Dr. William Glaze, Chair
EPA Science Advisory Board (1400A)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20460

Re: NATA – Evaluating the National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment 1996 Data – an SAB Advisory

Dear Dr. Glaze:

Thank you for your December 20, 2001 letter transmitting the subject Science Advisory Board (SAB) advisory. We appreciate the thoughtful suggestions and recommendations of the SAB on this important assessment and look forward to continuing to work with the SAB as we improve our understanding of air toxics and their associated risks.

The purpose of seeking an SAB advisory was to get feedback on the methodologies that we used for the 1996 assessment, and that we will continue to develop for use in future national-scale assessments. We asked the SAB to comment on the appropriateness of the methods used, and our application of these methods in the 1996 assessment. We requested this input in nine areas that spanned the entire assessment, including emissions estimates, dispersion modeling, exposure modeling, risk characterization, and risk communication. We sought SAB feedback early in our development of the National Air Toxics Assessment process in order to be able to apply the advice received to future risk-based analyses that will help guide the air toxics program in the future.

We agree with the SAB that this assessment "represents a new and significant advancement in the national capability for air toxics assessment" and thank the SAB for commending our "efforts and progress in addressing such a broad and difficult, but important task." We also strongly agree with the assertion of the Panel that the "NATA's potential to identify the types of further data needed for its estimates is particularly important in motivating industry, States, concerned citizens and the Agency to expand their data collection and reporting effort."

In its report, the SAB Panel makes a number of recommendations, categorizing them into either near-term (i.e., applying either to the 1996 NATA or the NATA process in general), mid- term (i.e., applying to efforts for the 1999 NATA), or long-term (i.e., applying to research and methods improvement needed for future NATA assessments beyond 1999.) We intend to act on all the near-term recommendations, incorporating them either directly into the publication of 1996 NATA

results on the Internet or into short-term studies whose results would be published in technical reports and linked to the NATA website. Additionally, we are already looking into incorporating some of the SAB mid-term recommendations into our 1999 NATA efforts, and we plan to publish a series of technical reports to address these issues as appropriate when results become available. Finally, we are currently developing a long- term research strategy for air toxics that will depend heavily on the long-term recommendations in the SAB report on NATA. Our strategy for air toxics research will be reviewed by the SAB later this year.

We greatly appreciate the tabular summary of recommendations provided at the end of the advisory's executive summary. This table will help us track our progress in addressing your recommendations. Rather than provide detailed responses to all the tabulated recommendations, we have enclosed a summary of our responses to each of the nine key areas identified in your cover letter.

This SAB advisory will help us to improve the 1996 National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment, to continue to develop and apply new methodologies that will support stronger assessments in the future, and to improve the focus of our research program for air toxics. Again, thank you for your letter. I appreciate the opportunity to be of service and trust the information provided is helpful.

Sincerely,

Christine Todd Whitman

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Mitchell J. Small

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CONTROL NO. AX-0111212 DUE DATE: 2/22/02