

Process to Review Science Advisory Board Standing Working Groups (Subcommittees)

Introduction and Background

The Science Advisory Board (SAB) is called upon to provide information and advice to NOAA on a wide variety of topics important to the Agency. Because of the breadth of subject matter that the SAB addresses, SAB members frequently consult with outside experts on specific topics. In some cases, the technical nature of a topic requires SAB members to convene a group of experts to study a subject of long-term interest to NOAA, and the SAB establishes such subcommittees on a regular basis. These subcommittees are called “standing working groups,” and operate under procedures outlined in the SAB Subcommittee Concept of Operations (ConOps).

The SAB Subcommittee ConOps was recently revised to include a review of standing working groups every two years in conjunction with renewal of the SAB charter. Specifically, the ConOps language states that “[t]he terms of reference for a standing working group should be reviewed and revised on a biennial basis by the SAB and NOAA, in conjunction with renewal of the SAB charter.” The ConOps further notes that subcommittee reviews will result in a report with a recommendation for whether NOAA should maintain the group, suggested revisions to the subcommittee Terms of Reference, and other recommendations about subcommittee operations, as appropriate.

Notably, the Environmental Information Services Working Group (EISWG) is legislatively mandated under the 2017 Weather Forecasting Improvement Act. Although EISWG will be reviewed along with the other standing working groups, NOAA will only consider changes to its Terms of Reference and operations, not whether to maintain it as a working group.

Review of Terms of Reference

A subcommittees’ Terms of Reference (TOR) guides its work. As part of its biannual review, NOAA will review a subcommittee’s TOR, including its work products and value of advice (as determined by NOAA), considering input from the SAB liaison and the full SAB.

All TORs, membership, and documents for Standing Subcommittees are posted on the SAB website <http://sab.oarhq.noaa.gov/WorkingGroups/StandingWorkingGroups.aspx>

Subcommittee Review Process in 2017

NOAA will begin a review of SAB subcommittees in 2017. Initially, NOAA staff will conduct an analysis of subcommittee TORs by comparing the TORs to the subcommittee’s work product provided to the SAB (typically reports). All subcommittee reports approved by the SAB are listed on the Standing Working Group website. The analysis by NOAA staff will include the number of reports sent to and approved by the SAB during the review period (for the 2017 review, this will include the time period from 2012 through 2017), and a comparison of the topics covered to those in the TOR. Staff will also review to see whether the subcommittee met at least once a year, as required under the ConOps. The results from the NOAA subcommittee

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staff review will be documented in a draft report.

The SAB Executive Director will review the draft report and then send it to the NOAA program liaisons for review and to provide input on the value of subcommittee advice to the SAB and NOAA, suggestions on changes needed in the TOR, and possible work topics for the subcommittee in the upcoming two years. The Executive Director will then send the revised report to the SAB subcommittee chairs and SAB liaison for review, which may pass it on to the full committee for comment. Finally, the SAB Executive Director will compile a final report for full SAB review, and SAB comments will be sent to the NOAA Administrator and NOAA Chief Scientist for final action.

After the subcommittee reviews are finalized, subcommittees will have six months to respond to recommendations and report on these responses to the SAB.

Timeline for 2017 Subcommittee Reviews

April 2017

The SAB reviews and approves the subcommittee review process.

June-July 2017

Review process begins with the NOAA staff evaluation, with draft report submitted to the SAB Executive Director.

After review, the Executive Director sends the report to the NOAA program liaisons, asking for their input as described above.

The revised report is sent by the Executive Director to the subcommittee chair(s) and SAB liaison for review and comment.

August 2017

Final report is sent to the SAB for review and comment.

September 2017

SAB comments sent to NOAA for final action.

October 2017

NOAA completes review of reports and sends final reports back to the SAB for action.

October/November 2017

SAB sends final reports to subcommittees for action, with report on completed actions due in six months.

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April/May 2018

Subcommittee reports on completed responses to recommendations sent to SAB.

Subcommittee Reviews after 2017

For biennial subcommittee reviews beginning in 2019, reviews will include the annual reports provided by the subcommittees to the SAB as required in the revised ConOps document approved by the SAB and a report on whether actions recommended in the 2017 review have been completed. When there is a SAB final work plan, as outlined in the SAB ConOps, the 2019 process will be amended to include evaluation of the TOR and program suggestions for work topics in the context of the SAB work plan.