberation

Dr. Paul Gilman, Chair of the Committee, said it would be useful in the future for ORD to brief the Committee on ORD's methods in responding to emerging issues. These briefings would provide space for exploring areas where BOSC members individually or collectively have greater interest. Dr. Bruce Rodan, Associate Director for Science, ORD, replied that those briefings could occur.

Dr. Viney Aneja, a member of the Committee, mentioned that Committee members did not suggest the seven topics listed in the *Future Topics for the Executive Committee Discussion*

document as potentially crosscutting issues, but EPA provided them to the Committee who then voted on those topics. He wondered how they collectively arrived at this list of seven topics. Dr. Gilman replied that the topics came from earlier Committee discussions as opportunities for areas for further focus.

Dr. Paula Olsiewski, a member of the Committee, noted that the current COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies how resource constrained EPA is and added that ORD should be careful not to create new projects that would further deplete their resources. The Committee members agreed.

Summary and Next Steps

Mr. Tom Tracy, Designated Federal Officer, stated that EPA would make the subcommittee report changes discussed during the meeting, and he would circulate for attendees' concurrence. Dr. Gilman would receive a draft cover letter, which he will be able to then approve and send to Dr. Orme-Zavaleta. Mr. Tracy discussed upcoming BOSC meetings, and he expressed his excitement that the BOSC has still been able to and will continue to meet virtually.

Meeting Agenda and Other Meeting Materials

The [agenda](https://www.epa.gov/bosc/executive-committee-meeting-july-7-2020)¹ and other meeting materials can be accessed at <https://www.epa.gov/bosc/executive-committee-meeting-july-7-2020>. The meeting participants and subcommittees' charge questions are provided below.

Meeting Participants

BOSC Executive Committee Members:

Paul Gilman, *Chair*
Lucinda Johnson, *Vice Chair*
Viney Aneja
Robert Blanz
Shahid Chaudhry*
Kari Cutting
Courtney Flint
Charlette Geffen
Matthew Naud
Paula Olsiewski
Joseph Rodricks
Leslie Rubin
Sandra Smith
James Stevens
Justin Teegarden*
Katrina Waters

**did not attend*

EPA Designated Federal Officer (DFO): Tom Tracy, *Office of Science Advisor, Policy, and Engagement*

EPA Presenters:

Andrew Geller, *Principal Associate National Program Director, Sustainable and Healthy Communities Research Program*
Samantha Jones, *National Program Director, Health and Environmental Risk Assessment Research Program*
Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, *Principal Deputy Assistance Administrator for Science, Office of Research and Development*
Beth Owens, *Principal Associate National Program Director, Health and Environmental Risk Assessment Research Program*
Michael Slimak, *National Program Director, Sustainable and Healthy Communities Research Program*

¹ https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-07/documents/external_agenda_bosc_ec_july_2020_7-1-20_final.pdf

Other EPA Attendees:

Christine Alvarez	Susan Julius	Kathryn Saterson
Jennifer Cashdollar	Sang Don Lee	Salina Tesfay
Megan Fleming	Sarah Mazur	Joe Tietge
Jeff Frithsen	Andy Miller	Suzanne van Drunick
Ann Grimm	Bruce Rodan	Tim Watkins
Bryan Hubbell	Mary Ross	Joe Williams
Sherri Hunt	Shawn Ryan	

Other Attendees:

Naomi Charalambakis	Penelope Fenner-Crisp	Linda Wilson
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Contractor Support (ICF):

Canden Byrd
 Delaney Reilly
 Amy Scheuer

Charge Questions

Chemical Safety for Sustainability and Health and Environmental Risk Assessment:

Q.1a: Please comment on the extent to which the research outlined for the 2019-2022 timeframe supports the relevant Agency priorities as described in the [EPA](#) and [ORD](#) Strategic Plans?

Q.1b: Each ORD research program undertook a rigorous engagement process to provide additional detail on specific EPA program and region, state, and tribal needs, the results of which are summarized in introductory sections, descriptions of specific research topics, and appendices. How well does the proposed foundational research program respond to these identified needs?

Q.1c: Does the StRAP, including the topics, research areas, and proposed outputs, clearly describe the strategic vision of the program? Please comment on the extent to which the StRAP provides a coherent structure toward making progress on the strategic vision in the 2019-2022 timeframe.

Q.1d: Recognizing ORD’s focus on addressing identified Agency, state, and tribal research needs, are there any other critical emerging foundational research needs, or fields of expertise and/or new research methods, where this program should consider investing resources?

Sustainable and Healthy Communities:

Q.1: BOSC subcommittee members have been provided a summary of planned research products related to research areas 9 & 10 for review at this BOSC meeting. After reviewing these materials, combined with the presentations provided during the 2-day virtual meeting, are there any critical gaps that would preclude accomplishing the environmental science goals of RA 9 and 10? Please provide recommendations for addressing those.

Q.2: The combined Strategic Planning and Research Area Coordination Team (RACT) process was resource intensive for both ORD scientists and partner organizations. Yet, this engagement has clearly vested EPA programs and regions, states, and tribes in the research to be conducted,

and heightened their interest in participation with ORD and in the outcomes of the work. ORD seeks BOSC input on effective ways to maintain this mutual engagement and communication between researchers and our research partners as we go forward with implementation.