

(via e-mail)

**DATE:** March 1, 2001

**TO:** Dr. McArthur Floyd  
Chair, ESCOP

Dr. Colien Hefferan  
Administrator, USDA-CSREES

Dr. James Wade  
Chair, ECOP

**FROM:** Dr. Eldon Ortman  
Dr. Richard Wootton  
Co-Chairs, Agriculture and the Environment Task Force

**SUBJECT:** Environmental Initiative Task Force Report

ESCOP, ECOP and CSREES appointed a joint Task Force in the Fall of 2000 to create an environmental "think tank" and to define how such an effort might be organized. The essence of our response to the charge is reported in Appendix A. Appendix B addresses an immediate opportunity presented by Dr. Rodney Brown's presence in Washington to work with NASA and CSREES. Appendix C is a paper that was drafted by Terry Nipp and May Naddaf. From this paper, Appendices A and B were drafted. The last Appendix, D, represents a formal response to questions presented to the Task Force following preliminary discussion of recommendations at the Annual NASULGC meeting in November 2000.

Much has happened since the task force was appointed. There is a new administration in Washington. The C-FAR group is more organized. Dr. Sam Smith has continued to work with Land-Grant presidents on the Food and Society initiative. Dr. Rodney Brown is in Washington for the next year. C-FAR, Food and Society and Dr. Brown's efforts are all designed to bring new resources to the Land-Grant system. In light of these efforts, a joint meeting of the Executive Committees of ESCOP and ECOP might be timely to look at how all of the initiatives fit together and how they may compliment each other.

**Appendix A**  
**Summary of February 13, 2001, Meeting**  
**Prepared by Eldon Ortman and Richard Wootton**

**Joint Agriculture and the Environment Task Force**

The Task Force has discussed and reviewed a concept paper which would provide a mechanism for technical think tank teams to be constructed with AES and CES membership for the purpose of developing pre-proposals or white papers on timely and emerging issues that the Land-Grant System could appropriately address through research and education.

A Board of Directors, functioning as a sub-unit of the Science and Technology Committee of ESCOP, would review ideas and recommendations for think tank activity and appoint technical think tank teams (T4) to further develop the idea into a pre-proposal, white paper, or grant proposal. The Board of Directors would include four members appointed by ESCOP and a like number appointed by ECOP. The Board

might be incorporated as a non-profit entity and apply for and receive foundation and federal grants/contracts.

An Executive Director, such as an IPA with adequate resource support, would be responsible for the logistical work of arranging for two to three Board meetings annually and for convening think tanks as required.

The Science and Technology Committee of ESCOP represents a connection between the Board and the research community; the ECOP Program Resources Committee may represent an appropriate linkage to the extension network.

While the initial intent of this work was to find a way to maintain the momentum provided by SUNEI, the think tank concept could work with a wide range of issues to provide research and outreach opportunities within any proposed project.

The Executive Director would maintain liaison with CSREES national program leaders and invite their participation on appropriate technical think tank teams. The Executive Director would also maintain communications with the ECOP and ESCOP budget and legislative committees and with AESOP. While the technical think tank teams or the Board of Directors would not necessarily have major responsibility for funding the proposals developed through this process, their suggestions, leads and documents would be used to pursue funding opportunities.

A number of issues were identified as candidates for utilizing technical think tank teams as discussed above. The Board of Directors could make an initial contact with public and private organizations to explore areas where interests merge and a think tank would be helpful to more fully develop a concept paper. The groups include:

- C-FAR
- Legislative Committees of ESCOP/ECOP regarding the Farm Bill
- Board on Agriculture Farm Bill Working Group
- Clean Water Working Group
- National Farmer's cooperatives
- Farm Bureau
- Barnyard Coalition
- Sam Smith/Food and Society Initiative
- EPA
- NASA

**Appendix B**  
**Joint Agriculture and the Environment Task Force**  
**Prepared by Eldon Ortman and Richard Wootton**

This paper follows up on discussion by the Task Force, a draft paper developed by M. Naddaf and T. Nipp, and dialogue with Dr. Rodney Brown on February 13, 2001. Four timely issues emerged through discussion; individually or collectively the ideas may warrant formation of "think tank(s)" to develop a white paper or pre-proposal.

The issues offer the potential for USDA-CSREES, NASA and EPA to collaborate:

1. whole-farm planning for on-site waste containment

2. test strategies designed to achieve EPA water quality standards to verify efficacy
3. develop models to predict baseline natural resource, wildlife and woodland contamination of surface water so that man-induced causes could be better determined.
4. develop a model for assessing individual farm environmental factors to provide a meaningful research base.

