

### **EPN “All Hands” Call, Friday, October 18, 2019**

This month’s all-hands call provided an overview of science in federal environmental policymaking, from the Science Advisory Board and transparency to particulate matter standards and the Clean Air Act.

#### **Presenters**

**Chris Zarba**, former Director of EPA’s Science Advisory Board (SAB), part of a 38-year career in management positions at environmental agencies.

**John Bachmann**, former Associate Director for Science/Policy and New Programs, EPA Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, where he facilitated discussions between scientists and policy makers and assisted in articulating key research priorities and long-term policy directions.

#### **Science Advisory Board (SAB)**

Chris Zarba presented an overview of the history of his experience with the Science Advisory Board and administrative changes in 2017. When he was Director, there were around 17 or 18 people and between 200 and 300 scientists hired every year between the SAB and the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC). There were 48 members during his tenure and a large portfolio of things to do, names to submit, and recommendations to make. After he became Director, SAB created two large panels on WOTUS and hydraulic fracturing. It also began webcasting, which was quite popular, averaging between three and four thousand viewers.

In October 2017, Scott Pruitt decided that EPA would fire every member of a scientific board that received an EPA grant, but retain scientists that received industry grants. Term limits for advisory board members were also cut in half, increasing turnover from 18% to 36%. This negative effect on science was multiplied by changes to the hiring process, as names and decisions were handed from the top down instead of including the input of staff and advisory board members.

Finally, SAB and CASAC have been deciding on consultation more and more. This means there is no final report, which lends itself to cherry-picking as policymakers can choose what you want to hear. This is not how the consultation process is meant to be used, and Michael Honeycutt, the chair of the SAB, seems to understand this. However, there is the continued potential for abuse and reduced participation of scientific advisory boards in the regulatory process.

#### **National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and Scientific Advice**

John Bachmann described the role of scientific advice in creating particulate matter standards. EPA investigates effects on human health and welfare when setting or reviewing PM standards under Section 108 of the Clean Air Act. The panel that John was on added new names and procedures for review, but CASAC has a role in everything: science assessment, risk exposure assessment, and policy assessment. Administrator Pruitt decided he wanted to review PM and ozone before the end of 2020, which seems like a political decision because it sidelines robust CASAC review. Now, CASAC’s streamlined process can only review the standards once instead of modifying something and revisiting it. Finally, CASAC’s review panel for particulate matter was disbanded, removing additional scientific input from the process.

The Independent Particulate Matter Review Panel, headed by Chris Frey and totaling 20 people, reviewed the PM standards, critiqued them, and made recommendations. It is a unique collaboration given the large amount of press on the topic, and the independent panel will have comments on the draft CASAC letter following its own letter. This group was very productive, and it shows what happens when you have scientists coming together in a setting outside of the inadequate CASAC review process.