

program as an element for laboratory certification by the State.

Water Pollution (WP) study program, which includes chemistry PE studies, tests laboratories' abilities to analyze for common surface water quality pollutant parameters and supports 25 to 30 State wastewater and other environmental laboratory certification programs. Many States conduct laboratory accreditation programs in support of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program under the Clean Water Act. Though participation in the WP is not federally compelled, many States require laboratories to participate in EPA's Water Pollution (WP) PE study program as a basis for accreditation under State laws.

Discharge Monitoring Report Quality Assurance (DMRQA) study program, which includes inorganic chemistry and whole effluent toxicity (WET) PE studies, is used as one tool for ensuring the quality of monitoring data submitted by National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permittees. Historically, EPA administered the DMRQA studies through NPDES "major" permittees, who would transmit the DMRQA test samples to the same laboratories that conduct compliance monitoring for such permittees. Beginning in FY 1996, NPDES permittees were instructed to notify their laboratories to request and receive the necessary samples directly from the EPA. NPDES permittees are required to participate in the DMRQA study under the authority of Clean Water Act section 308. Thus, though laboratories are not directly required to participate, participation is effectively or indirectly required by market forces.

Why is EPA Externalizing the PE Study Function?

In the past, EPA conducted the PE studies with no cost to the participating laboratories. As part of the Government's efforts to save resources and to externalize those activities that are not inherently governmental functions and that can be conducted by the private sector, the Agency reassessed its continued operation of the programs.

EPA had considered numerous options for externalizing the PE studies program. EPA explained these options in the **Federal Register** at 61 FR 37464—37471 (July 18, 1996). After considering the comments received, the Agency decided on a program where EPA would issue standards for the operation of the program, the NIST would develop standards for private sector PE suppliers and would evaluate and accredit PE suppliers, and the private sector would

develop and manufacture PE materials and conduct PE studies. In addition, as part of the program, the PE providers would report the results of the studies to the study participants and to those organizations that have responsibility for administering programs supported by the studies (e.g., State and EPA for WS and WP studies; EPA for DMRQA studies). The Agency believes that this option (Option 2 of the proposed Options) would best serve the public interests.

When Will Externalization Occur?

EPA and NIST anticipate that NIST would begin to take applications for accrediting private sector PE suppliers beginning in the summer of 1998. The agencies further anticipate that the first class of commercial sector PE providers would be accredited by the January of 1999 and, accordingly, ready to begin to service laboratories with PE studies shortly thereafter. Therefore, the final studies conducted by EPA would include: DMRQA 18 (aquatic toxicity samples to be shipped June 1998; chemistry samples to be shipped July/Aug 1998); WP 40 (samples to be shipped July/Aug 1998); WSM 30 (microbiological samples to be shipped April 1998); WS 41 (chemistry samples to be shipped May/June 1998); Radiochemistry study entitled, "Gamma in Water Performance Evaluation Study" (samples to be shipped Nov 1998).

What Would Change in PE Studies?

The new PE Studies program would serve the same purposes as did the previous PE Studies program. Though the mode of operation would change, the information and data supplied to the States (and EPA Regions) would not. Under the new structure, EPA would remain the Standards Setting Authority for the Water PE Study program. [For explanation of terms, see 61 FR 37464—37471.] EPA would work with NIST to establish the operational and technical standards to be used for accrediting private sector PE Study Providers and would oversee compliance with the national standards. NIST would publish the accreditation standards. Both standards setting functions would be closely coordinated with the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC).

NIST has indicated that its National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) would serve as the PE Study Provider Accreditation Body. NIST intends to collect a fee from PE Study Providers to recover costs associated with the NIST accreditation program. NIST would also develop

primary reference standards, which NIST would sell to PE Study Providers.

The private sector and/or States (who, in some cases, currently conduct their own PE studies) would have the opportunity to become accredited PE study providers. The private sector PE Study Providers would: produce and value assign the PE materials according to NIST protocols; distribute the PE samples to participating laboratories; analyze client lab measurement data; calculate acceptance limits according to procedures established by EPA; and report results (in the appropriate format and detail) to the participating laboratories, appropriate state authorities, EPA, and NIST.

Under the new system, States would have several options for obtaining the PE study data for laboratories subject to their accreditation program. Three such options include: States may require laboratories to participate in a specific private sector PE programs and have the results sent to the State by the PE study provider; States may elect to serve as PE study providers themselves (as some States do now); or States may permit a laboratory to participate in any accredited PE study and have the results sent to the State. In all cases, States would be able to receive all the information that was previously provided by the EPA. The only additional costs that States should experience as a result of these changes are those associated with purchasing PE studies from the private sector for their own laboratories.

Dated: May 28, 1997.

Robert Perciasepe,
Assistant Administrator for Water.

Dated: May 27, 1997.

Robert J. Huggett,
Assistant Administrator for Research and Development.

Dated: May 30, 1997.

Steven A. Herman,
Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.