The Task Force saw opportunity for Land-Grant Research and Extension to work with Dr. Brown in developing concept papers around the four issues so that discussions could be held with the three federal agencies to explore interest.

**Appendix C**  
**Joint Agriculture and the Environment Task Force**  
**Draft Implementation Plan**  
**2/13/01**  
**Prepared by M. Naddaf and T . Nipp**

### **Synopsis**

The Task Force has reviewed and approved a concept paper for developing a Think Tank and a proposal to focus on Environmental Management Systems. This paper provides a "first-cut" implementation plan, providing some administrative structure for the Think Tank and listing a series of activities for an Environmental Management Systems Team.

### **Forming the Think Tank**

The challenge is to get some critical activities underway with reasonable speed. Some structure is necessary to clarify who has authority to make decisions and provide guidance. On the other hand, it is important that we do not get lost and overly delayed setting up a new set of structures and processes. If the "Think Tank" is to be successful, it needs some minimum structure that can be modified and expanded through time as needed.

#### Board of Directors

We propose a Board of Directors with eight members, with four members selected by ECOP and four members selected by ESCOP. The Board of Directors would request ex officio representation from USDA CSREES, ARS and ERS. As well, ex officio representatives would be requested from USDA/ NRCS, EPA, NASA and NSF as appropriate to specific projects.

#### Technical Teams

Technical Teams will be appointed by the Board on a project-by-project basis. Teams will be formed and dissolved as they complete specific tasks. The first team will be formed to address Environmental Management Systems, described below.

#### Staff Support

There are inadequate resources to cover a full-time Executive Director with staff support. We suggest the current limited resources be targeted to facilitating critical events and activities. As outside resources are

raised by the Think tank to support specific projects and activities, staff support can be expanded as appropriate.

#### Incorporation

The Think Tank needs to incorporate as a non-profit entity to be able to receive foundation grants and federal contracts. May Naddaf can provide the necessary paperwork and file for incorporation.

### **Environmental Management Systems**

#### Technical Team

The Board should create an Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Technical Team to assist in addressing Environmental Management Systems. This Team should include one research administrator and one extension administrator that will serve as a liaison to the appropriate ECOP/ESCOP and Board on Agriculture Committees. Specialists should be included from the Farm\*A\*Syst IFAFS project, the ISU/Texas A&M project, the North Carolina FRA Waste Management project, and the ECOP/ESCOP Animal Waste Management team. Appropriate staff from USDA/CSREES, ARS, ERS, NRCS, EPA and NASA should be identified as ex officio members.

#### Policy Opportunities

Once formed, representatives from the EMS Team need to meet with the Bush Administration's Environmental Transition Team to discuss the role of EMS in addressing policy issues facing EPA and USDA. Terry Nipp has had preliminary discussions with some members of the transition team. Members of the EMS Team need to meet with the new appointees in EPA, USDA, and NASA to discuss the role of EMS in meeting agency goals.

The EMS Team also needs to engage in exploratory discussions with key House and Senate staff.

#### Current Land Grant Efforts

Various of our Land Grant Universities are already engaged in industry/interest group coalitions that plan to address EMS issues in the Farm Bill and in response to EPA's TMDL programs. Linkages to these activities should be built into the membership of the EMS team. Representatives of the EMS team should meet with the Clean Water Working Group, the National Farmers' Cooperatives, the Farm Bureau, the Barnyard Coalition and others.

#### Food and Society Initiative

The Think Tank and the EMS project needs to be coordinated with the NASULGC President's Food and Society Initiative. Terry Nipp and May Naddaf have met with the CGA and NASULGC staff that are working with the President's, particularly with those working on the President's Environment Committee. Terry and May have reviewed the notes currently developed by the Environment Committee and will participate in upcoming teleconferences. There is hope on both sides that the ongoing results of the EMS project can be funneled directly into the activities of the Presidents.

#### National C-FAR Efforts and the Farm Bill

The recently formed National C-FAR group has committed to doubling agriculture research and extension funding accounts over the next five years. They are willing to discuss including some portion of this

increase in the agricultural base line (mandatory programs). This is a new and substantial opportunity that may cause more direct linkage between some of our funding streams and the production and conservation titles of the Farm Bill. EMS will likely be a substantial part of the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill, with linkages to the Research/Extension Title and EPA Waste Management Programs. The EMS Team needs to meet with the National C-FAR leadership and establish liaison linkages to the NASULGC Board on Agriculture Farm Bill Working Group.

