

Integrity in Science Watch

Week of 3/24/06

Broad Coalition Demands NAS Kick Weyerhaeuser Off Forest Hydrology Committee

A coalition of environmental and public interest groups on Tuesday demanded the National Academies of Science remove a top Weyerhaeuser scientist from the panel analyzing forest management practices' impact on water quality. In a [letter sent to NAS](#) chairman Ralph Cicerone, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Natural Resources Defense Council and 14 other organizations urged NAS to adhere to its own policy of "balance and objectivity" by removing George Weyerhaeuser Jr., vice president at the forest products giant. Weyerhaeuser clearly has a stake in the outcome of the committee's deliberations, the groups charged.

The letter also called on NAS to add several conservation-oriented scientists to the panel to offset the committee's industry consultants, Suzanne Birmingham Walker of Azimuth Forestry Services and Michael Kavanaugh of Malcolm Pirnie, Inc. The groups identified five qualified candidates for those slots. Though NAS is nominally independent of the federal government, it must follow the conflict of interest and balance requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act when working on studies funded by Congress.

American Cancer Society Tied to Drug Companies, von Eschenbach

The press last week reported John Seffrin, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society, endorsed Andrew von Eschenbach to lead the Food and Drug Administration. However, the widely used quote from an Associated Press story failed to mention the [extensive financial ties](#) between ACS and the companies von Eschenbach will regulate. ACS raises over \$100,000 each year a wide assortment of major drug, food and health care-related firms including Amgen, Novartis, Pfizer and Quest Diagnostics. ACS last year also helped launch a major cancer prevention and treatment initiative called the CEO Cancer Gold Standard that is led by top officials from major drug companies. "You have a mixture of talent, experience and sensitivity that make [von Eschenbach], I think, uniquely qualified to be a regulator at an agency as important as the Food and Drug Administration," Seffrin said. Von Eschenbach, while simultaneously head of the National Cancer Institute and interim head of FDA, endorsed the CEO Cancer Gold Standard initiative.

British Government Scientist Questions Clinical Trial Conduct

The British drug trial that sickened six men and left two in a coma last week was poorly run, says a top British physician. Parexel, a large U.S.-based contract research organization in the business of conducting clinical trials for the pharmaceutical and

biotechnology firms, ran the trial, which was for a new leukemia drug. "The idea that you give six people an injection at the same time is unusual," Kate Law, head of clinical trials for Cancer Research U.K., [told the Associated Press](#). "In any of our tests, we never test drugs on the volunteers all at the same time." The drug maker's chief scientist, Thomas Hanke of TeGenero AG of Wuerzburg, Germany, said tests in monkeys left some with swollen glands, but nothing to predict disastrous effects in humans.

Climate Scientists, Officials Disclose Struggle to Relay Information on Global Warming

[CBS News](#) last Sunday reported two top scientists' experiences with the Bush administration's ongoing politicization of climate change. Embattled NASA scientist James Hansen on *Sixty Minutes* told of his struggle to speak out about the issues surrounding global warming, "In my more than three decades in the government I've never witnessed such restrictions on the ability of scientists to communicate with the public," he said. Rick Piltz, a recently resigned official for the federal Climate Change Science Program says his annual reports on climate issues were heavily edited by Phil Cooney, the chief-of-staff at the White House Council on Environmental Quality and a former oil industry lobbyist. A line that said Earth is undergoing rapid change became "may be undergoing change" and a reference to energy production contributing to warming "was crossed out," Piltz said. Piltz recently founded [Climate Science Watch](#), an advocacy project focused on "holding public officials accountable for the ways they use climate science data in policymaking."

Oregon Congressman Fights for Integrity in EPA Research

Congressman David Wu (D-OR), member of the House Science Subcommittee on Environment, Technology and Standards, heavily [criticized the EPA](#) at a hearing Monday on the agency's proposed research and technology budget. Wu and 78 other members of Congress have introduced the "Restore Scientific Integrity to Federal Research and Policymaking Act," which would protect federally-funded scientific research from being altered or censored by any federal employee. Jeffrey Ruch, executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, testified on behalf of federal research scientists. "Until EPA offers its scientists some meaningful protection...the agency's entire science program will be tainted in the eyes of both the scientific community and the general public," Ruch said. EPA's Chair of the Science Advisory Board, M. Granger Morgan, stated, "We all want environmental decision-making to be based on sound science. However, our nation is not investing adequately in producing that sound science."

If EPA's PM Standards are Accepted, Litigation Could Follow

The EPA could face a court challenge if it doesn't adapt particulate matter standards in line with its scientific advisory committee's suggestions, [Inside EPA](#) (subscription required) reported Tuesday. Members of CASAC (Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee) recommended lowering the annual PM 2.5 standards to 13-14 micrograms

per cubic meter (ug/m³) instead of the current 15 ug/m³. The Clean Air Act requires EPA decisions be "based on the best available science," warned University of Pittsburgh professor Bernard Goldstein. The EPA may have "illegally made an important regulatory decision without obtaining advice as to its scientific soundness from its congressionally-mandated scientific advisers."

Minnesota Legislators Push for the Publication of All Clinical Trial Results

Two Minnesota state legislators have introduced a measure that will require public posting of all clinical trial results, including those that fail. State Rep. John Lesch (D) and State Sen. John Hottinger (D) said their bill would [require disclosure of every clinical trial](#) conducted since 1990 when a new drug enters the market. "We think it's only fair that doctors and consumers have all the available results to make informed choices about the safety of these drugs," Lesch said. Drug companies currently report some of their clinical trial results to the FDA- those needed to get the drug approved and any post-market studies required by the regulatory agency. However, firms are not required to make those results public and usually only favorable results get published. Major drug companies have begun listing clinical trials [on a website](#), but critics say it is far from complete.

Data Quality Act Suffers Setback

According to Science Magazine, the Northern Virginia U.S. Court of Appeals last week rejected a Salt Institute suit challenging a National Institutes of Health study that showed lower sodium intake lowers blood pressure and reduces heart disease. The suit was brought under the Data Quality Act, the business-backed 2000 law that opens government science findings to challenges based on the underlying data. Environmental and public interest groups hailed the ruling since DQA challenges have, for the most part, been used by business groups seeking to challenge the science behind health-related government regulations.

The Integrity in Science Database of Scientists and Organizations With Ties to Industry can be found at: www.integrityinscience.org.

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