

## **Research to Risk Assessment Interagency Work Group**

### **Summary Teleconference Notes**

**September 29, 2011**

#### **Introduction – Progress since our first call on June 15th**

We noted in the first R2RA conference call on June 15<sup>th</sup> that our purposes were to create an ongoing communication network, promote mutual learning, and promote the use of SRP science to assist in advancing the field of risk assessment.

We sent out an email with a proposed action plan, draft criteria for selecting pilot projects, and the full list of R2RA participants. We also sent an email with a web address linking you to documents that came out from the previous meeting. We will be using this website with its new short link ([http://1.usa.gov/SRP\\_R2RA](http://1.usa.gov/SRP_R2RA)) to collect information, so this will be the information repository. You'll be able to find documents and reports from our discussions.

Today's call will provide the opportunity to comment on minutes, shared/mutual learning, run over screening criteria for selecting pilot research projects.

#### **ATSDR Health Assessments**

A question arose regarding the summary of our last meeting, whether we would be addressing the topic of health assessments.

The response was that this effort is to be inclusive of ATSDR, so health assessments are potential research candidates if we have specific needs. And since we're including the regions in the work group, the health assessments done by the state departments of health are also relevant. It was also noted that the assessments that IRIS does are analogous to the ones that ATSDR does in Atlanta.

The intention of the work group is to include ATSDR issues, so our ATSDR participants have provided suggestions for SRP research projects that would be relevant to ATSDR.

It was noted that when we discuss different topics, where it would be good to share with the states, we should plan to share results with the state. Hopefully what we do here should reach the states, and we should communicate our results with them.

It was suggested that ATSDR has more formal relationships with the state health agencies and would expedite that communication.

#### **Opportunities for shared/mutual learning**

We started this discussion on our first call. There are different avenues we can pursue, and one straightforward one is having some relevant webinars. These could help all of us, but particularly help SRP grantees understand the processes that EPA and ATSDR use in the field of risk and health assessment. For example, how does IRIS work, how do you get data for updating the IRIS chemical

profiles? How could SRP contribute more to that process? The same applies to ATSDR and health assessments.

There are some relevant forums with EPA and ATSDR that have to do with risk assessment. SRP has participated in some of them in the past, but building on them would be useful. Some opportunities discussed included:

- A webinar on the EPA NexGen initiative and how it fits with this work group.
- Hopefully a few work group participants will attend the SRP Annual meeting in Lexington in October.
- The SOT March meeting
- OSWER Risk Assessment Forum
- NARPM is coming up, and there's a call for abstracts on that.
- Society for Risk Analysis meeting is coming up, and that might be a good fit.
- APHA meeting is coming up the 1<sup>st</sup> week in November, in Wash DC. They're doing a session on Risk Assessment.
- Are there other meetings that might be good—e.g. the national risk assessors meeting?

We would like to follow up and contact some of you specifically to do specific webinars and get those going.

A question arose what would be our primary purpose for meeting. There could be many purposes, including getting us face-to-face to talk about particular topics, to get the word out on the work this work group is doing, or to select topics that we're talking about and see what others are doing on these topics.

The response was that the purpose of each meeting would depend on the subject, what the broader meeting is, what the venue is, and how we could use the meeting time to our advantage. For example, a year from now we might be able to do a session in a broader national meeting and present what we've found. This might help with broader participation and buy-in.

Another question arose whether future webinars would be for the participants, or for researchers to see how risk assessments are done?

The response was that for IRIS and health assessments, we'd like to bring in SRP researchers to participate so they can learn more about the agency processes. This would be useful to share perspectives with others—and to assess how we can use each other's work.

If we are going to be successful in applying research results to risk assessment...then the researchers need to understand the nuts and bolts of agency processes. We need to find a way to talk freely, among ourselves, without interference. But this does require our involvement in scoping out this mutual understanding process.

There also was discussion regarding how our state partners can benefit from these efforts. They also need to know what's going on between research and risk assessment – How our results could be used, explaining how the resulting data/information can be applied in the field in risk assessment work.

There was further discussion on how this could be achieved. It was stated that a single meeting of one or several days is not enough. It's going to be a continuous process that provides information and packages the information from the process so it can be accessed by the broader stakeholder community. The best ones to understand what the needs are the researchers. If you know the regulatory needs, researchers are more likely to know where the information gaps are.

Speaking from the role of one participant who serves as a “go-between” for the research community and the EPA regional program people, researchers often recognize that they have a piece of information that will fit the decision-making process. They may not know that there is an information gap that can be filled by a new piece of information. You have to get researchers to think outside the box. Some people still don't see how the two pieces (research and risk assessment) fit together - what the researcher is doing and how it fits into the risk assessor needs/wants. There is always a challenge to integrate the motivation of the researcher and the risk assessor. Traditionally what motivates researchers is publications. We need to integrate the needs of both researchers and risk assessors.

#### **What are good matches for pilot research project that meet EPA, ATSDR, and SRP researcher needs?**

Most people w/in the SRP recognize this is a need for relevant research to be applied. They see that this is important for regulatory work.

For example, EPA Region 10 has partnered with the outreach coordinators for the SRP centers at UW and OSU. They have come to R10 to give seminars and talk about the opportunities for collaboration and what the researchers are doing that meets the needs of regulators in the region. In the case of one researcher, the research is already being deployed at a site, and this was finding new ways to make it work at other sites. This is the kind of collaboration that we're looking for in this work group.

One of the things we were hoping for...where else can this research be applied, and be useful for risk assessors? How do we get it to be applied beyond one site? We should be building on what has already been done. We need to look at the different areas of science that are of interest, and then bring in the investigator, so we can already have an action plan. That gets them involved in participating, too.

We're closing this loop between the researchers and the program. We need to assess how our work can benefit us all? Researchers are reaching out to the agency...but that's a 2-way street. We have to tell them about the research we need. This is probably done, but not enough. It's an iterative process.

We need to identify which research projects that we want to start with. Let's start with a few projects. The next step is then to make connections with the investigators.

We then had a discussion of the potential research projects proposed by SRP as candidate pilot collaboration/application efforts. Our proposed list of pilots included:

1. NYC—airborne PCBs ...biomarkers, toxicity, and dispersion models - Any large city with older schools and older light fixtures will be leaking PCBs. This could involve Regions one and five also. This will involve the SRP program at the University of Iowa.
2. Vapor intrusion...There was interest in the applicability to site-specific work and the potential need for inputs to future national guidance. The SRP researcher at Brown University (Kelly Pennell) has also given a seminar at ATSDR.
3. Bioavailability is another issue of broad interest that would probably cut across several SRP programs.
4. There was feedback on the benzene work at Berkeley. This could help health evaluations dealing with sensitive populations. There's also interest from ATSDR.
5. There also is interest in SRP research on arsenic by OSWER and IRIS is interested, particularly the work coming from Dartmouth. This may be applicable to IRIS tox reviews and how it informs the health hazard and dose-response assessments. There is a lot of epi data that is taken under consideration and its relevance to humans.

There was some discussion of the needs for research in the asbestos field, but it was agreed not to pursue this area. EPA's looking at going to site specific studies. Asbestos might not be the best compound to measure the success of this program on.

**Next steps—**

SRP will invite the relevant investigators to participate in follow on discussions on each proposed pilot project. We can then start actually working to get the researchers and interested EPA and ATSDR participants to assess the collaboration potential in these areas. We see that as a mutual activity; your thoughts are the most important part.

Our next call is planned for early November. SRP will send out another agree a date to identify the most convenient time for the participants.