#### CNIE

The Coalition that supported the creation of a National Institute of the Environment now supports funding for environmental research in NSF. Terry Nipp has been participating in meetings of the Coalition, which have included workshops on environmental education. The Coalition is aware of the possible formation of the Think Tank and the EMS teams and has welcomed the opportunity to explore linkages with their activities, on the Team is formed.

#### USDA

There is a NRCS/ARS/CSREES team that is looking at the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill. The EMS Team should meet with this USDA team and ad hoc and ex officio linkages should be established as appropriate. The EMS Team should meet with Dr. Foil and Dr. Brown of CSREES, as well as others, to explore how the EMS Team and the Think Tank can be helpful. Both Dr. Foil and Dr. Brown are aware of the Think Tank concept and have expressed interest in working with this emerging concept.

#### EPA

The EMS Team should meet with appropriate agency managers to discuss the relevance of their activities to critical policy issues, particularly the animal waste management issues.

#### NASA

Once formed, the EMS Team should meet with Rod Brown and discuss the most effective ways to link the EMS project to NASA's GIS and remote sensing initiatives. Subsequent meetings with NASA managers should follow.

#### Congress

Meetings with Congressional Members and staff will occur, but these will be exploratory and educational. No advocacy activities will be pursued by the EMS Team or the Think Tank. In the course of iterative meetings with agencies and interest groups, draft reports and proposals for action will be developed by the EMS Team. These proposals and reports will be shared with the ECOP/ESCOP Chairs and Legislative Committees and the Board on Agriculture Farm Bill Working Group. Proposed legislation or funding strategies resulting from these reports will come from the ECOP/ESCOP/Board on Agriculture Committees.

#### **List of Events**

As described above, a series of specific events need to occur in the coming year. A list of activities that will require funding or staff support follows.

Board of Directors. Will need to have formation meeting, with a minimum of three total meetings per year, supplemented by teleconferences.

EMS Technical Team. The EMS Team will need to have a formation meeting with several Team meetings and numerous teleconferences. Several representatives of the EMS Team will need to come to DC for a series of meetings. The EMS Team will need to facilitate several round table discussions and possibly a workshop.

Small group meetings. Several representatives of the EMS Team will need to be involved in a number of small group meetings, including meetings with

- \* The Transition team
- \* USDA, EPA and NASA appointees and program managers.
- \* Washington based interest groups, including the Farm Bureau and the Farmer's Cooperatives.
- \* Congressional Committee Members and staff.

Representatives from the EMS Team will need to participate in stakeholder input sessions being developed by the Farm\*a\*syst team and activities planned by the Barnyard Coalition.

Round Tables and Workshops. The EMS Team will be asked to facilitate roundtables and workshops by farm and environmental groups to further explore the relation of the Conservation Title and EPA

#### Outcomes

The EMS Team should report to the Think Tank, which in turn will report back to ECOP, ESCOP and the Board on Agriculture. In regards to the EMS project, products should include:

- \* A paper on the potential role of EMS in the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill, to be provided to the Board on Agriculture Farm Bill Working Group.
- \* A paper on the role of EMS in addressing EPA's animal waste management goals, to be provided to the ECOP/ESCOP Budget and Legislative Committees.
- \* A paper on possible areas of EMS collaboration and funding between NASA, EPA and USDA, to be provided to the President's Food and Society Initiative as well as ECOP, ESCOP and the Board on Agriculture.
- \* An activities report on meetings with interest groups and agency officials, to be provided to ECOP and ESCOP.

#### Budget and Staff Support

Efforts should be made to secure foundation and agency support for specific workshops and roundtables. Available resources should be leveraged with additional external funding streams, if possible.

Because the Think Tank strives to be policy relevant, the Think Tank and the staff support for the EMS project should be located in Washington DC. Staff support should be provided to augment the formation of the Board and the EMS Team with the remainder of the resources being made available to leverage outside support to cover the costs of roundtables and events. Staff support may be expanded to cover events as they occur. We recommend co-locating the Think Tank with AESOP, to take advantage of shared office support and the proximity of AESOP staff to the policy process.

Oversight of the budget should reside with the Board of Directors, who would file an annual report to ECOP and ESCOP. The Board would oversee and approve funding for staff and budgets for specific activities, such as roundtables and workshops.