[FR Doc. 97-15414 Filed 6-11-97; 8:45 am]

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-5839-8]

National Drinking Water Advisory Council, Occurrence and Contaminant Selection Working Group; Notice of Open Meeting

Under section 10(a)(2) of Public Law 92-423, "The Federal Advisory Committee Act," notice is hereby given

that a conference call for the Occurrence and Contaminant Selection Working Group of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council established under the Safe Drinking Water Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. S300f *et seq.*), will be held on June 23 and 24, 1997, from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. EDT, each day. The conference call is open to the public, but due to availability, conference lines will be limited and access will be granted on a first-come first-served basis.

The purpose of this call is to review progress on the development of the first Drinking Water Candidate List since the last meeting of the Working Group on April 3-4, 1997. The Working Group members will analyze the results of the criteria developed, and relevant issues and facts, and draft proposed position paper for deliberation by the advisory council. Therefore, statements will be taken from the public as time allows.

For more information, please contact, Evelyn Washington, Designated Federal Officer, Occurrence and Contaminant Selection Working Group, U.S. EPA, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (4607), 401 M Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20460. The telephone number is 202-260-3029, fax 202-260-3762, and e-mail address washington.evelyn@epamail.epa.gov.

Dated: June 4, 1997.

Charlene E. Shaw,

Designated Federal Officer, National Drinking Water Advisory Council.

[FR Doc. 97-15407 Filed 6-11-97; 8:45 am]

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-5839-9]

National Drinking Water Advisory Council, Small Systems Working Group; Notice of Open Meeting

Under section 10(a)(2) of Public Law 92-423, "The Federal Advisory Committee Act," notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Small Systems Working Group of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council established under the Safe Drinking Water Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. S300f *et seq.*), will be held on June 30 and July 1, 1997 from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm, at the Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel, 480 L'Enfant Plaza, Washington, DC 20024. The meeting is open to the public, but due to past experience, seating will be limited.

The purpose of this meeting is to review and discuss final recommendations for the National

Drinking Water Advisory Council regarding implementation of the capacity development and affordability provisions of the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments. The meeting is open to the public to observe. The working group members are meeting to develop final recommendations based upon issues considered at previous meetings. Statements will be taken from the public at this meeting, as time allows.

For more information, please contact, Peter E. Shanaghan, Designated Federal Officer, Small Systems Working Group, U.S. EPA, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (4606), 401 M Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20460. The telephone number is 202-260-5813 and the email address shanaghan.peter@epamail.epa.gov.

Dated: May 29, 1997.

Charlene Shaw,

Designated Federal Officer, National Drinking Water Advisory Council.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-5839-4]

Science Advisory Board Notification of Public Advisory Committee Meeting, June and July 1997

Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Pub. L. 92-463, notice is hereby given that the Science Advisory Board's (SAB's) Environmental Engineering Committee (EEC) will conduct a public meeting from Monday June 30, 1997 through Thursday July 3, 1997. The meeting will be held in conference rooms 120-126 at the Environmental Protection Agency's Andrew W. Breidenback Environmental Research Facility, 26 West Martin Luther King Boulevard, Cincinnati, Ohio. The Committee will convene at 8:30 a.m. on Monday June 30 and adjourn no later than 3 p.m. Thursday July 3. The Committee may begin earlier and end later otherwise as needed for the work.

Purpose of the Meeting

On June 30-July 1 the EEC will review the Pollution Prevention Research Strategy and the Waste Research Strategy developed by research coordination teams in EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD). On July 2, the EEC will review the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics (OPPT) TRI Relative Risk-Based Environmental Indicators Project and conduct a

consultation on a proposed approach for developing the TRI Relative Risk-Based Chronic Ecological Indicator. (An SAB consultation is a discussion of an issue in its early stages which generates neither consensus advice nor a written report, but which may be helpful to the Agency in identifying areas that should be addressed in its further development of the topic.) July 3 is intended to be a day of writing and report preparation.

During the meeting, the Committee also expects to review and possibly approve four reports prepared by the EEC or its subcommittees: (A) the research program and strategic directions of the National Risk Management Research Laboratory (NRMRL); (B) Superfund's draft proposed national guidance on field filtration of ground water samples taken for metals analysis from monitoring wells for Superfund site assessment; © the use of toxicity weighting in the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Analysis Sector Facility Indexing Project; and (D) the Office of Solid Waste's proposed plan for a Congressionally required study of surface impoundments.

Review of the Pollution Prevention Research Strategy

Copies of the review documents for the Pollution Prevention Research Strategy review can be obtained from Jonathan Herrmann of the NRMRL in EPA/ORD (phone 513/569-7839 or fax 513/569-7680). The current draft charge for the pollution prevention research strategy review is:

(A) Is the research strategy on target in describing the current state of pollution prevention, where it should be focused in the near term, and where it needs to be directed in the future (i.e., sustainable development)?

(B) Does the strategic review and program scoping provide a clear sense of priorities and role for ORD's pollution prevention research effort, and does it support the opportunities for pollution prevention research and development described in Chapter 3.0? Have any opportunities for ORD research in pollution prevention been missed and, if so, what are they?

© Are the four long-term goals consistent with the mission of the research strategy, and if thoroughly executed, will they effectively achieve the stated vision? If not, what improvements or changes are recommended?

(D) Are the prioritization criteria listed in Chapter 2.0 the of the research strategy thorough and will they permit rational and reasoned decision making on which projects should be pursued as