

October 1, 1997

FOR: The Commissioners
FROM: L. Joseph Callan /s/ Executive Director for Operations
SUBJECT: CREATION OF A RESEARCH EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW BOARD

PURPOSE:

To inform the Commission of the staff's formation of a Research Effectiveness Review Board (RERB).

BACKGROUND:

COMSECY 96-066, Research (DSI-22) dated March 28, 1997, asked the staff to consider the creation of a RERB. The Commission asked that it be composed of representatives from RES, NRR, NMSS and AEOD. Its purpose would be to advise the directors of these offices on the effectiveness of the research programs in meeting the needs of the users and on the effectiveness of the program offices in supporting and in articulating their needs and priorities to the research offices. The Board would periodically review the bases for initiating, continuing, and terminating specific research programs giving particular attention to the effectiveness of broad based long range programs and the capabilities of the staff to address core research needs. The usefulness and advisability of its continuation should be examined by the Commission every three years.

DISCUSSION:

The RERB with membership from RES, NRR, NMSS and AEOD will be formed. It is planned that the Board will meet twice annually (about every six months) to address each of the subjects identified by the Commission in COMSECY 96-066. The Board will consist of the deputy division directors from RES and those deputy division directors from NRR, NMSS and AEOD whose work is supported by RES.

At one of its semi-annual meetings, the Board will assess RES products issued over the past year in terms of their value to the regulatory mission of the agency and their timeliness, quality and usefulness to the user office. The Board will also evaluate the quality of user-need requests sent to RES over the past year in terms of how well they articulated needs and priorities and how well the offices supported RES in pursuit of these needs. RES will prepare assessments of the products it delivered and the user need requests it received. Board members will review the RES assessments for work sponsored by their divisions. The Board will then meet to make a collective evaluation and to formulate recommendations.

At its second meeting, the Board will review proposed RES operating plans. These plans, covering a three year period, will show proposed new starts, work to be continued and completed, bases for the planned work and core capability needs. Following each meeting the Board will provide a report to the office directors which will summarize its assessment, identify any areas for improvement and provide associated recommendations. Subsequently, the RES Director, in coordination with the other office directors, will provide a report to the Deputy Executive Directors for Regulatory Effectiveness and Regulatory Programs. This report will highlight the Board's conclusions and identify actions to be taken in response to any recommendations the Board has made.

The results of the RERB reviews and the actions taken by the offices in response to these reviews will also be addressed in the program reviews envisioned by the Planning Framework. By doing so, the Program Review Committee can help assure that the interface between the program offices and RES is highly effective. It is also expected that the evaluation of research products will play a valuable role in the agency's regulatory excellence initiative. The customer feedback on product quality, timeliness, usefulness and value to the regulatory mission of the NRC will help RES address issues bearing on both the effectiveness and efficiency of the research program.

In three years, the staff will report back to the Commission on the usefulness and the advisability of continuing the Board.

It should be noted that RES will also have semi-annual interface meetings (having both division and office level representation) separately with NRR, NMSS and AEOD. At these meetings, they will discuss issues and assure coordination between their respective programs. At the outset of each interface meeting, any new or emerging issues that might call for either new research or the redirection of current programs to provide timely information will be discussed. Also, each program office will describe technical activities it plans to initiate in response to these issues and any support they will need from RES. These meetings are an important adjunct to the RERB meetings discussed above.

COORDINATION:

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this Commission Paper for resource implications and has no objections.

RECOMMENDATION:

Unless the Commission directs otherwise within 10 days from the date of this paper, I will direct the staff to implement the Research Effectiveness Review Board process.

L. Joseph Callan
Executive Director

for Operations

Contact: Lloyd J. Donnelly, RES/FMPAS
(301) 415-5828

*See attached sheet for previous concurrences.