

Meeting Date: June 18, 2009

TO: MTCA Science Advisory Board

FROM: Pete Kmet, P.E.
Department of Ecology—Toxics Cleanup Program

SUBJECT: Status of SAB and Scientific Advice on MTCA Issues

On the last day of this year’s legislative session, SB 5995, eliminating several advisory boards and commissions was resurrected and passed. Section 10 of this bill eliminates the statutory obligation for Ecology to maintain a MTCA Science Advisory Board (SAB).

It is important to point out that Ecology did not ask for this bill nor was this bill targeted at the MTCA SAB and your great work. Rather, it was part of a larger government reform initiative that Governor Gregoire unveiled in her “State of the State” address at the beginning of legislative session in January. The original version of this bill eliminated over 400 boards and commissions. This final version eliminates 18 Boards and Commissions. From comments made by the Governor, it is anticipated that many of the remaining Boards and Commissions will be targeted for elimination in future years.

Attached is complete bill for your information. Of particular interest is the discussion of legislative intent in Section 1:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. Intent. One of the key roles of advisory boards, committees, and commissions is to provide input, advice and recommendations from stakeholders, other interested parties, and the public to state agencies. Some advisory boards, committees, and commissions may be abolished without detriment to the mission of the agency each supports. Most of the advisory functions of some boards, committees, and commissions can be performed without the administrative costs of maintaining formal organizations. In the interest of building a leaner, more efficient, and more responsible government, this vital communications conduit must be maintained for the benefit of the state and its citizens, through the use of modern communication technology. It is the intent of the legislature this interim to identify criteria to evaluate those advisory boards, committees, and commissions that may be eliminated or consolidated, and for agencies to identify new, less costly, and more effective opportunities to ensure a broad range of citizen participation is provided and that all reasonable efforts are made to ensure that channels are maintained for vital input from the citizens of Washington.

Since passage of this bill, both TCP Program Manager Jim Pendowski and Ecology Director Jay Manning have indicated that Ecology intends to continue to solicit scientific input on MTCA rule and policies.

The purpose of this discussion is to solicit ideas from current SAB members on how best Ecology can obtain future scientific input on cleanup issues.

As you think about this issue, please consider the following questions:

- What has worked well with the current MTCA SAB process?
- What hasn't worked so well?
- Looking back, how effectively did subcommittees work to augment a full discussion by the Board?
- Should this be a standing panel/board or perhaps an ad hoc panel that Ecology forms as needed for specific issues?
- What factors should be considered in selecting panel/board members? Should panel/board members be required to have certain qualifications (PhD)?
- Should alternates be allowed? What frequency of meetings works best for Ecology and the Board?
- Who should appoint panel/board members: TCP Program Manager? Ecology Director? Does this affect the perception of the status of committee recommendations? The ability for Board members to serve?
- If it is a standing panel/board, how often should it meet?
- What is a workable size for a group like this?
- Is the public given appropriate opportunity for input?

The agency is evaluating the future structure for retaining a science advisory capacity for the state cleanup laws. This discussion and other evaluations will be considered as a new format is developed by the agency.

I'm sure there are other issues/questions that will come up as you discuss this. Ecology staff look are forwarding to our June 18th discussion.

cc: Dawn Hooper