WASHINGTON, DC, August 3, 2007 – A voluntary stewardship program for nanoscale materials as proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency drew comments from Kristen Kulinowski, director of the International Council on Nanotechnology (ICON), at an EPA public meeting August 2.

ICON is an international, multi-stakeholder organization dedicated to the safe, responsible and beneficial development of nanotechnology. Its members come from academia, industry, non-governmental organizations and government. The organization is a part of the Center for Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology at Rice University, where Kulinowski also serves as executive director for policy.

The EPA meeting was held to discuss and receive comments on the development of the voluntary Nanoscale Materials Stewardship Program (NMSP) under the Toxic Substances Control Act. In July, the EPA released a concept paper on NMSP, a TSCA inventory paper, and an Information Collection Request for public review and comment.

Speaking on behalf of ICON, Kulinowski said that the organization "takes no formal position on the NMSP," but urged the EPA to take three steps with respect to nanoscale materials:

1) Develop a publicly accessible database of information gathered within its authority;
2) Structure any data collection requests to conform to published standards; and
3) Continue to gather data on as broad a range of nanoscale materials as possible.

"There is a need to substantially increase the knowledge base of the connections between nanoscale materials' physical and chemical properties and their interactions in biological and environmental settings," Kulinowski said, adding that this knowledge "could lead to novel methods for assessing risk."
ICON Director on EPA's Nanoscale Materials Stewardship Program – 2

ICON is working to develop an International NanoEHS Research Needs Assessment for nanoscale material biological and environmental interactions. This year, it held two workshops attended by dozens of experts from 10 countries and four continents to outline the research steps needed to provide predictive models within the next 10 years. The ultimate goal is to enable the design of biocompatible nanomaterials. A report on the results of both workshops will be issued this fall.

In the EPA meeting, Kulinowski urged that the information gathered under the NMSP be accessible to the public in a way that would protect confidential business information but would contain useful information for comparative purposes. This "would be a significant contribution to the public dialogue on nanoscale material impacts and would signal a strong commitment on the part of EPA to maintain openness and transparency on this important issue," she said.

She also encouraged the EPA to become involved in the development of "consensus standards" on safe applications of nanoscale materials. The full statement is available on http://icon.rice.edu.

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About ICON

The International Council on Nanotechnology (ICON) is an international, multi-stakeholder organization whose mission is to develop and communicate information regarding potential environmental and health risks of nanotechnology thereby fostering risk reduction while maximizing societal benefit. The council has evolved into a network of scholars, industrialists, government officials and public interest advocates who share information and perspectives on a broad range of issues at the intersection of nanotechnology and environment, health and safety. We maintain a public portal for information on nanomaterial environment, health and safety (EHS) at http://icon.rice.edu.