**Appendix D**  
**REPORT TO ESCOP from the Joint ESCOP/ECOP Environmental Initiative Task Force**  
**TASK FORCE'S RESPONSES TO THE CHAIR'S 10 QUESTIONS**

1. How might the proposed activities be coordinated with the anticipated activities of Rod Brown, who will soon be joining CSREES and NASA to work on similar issues?

There is strong interest in maintaining open communication with all initiatives that are attempting to gain support for research and education activities relating to environmental issues. Rod Brown met with the Task Force February 13 and discussed opportunities for interaction.

2. How might the proposed activities be coordinated with the announced plan of Rodney Foil to work more closely with other "partner" agencies to jointly fund some competitive grant activities through IFAFS?

There is agreement within the Task Force that direct communication with CSREES, and especially with the leadership of IFAFS is critically important. We see opportunity for providing public comment on future RPFs from NASA, EPA and other federal agencies and support efforts to sustain or obtain resources. Task Force has consulted with R. Foil.

3. How might the proposed activities be coordinated with the "Sam Smith" Food and Society initiative, sponsored by NASULGC?

Informal conversations with Sam Smith have already been held. So far he has given us encouragement for the concept of forming a Think Tank. However, more detailed discussions will be needed. It is anticipated that the proposed Think Tank can contribute in planning the content and strategies of the Food and Society Initiative. Recommend sharing draft documents with Smith for comment.

4. Is there agreement among these relatively independent activities that your proposed activities will best meet their (i.e., Brown, Foil, and Smith) collective needs? Are there activities other than a think tank (i.e., staff support, travel supplements) that they would prefer instead?

Conversations among these leaders are ongoing. We believe that the proposed Think Tank will compliment these activities. We would suggest that the role of the proposed Think Tank will be one of support and facilitation. It is expected that the Think Tank will anticipate and frame an agenda for ECOP/ESCOP. This approach should help to improve the value of the Think Tank to others, and reduce concerns for competing interests.

5. What might be a mechanism to provide the think tank activity with managerial oversight?

At issue here is gaining the "corporate history" of past steering committee activities while fully integrating Cooperative Extension into the new activities. We are giving consideration to forming an oversight/governing board for the proposed Think Tank. It is important for this to be an integrated activity that provides linkages to both past and current ECOP and ESCOP initiatives/activities, for example, SUNEI and ECOP/Forestry Liaison Team.

6. What accountability system could be put in place to assure SAES directors that they are getting full measure for their present contributions?

We have been advised by individuals associated with SUNEI that unrealistic expectations were held by some directors who thought large amounts of new dollars would be available in a year or less from the Initiative's beginning. We have been cautioned to be more realistic in setting out the deliverables for the proposed Think Tank. We will be focusing on stating the kinds of reports, meetings, and activities that would contribute to success through other initiatives (such as C-FAR and Food and Society initiatives). The Think Tank should be prepared to give periodic reports to ECOP/ESCOP on our accomplishments and progress on agreed deliverables.

7. What is the position of the task force regarding proposals to postpone the next round of invoicing of SAES directors to late 2001?

We agree that until a plan, for example, the proposed Think Tank or other option, is agreed to by ECOP/ESCOP and put in place, any invoicing of SAES directors should be put on hold.

8. What might be the reaction of extension directors to sharing the costs of future activities of this initiative?

It is anticipated that institutions would cover the costs for participation of their faculty on the Think Tank if other funding mechanisms cannot be identified. This question needs to be explored further with deans and directors.

9. What "deliverables" should be expected from the new activity, in the sense of products, services, timetables, milestones, and benefits?

A plan for outcomes from the proposed Board of Directors for the Think Tank will need to be developed by the Board of Directors and agreed by ECOP/ESCOP. This plan should include descriptions of planned activities, services, contacts, and strategies for partnering, along with other items yet to be identified.

10. How and to whom should the SAES funds now at the University of Maryland be moved relative to the new activities, giving attention to fiscal accountability and programmatic efficiency?

We propose that the current balance be held at the University of Maryland until agreement is reached on the structure and operation of the proposed Think Tank. Once there is programmatic agreement, the funds can be transferred to a location suitable for project management, program accountability and fiscal audit purposes. To facilitate making a decision on the future direction(s) for the Environmental Initiative it is recommended that ESCOP leadership be provided an accounting, a current report on the funds at University of Maryland.