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You may submit comments on a disk or CD ROM that you mail to the OEI Docket mailing address. These electronic submissions will be accepted in WordPerfect, Word, or ASCII file format. Avoid the use of special characters and any form of encryption.

If you provide comments in writing, please submit one unbound original with pages numbered consecutively, and three copies of the comments. For attachments, provide an index, number pages consecutively with the comments, and submit an unbound original and three copies.

Background

Many EPA programs are faced with deciding whether and how to regulate metals. These decisions range from site-specific assessments performed to determine, for example, whether a site needs remediation and, if so, to what degree; to national-scale assessments where, for example, national air and water quality standards are being developed; to national hazard or risk ranking conducted for purposes of setting priorities for future analysis, action, or information gathering. In recognition of the unique assessment issues raised by metals and the complexity of addressing these issues consistently across the Agency's various programs, an Agency workgroup, under the auspices of the Science Policy Council, is working to develop an integrated framework for metals risk assessment that will (1) foster consistent application of scientific principles for assessing the hazard and risk for metals, (2) reflect state-of-the-science application of methods and data, (3) incorporate a transparent process (*i.e.*

articulating assumptions and uncertainties), and (4) provide the flexibility to address program-specific issues. Issues discussed in these papers are focused on the inorganic species of metals and metal compounds.

Role of the Issue Papers

In September 2002, EPA discussed plans for the development of the metals assessment framework and associated guidance with the Agency's Science Advisory Board (SAB). That discussion included the context and key issues the Agency believed should be addressed in a metals assessment guidance and also identified the anticipated process for development of such guidance. In their review, the SAB expanded and condensed key technical areas into those represented by the five issue papers identified above. The SAB also emphasized the importance of engaging the outside community so as to contribute to the knowledge base the Agency would draw from in developing the subsequent guidance. As part of the effort to engage stakeholders and the scientific community and to build on existing experience, the Agency has commissioned external experts to lead the development of scientific papers on issues and state-of-the-art approaches to metals risk assessment. (Some individual EPA experts contributed specific discussions on topic(s) for which he or she has scientific expertise or knowledge of current Agency practice). Although Agency technical staff, as well as representatives from other Federal agencies reviewed and commented on previous drafts, the comments were addressed at the discretion of each respective author or group of authors. Therefore, the views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the EPA and should not be construed as implying EPA consent or endorsement. Comments of a technical nature received during the public comment period will be provided to Eastern Research Group for disposition by the authors.

Organizing Questions

For the purpose of organizing comments on the issue papers, the Agency suggests that commenters address the following questions:

1. For the purpose of deriving general principles that can be applied in the assessment of metals, do the issue papers provide an appropriate level of detail?
2. Are there additional chemical, biological and physical processes that should be considered for metals

assessment? If so, please describe and provide references.

3. Are you aware of any models, approaches or methods not considered in the reports that if implemented, would substantially reduce uncertainty in the Agency's metal assessments? If so, which ones are ready for application now (or in the next few years), and which types of assessments would benefit most from their application (*e.g.*, hazard ranking/characterization, national, or site-specific assessments)?

4. What other suggestions do you have to improve the utility of these papers as the Agency develops a metals assessment framework?

Dated: September 12, 2003.

Peter W. Preuss,

Director, National Center for Environmental Assessment.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-7562-3]

Notice of Extension of Public Comment Period on the Framework for Application of the Toxicity Equivalence Methodology for Polychlorinated Dioxins, Furans and Biphenyls in Ecological Risk Assessment (External Review Draft)

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Notice of extension of public comment period.

SUMMARY: This notice extends the comment period for the Framework for Application of the Toxicity Equivalence Methodology for Polychlorinated Dioxins, Furans and Biphenyls in Ecological Risk Assessment (External Review Draft). The availability of this document was originally announced in the **Federal Register** on July 30, 2003 (68 FR 44784).

DATES: Comments must be received by Wednesday, October 29, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The document is available via the Internet from <http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/raf/recordisplay.cfm?deid=55669>. Instructions for submitting comments are provided in the July 30, 2003 **Federal Register** notice, which is accessible from this Web site.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. William P. Wood, Risk Assessment Forum (mail code 8601D), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20460, telephone 202-