2011 Annual Report of the SETAC North America (NA) Life Cycle Assessment Advisory Group

Committee: Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)
From: Jane C. Bare (bare.jane@epa.gov), Chair
Date: Nov. 11, 2011
Reporting period: November 2010 to Nov 2011

Long-term goal

The mission of the SETAC LCA Advisory Group is to advance the science, practice, and application of LCAs to reduce the resource consumption and environmental burdens associated with products, packaging, processes, or activities. To achieve this mission, the SETAC LCA Advisory Group will:

1. Serve as a focal point to provide a broad-based forum for the identification, resolution, and communication of issues regarding LCAs; and

2. Facilitate, coordinate, and provide guidance for the development, implementation, and communication of LCA and its use.

Short-term goals

- Revitalize membership and interest in LCA
- Initiate focus groups on topics of current high interest to LCA community

Accomplishments

This is the first full year of the revitalized LCA Advisory Group following newly elected members in 2010. Seven Steering Committee members were elected and a chair and co-chair chosen. Our accomplishments this year are summarized below.

During the Portland meeting the previous mission statement was discussed and modified as reflected above. A brainstorming session was held to focus further research and direction. Nearly everyone in attendance participated in this exercise. The focus was first on Strengths, then Weaknesses and finally Action Items. All ideas were recorded and then the weaknesses were further rearranged into the bolded topics below. When action items were developed, it became obvious that there was some overlap with the UNEP/SETAC LCA Initiative and SETAC NA members were encouraged to become more involved in these working groups.

The brainstorming session resulted in the following action items.

1. Reach out and coordinate with UNEP/SETAC, especially on priorities listed above. Get NA AG member(s) to participate and become more familiar with methods and people working on land use, water use, social LCA, metals, data.
2. Pre-SETAC workshop on Communications (line items above) for LCA practitioners. This could be a precursor to a Sustainability Communications session at World Congress.
3. Develop guidance document related to how to use LCIA for improved decision making. Try to find a way to systematically incorporate decision analysis and theory. Could be an outcome of workshop (#2 above)
4. Encourage / guide data collection priorities via SETAC platform sessions. Form a team and develop SETAC sessions with targeted platform sessions related to data and R&D (line items above). Would involve recruiting specific speakers to address chosen topics.
5. Form a team (with workshop) to develop and write a collaborative review paper on data availability, gaps, and criteria that should be used to evaluate data. OR Advisory group uses topic area to invite speakers and have a session. OR both (have a session, then have a team write the paper).
6. Provide either a short course or session which gives LCA overview for those who don't have an LCA background. LCA 101 or Sustainability 101 sessions.

7. Team to determine the options for how to address peer review and auditing of LCA studies.
8. Team, WS, paper to make recommendations about communicating results, when to use, and how to develop further Consequential vs. Attributional methods.
9. Team, WS, and/or paper on LCA for emerging technologies and methodologies.

The chair sent out a call for interest in each of the above 9 action items and received very few replies and volunteers. Discussions within the Steering Committee lead to a reorganization and prioritization of the action items and the following four items have become the focus areas for the upcoming year:

Four Focus Teams:

- Develop guidance document related to how to use LCIA for improved decision making. Try to find a way to systematically incorporate decision analysis and theory. Investigate normalization and weighting. Could be an outcome of workshop.
- LCI data issues focusing on needs and developing recommendations for data development, integration models, handling missing data, and use.
- LCA Auditing team to develop recommendations for peer review and auditing of LCA studies, including whether there should be a certification for peer reviewers or auditors and how that should be implemented.
- Team, workshop and/or paper on LCA for emerging technologies and methodologies. Anticipatory LCA. High risk – low probability impacts. High uncertainty. No standardized methodologies.

Recruitment of additional interest in these focus teams will be a key item on the agenda during the two organized LCA Advisory Group meeting at the 2011 SETAC Annual meeting. The first meeting will be held for on-site attendees only on Tuesday, and the second meeting will have a teleconference line available for offsite attendees. Other LCA events at the Annual meeting in 2011 include: a half-day Introductory LCA course, a session on Life Cycle Impact Assessment, and entries to the Poster display.

An LCIA workshop has been proposed as an option during Fall 2012. The workshop is still under development, but is expected to be approximately 3 days ong and focus on the current state-of-the-science and the link to applications of LCA (e.g., Product Category Rules).

Additional activities which have received attention this year include:
Ties to the LCA Advisory Group to the Industrial Society of Industrial Ecology,
The relationship between the North American LCA Advisory Group and the Global Coordination Committee,
Potential collaboration with other Advisory Groups (e.g., Sustainability).

2010-2012 LCA Steering Committee members

1. Jane Bare, US EPA (chair)	USA	Govt
2. Scott Butner, Pacific Northwest Laboratory (co-chair)	USA	Govt
3. Christopher Bradley, BASF	USA	Private Sector
4. Lise Laurin, Earthshift	USA	Private Sector
5. Pascal Lesage, CIRAIG	Canada	University
6. Thomas Seager, Arizona State University	USA	University
7. Annie Weisbrod, Procter and Gamble	USA	Private Sector

All were newly elected in 2010.