

**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF**

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**HEARING ON**

**Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS)**

**Before the**

**THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**June 11, 2009, 1:00 p.m.**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Dr. Kevin Teichman, the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science in EPA's Office of Research and Development. I am also the Acting EPA Science Adviser, and in this role I serve as a member of the Office of Science and Technology Policy's (OSTP's) Task Force on Scientific Integrity. I appreciate this opportunity to appear at this hearing and discuss with you EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS). In this written testimony, I will include a brief description of the recent history of the IRIS program as well as discuss some of the highlights of the new IRIS process that was announced by EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson on May 21, 2009.

Before I begin, I would like to thank Congressman Miller and this Subcommittee on behalf of EPA, and personally, for support of the IRIS program. The importance of a functioning and successful IRIS program to the health of the American people was acknowledged by this Subcommittee in two past hearings and by Chairman Miller's introduction of H.R. 7234, the *Integrated Risk Information System Authorization Act*. Since the purpose of IRIS is to provide timely, high quality, and accessible human health

risk information on environmental contaminants that may endanger the health of the American public, your continued interest in the future of the IRIS program is greatly appreciated.

IRIS is one of EPA's most successful and most public products. IRIS has been a highly regarded resource for providing information on the potential human health risks from long-term exposure to various contaminants. The IRIS assessments used by EPA's Program Offices and Regions are the science foundation for Agency actions to protect human health. IRIS assessments are also used by risk assessors and environmental and health professionals in state and local governments, as well as internationally. Because of the widespread recognition and use of IRIS risk information, it is of utmost importance that the process used to develop this information, and the resulting assessments posted on IRIS, reflect the highest possible standards for scientific quality and integrity, transparency, and timeliness.

On April 10, 2008, a new IRIS process was created via a memorandum from former Deputy Administrator Marcus Peacock that codified the IRIS process. This process introduced additional, time-consuming steps, some of which were not transparent to the public.

On January 26, 2009, Lisa P. Jackson was sworn in as EPA's 11<sup>th</sup> Administrator. On January 23, 2009, Administrator-Designee Jackson wrote to all EPA staff that, "*As Administrator, I will ensure EPA's efforts to address the environmental crises of today are rooted in three fundamental values: science-based policies and programs, adherence to the rule of law, and overwhelming transparency. By keeping faith with these values and unleashing innovative, forward-thinking approaches – we can further protect neighborhoods and communities throughout the country.*" Coming from careers at both EPA and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Administrator Jackson recognized the critical role that EPA plays in disseminating timely, high quality, and accessible human health risk information on environmental contaminants. Thus, one of her highest priorities was to take the necessary steps to strengthen and revitalize the process by which EPA develops and disseminates human health risk information.

On May 21, 2009, just four months after coming to EPA, Administrator Jackson announced a new IRIS process that is more responsive to the needs of the Agency in its work to effectively and efficiently protect the health of all Americans. The new IRIS assessment development process, which was implemented immediately, is more streamlined, transparent, and timely, and will ensure the highest level of scientific integrity. It will rely primarily on an opportunity for public review and comment followed by a rigorous, open, and independent external peer review process to guarantee the scientific quality of the IRIS assessments.

There are several aspects of the new process that I would like to highlight. The first is that the new IRIS process will be entirely managed by EPA. Second, there is no longer an opportunity for another federal agency to prolong the assessment process by asking that additional research be conducted before an assessment can proceed. Instead, EPA will announce the chemicals that will be assessed far enough in advance so that any interested party could conduct short-term studies that could add to the peer-reviewed scientific literature for that chemical. Third, all scientific comments from other federal agencies and White House offices will become part of the public record for that chemical assessment. Opportunities for scientific comment by other federal agencies and White House offices was maintained in the new process, because EPA welcomes input from interested experts that may add to the science quality of the draft or final assessment.

Finally, the assessment process has been streamlined to ensure that more new and updated assessments are included on IRIS. While still robust, the assessment development process for most chemicals will be shortened to 23 months, speeding the availability of IRIS assessments to the human health risk assessor community and the public.

There are two aspects that were retained in the new process. First, is the opportunity for any interested party to provide information to EPA prior to the external peer review meeting. These listening sessions, announced in the *Federal Register*, allow all interested parties to present scientific and technical comments on draft IRIS health

assessments to EPA and other interested parties during the public comment period and before the external peer review meeting. EPA has found the listening sessions to be a valuable step in public outreach and participation. The listening session comments are considered by the Agency as it revises the draft assessment in response to the independent external peer review and public comments. As with scientific comments from other federal agencies, listening session comments become part of the public record. Second, changes in EPA's scientific judgments from public comments and peer review will be clearly documented and explained, maximizing the transparency of the final product.

Finally, to give this new process an added boost, the Administrator has directed that for fiscal year 2010, resources for the IRIS program should be increased, and the President's budget request includes an additional \$5 million and 10 FTEs for the IRIS program.

EPA remains dedicated to listening and being responsive to the public, to independent experts, and to scientists in other federal science agencies as it develops IRIS human health assessments. The ability of EPA's IRIS program to succeed has been significantly improved now that some steps have been removed or revised. EPA is confident that we can continue to provide the critical human health risk information to EPA's Programs and Regions that ensure the Agency's actions protect the public health.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you EPA's new and improved IRIS program. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.