

October 17, 1994

EPA-SAB-EC-COM-095-001

Honorable Carol M. Browner
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Ms. Browner:

The Science Advisory Board (SAB) notes with interest your leadership in the Women in the Environment workshop to be held in Oakland, CA next month, and in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing, China next year.

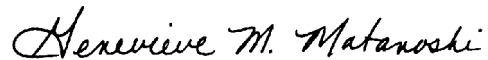
The SAB encourages a rigorous examination of scientific and technical issues related to women and the environment. Quite frankly, this is an area of study that is more marked by ignorance than insight and better characterized by neglect than knowledge. Recent reports from the World Health Organization, the National Academy of Sciences, and others document the systematic lack of knowledge about female-specific aspects of fields as diverse as animal testing, human testing, and exposures, both in the home and occupational settings.

Women have some obvious differences that may make them more--or less--susceptible than men to the effects of environmental insults. Their vital role in reproduction and support of the growing fetus is recognized but not completely studied. Even less well established is the importance of hormonal differences, physiological changes, and behavioral patterns in women which have the potential to affect the manner and magnitude of sex-specific responses to agents in the environment. Women also experience exposures which can qualitatively and quantitatively different from exposures experienced by men. Further, the role of women in altering public attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection has not been developed, despite the major part that women play in early education of the population.

While people may disagree about the magnitude of the impact resulting from this lack of knowledge, it cannot be denied that these gaps exist. In order to make progress, leaders such as yourself need to point out the problems and then move forward aggressively to address them.

Again, the SAB commends your initiative on this matter and stands ready to assist you through direct advice, review of Agency documents, or any other way that could be helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Genevieve M. Matanoski". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Genevieve Matanoski, M.D., Dr.P.H.
Chair, Science Advisory Board