

PBT Drafting Team Conference Call Summary March 22, 2005, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm Central Time

Participants: Ted Smith, Laura Rauwerda, Melissa Hulting, Mike Murray, Sue Brauer, Matt Hudson, Jennifer Zewatsky, Joe DePinto, Jon Dettling, Beth Murphy, Liz LaPlante

Introduction and Meeting Agenda

Ted Smith began the teleconference with a discussion of the action items that were developed at Maumee Bay. Many of these action items were clearly redundant, and some were more significant than others in terms of achieving the team's goals. Each of these action items has been assigned a priority level of 1, 2, or 3 in the Excel spreadsheet that Ted distributed to the group on Monday, March 21. Items ranked "1" are of the highest priority, while those ranked "3" are low priority or outside the scope of the team. Ted asked for comments from the rest of the group on the rankings that have been assigned.

Review of PBT Team Action Items

Team members have not had sufficient time to completely review the action item list, though several comments were offered. A suggestion was made to change the wording used for the ranking categories and to separate the issue of actions that are ongoing vs. actions that are not. Melissa Hulting responded that the ranking categories are tentative at this point and do not necessarily reflect the wording that will be used in the Strategy. She stated that, in terms of activities that are already occurring, the key is to differentiate between activities that are fairly safe and will continue without additional funding from those that will require additional resources to continue. Some ongoing activities may be assigned a priority ranking of 1 if they will be unable to continue without extra support. Ted suggested that the team assess each action from multiple angles: 1) how important the item is, 2) whether resources are in place to support the action, and 3) the status of those resources. Dale Bryson, in his comments last week, raised a concern that the PBT Team is going to miss the opportunity to ask for additional resources to fund ongoing regulatory programs. Ted thinks that Dale's comments were valid.

Joe DePinto suggested that actions be ranked relative to individual chemicals. Activities may be ranked differently when applied to chemicals that have been studied extensively versus chemicals of emerging concern, for which existing programs may or may not be sufficient. A great deal of information has been collected on chemicals covered by the Great Lakes Binational Toxics Strategy (GLBTS) and other programs. The team's actions should be prioritized differently for those. Modeling activities, for example, would be more important for chemicals of emerging concern than for current priority pollutants. Ted suggested to Joe that the current list of action items already reflects a priority for contaminants of emerging concern in the assessment categories. Under "Monitoring," for example, one item with a priority ranking of "1" suggests creating a Great Lakes-specific Health and Nutrition Examination Study, similar to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Study (NHANES). Such an activity would include emerging contaminants.

Melissa suggested that people e-mail comments on the action items list. If possible, team members should focus on rewriting existing actions rather than adding new ones, since so many are redundant.

Laura Rauwerda asked why an effort has not been initiated to identify the impacts of activities mandated by federal and state programs (e.g., industrial pretreatment of wastewater) on the status of existing pollutants in the Great Lakes. She suggested adding a summary action focusing on the positive impacts of regulations on discharges to water and air. Such an action would reflect how to build on the programs that have achieved some success. Melissa reminded Laura that the presentations at Maumee Bay were intended to reflect the status of current activities and programs and that white paper authors were asked to provide a gap analysis of their respective programs. Laura stated that program successes should be included in the action list, as well as gaps. Melissa reminded PBT Team members that she is counting on them to tell her which programs are working and which ones are not, since they are experts in their fields and have a good sense of what needs to be done.

The team discussed how current regulatory programs could be evaluated. Ted suggested that a regulatory analysis would be fairly straightforward for current priority pollutants, such as mercury, dioxin, and PCBs. Such an analysis would be far more difficult for emerging contaminants. Discussion returned to Joe DePinto's earlier suggestion of splitting the action list to separate emerging contaminants from current priority pollutants. Sue Brauer noted that actions for existing chemicals will differ from those for emerging pollutants; therefore, splitting them would not be necessary. Ted reminded the group that the drafting team initially contemplated separating the strategy into two segments: one for current chemicals and one for emerging contaminants.

Joe DePinto raised the issue that the team might be criticized for failing to take positive reduction actions on emerging chemicals. He suggested that it is important to avoid that criticism by emphasizing that actions will be taken when sufficient information exists to predict that they will have a positive impact.

Ted reminded the group that it has four or five weeks to organize a written draft. He asked the team to spend the next few days reviewing the actions and determining whether they have been ranked appropriately. After that, the drafting team can put the action items in a matrix and begin to identify resource needs. It will also be important to determine which program will be responsible for developing and implementing each action. Ted commented that the resource analysis may not need to be completed by April 21, but that is unclear at this point. Melissa asked the group to review actions and make comments by the end of the week, if possible. Melissa Hulting asked the group to contemplate, when reviewing each action, whether a program is already in place to address the activity. If so, the reviewer should consider whether a subsequent action should be added to suggest strengthening or increasing funding for that program. Liz LaPlante observed that the PBT Team's action matrix virtually replicates material developed by the chemical committee for the Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP) of 2000; therefore, the LaMP might be a good model to use.

The group discussed whether the actions on the list were comprehensive with regard to the team's goals. Sue Brauer and Laura Rauwerda commented that something may be

missing, but they are unsure as to what that might be. Laura emphasized the need for connectedness in the team's final product. The team briefly discussed pollution prevention and technical assistance programs and whether they were covered sufficiently in the action list.

Mike Murray suggested reorganizing the structure of the list to reflect the action categories covered by the white papers. Within each category, actions could then be separated by specific chemicals. Certain actions would cover multiple chemicals. Such a cross-cutting approach could address both priority and emerging chemicals at the same time. Ted responded that reorganizing the action items into white paper categories could be an interesting exercise that prompts reviewers to identify missing items.

Ted initiated a discussion of how a basin watch list of emerging chemicals could be developed. He asked the group if there is a way to create a short list of emerging contaminants that can be analyzed in fish or wastewater effluent. Mike Murray proposed a two-part recommendation: 1) conduct chemical screening activities or review information that has already been collected and 2) monitor for specific chemicals in wastewater effluent. The group then discussed how monitoring is conducted at wastewater treatment plants. Some of these facilities routinely monitor for emerging contaminants, even though they are not required to by law. Actions should be worded to reflect a collaboration or partnership with wastewater treatment plants. Ted commented that the team needs to consider the resource implications of its suggested actions and how assistance can be provided to wastewater treatment plants so that they do not bear the full burden of evaluating the status of emerging chemicals.

Review of Wildlife Goal

Melissa asked if the team wanted to discuss Laura's addition of a wildlife goal. Ted responded that he likes the goal and thinks it is an appropriate addition. Mike Murray suggested adding "fish" to the goal, since fish health is sometimes a direct issue. Ted replied that the wording can be changed to read "aquatic and terrestrial wildlife." The group agreed.

Follow-Up Actions

Team members were asked to continue reviewing the action item list and making comments on the website. Ted and Melissa will reorganize the action list, possibly in multiple ways. They will send a revised draft list to the team by the end of this week and resume working on it next week. The short-term goal is to have as comprehensive a list as possible by the end of this week. Ted will attempt to cancel the full PBT Team call next week and hold a drafting team call instead.