

The Institute Review

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Editor-In-Chief
Pat Conlon, Environmental Standards

First Quarter 2009

Miami Meeting Wrap-Up and Looking Forward to San Antonio

By Lara Autry, USEPA OSA and Jerry Parr, TNI

What a beautiful location and wonderful success the *Forum on Laboratory Accreditation (Forum)* in Miami, Florida proved to be January 12 – 17, 2009! With approximately 250 attendees, 13 exhibitors, and 2 meeting sponsors, the Forum was held in cooperation with the *Florida Society of Environmental Analysts*, *Florida Department of Health*, and *Florida Department of Environmental Protection* and provided an array of general sessions on hot topics of the community; working sessions of committees; training courses; and an Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) face-to-face meeting.

The major events from the week are summarized in other articles in this issue of The Institute Review. In addition:

- ◆ Judy Duncan provided a summary of TNI activities over the last six months.
- ◆ The Accreditation Body committee discussed the development of an associate Accreditation Body designation for those states who have incorporated elements of the TNI accreditation program within their state, but that are not NELAP-recognized Accreditation Bodies.
- ◆ The Proficiency Testing (PT) Board formed three (3) subcommittees for specific technical PT issues — whole effluent toxicity, air, and radiochemistry — and the PT committee would like to recruit additional members for these subcommittees.
- ◆ The On-Site Assessment committee presented a basic assessors training curriculum guide.

Presentations made at the Miami Forum are now available on the TNI website under *Conferences/ Previous Conferences*. Details about the various committee meetings can be found in the committee meeting minutes.

☆☆☆

Now, it is time to dust off those cowboy boots, grab the cowboy hat, and polish the belt buckles for the *Environmental Measurement Symposium* to be held at the Hyatt Regency San Antonio from August 10 – 14, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas! The combined meeting of the *25th Annual National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC)* and the *Forum on Laboratory Accreditation (Forum)* is in its third year and has been hailed as “...a meeting anyone in this business cannot afford to miss...” by many attendees from the past couple symposiums.

As the principal forum for addressing policy and technical issues affecting monitoring in all environmental media (i.e., water, air, soil, and wastes) and across all environmental programs, the focus for the NEMC portion of the meeting is *New Frontiers in Environmental Measurement*, which includes global topics of climate change, clean energy, and nanomaterials. Concurrent technical sessions will be held on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, like last year, with Wednesday



Contents below are linked directly to the article.

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Miami Meeting Wrap-Up and Looking Forward to San Antonio (cont.)

boasting a general session with very senior level speakers, whom will begin to be announced soon on the NEMC website at www.nemc.us.

With positive feedback from the Miami meeting on the workshop style sessions, the majority of the Forum will maintain this same structure. Proposed topics are currently:

- ◆ a ½ day for Labs Implementing the TNI Standard;
- ◆ a full-day on Proficiency Testing (PT) Issues, including Stationary Source Audit Samples (SSAS), fields of proficiency testing (FOPTs), laboratory frequency issues, and PT provider issues;
- ◆ a full-day Assessment Forum;
- ◆ a full-day on Accreditation Body (AB) issues, including the implementation of standards, building a national program (e.g., new ABs, associates), fields of accreditation (i.e., the SW-846 issue), and the national database;
- ◆ a ½ day on the National Environmental Field Accreditation Program (NEFAP); and
- ◆ a ½ day for committee and program reports.

Watch for registration details on both the TNI website (www.nelac-institute.org) and NEMC website (www.nemc.us) and be sure to make your reservations soon. This will be one meeting this year that you do not want to miss!!!!

Requests for Standards Interpretations (2003 NELAC Standard)

By Ilona Taunton, TNI

TNI has a process to help you get answers to questions you have about the 2003 NELAC Standard. Your questions can be submitted on the TNI website (www.nelac-institute.org - choose "Standards" and "Request for Interpretation"). Just complete the entry form, and your question(s) will automatically be logged in and sent for review to the NELAP Board Chair, Laboratory Accreditation Systems Committee (LASC) Chair and the LASC TNI Program Administrator.

This process has been in place since August 2008. There have been forty-six (46) questions submitted with over half of them answered. Each question is passed to a committee or board for consideration and then their response is reviewed by the NELAP Board prior to finalization. Our original intent was that questions be finalized and responded to within sixty (60) days. Though we have accomplished this in a few cases, most have taken longer as we have been learning to work through the process. When questions are answered, a letter is e-mailed to the original inquirer and the response is posted on the TNI website (i.e., choose "Standards" and "Interpretations and Clarifications"). Responses are organized by Chapter of the Standard. You can also view the actual Standard language from the website.

Please remember that any disputes between a laboratory and their Accreditation Body (AB) regarding accreditation are to be handled through the appropriate appeals process established by applicable state laws and regulations. We strongly encourage people to always contact their AB first when questions arise. The standards interpretation process is not meant to replace this vital communication.

Note: The processing of standard interpretation requests will be delayed this spring, as the NELAP Board and Expert Committees work to finalize and adopt the new TNI standards.



National Database Nears Completion

At the Miami meeting, the National Database Committee premiered a demonstration of the national database of accredited laboratories. When finalized, the database will allow users to easily view each laboratory's scope of accreditation down to the analyte level. There may also be an opportunity for laboratories to enter general information such as their website address, hours of operation, etc. The Committee and the TNI Board are now working through details on what level of accessibility should be granted to the various users of the database.

The database is expected to be fully operational this fall. The Committee is in the final stages of testing and preparing written documentation on the operation of the site. The Website Committee will then test the database and establish the look of the web page.



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Update on Frequency of Proficiency Testing

By Kirstin McCracken, TestAmerica

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Frequency Subcommittee was formed to gather and analyze data related to a potential change to the current requirement to analyze two (2) PT samples per year, per field of proficiency testing (FoPT) to a PT scheme that is less frequent. Details of the work of this subcommittee can be found in the 2008 third quarter issue of The Institute Review (click here [The Institute Review 3Q08](#)).

Over the last few months, the committee has continued to work on this topic and in Miami, the subcommittee announced they were currently working on another study intended to ascertain if there is a difference in pass/failure rates between NELAC and Non-NELAC accredited laboratories that analyzed two (2) PT samples per year. This new study is intended to separate any differences in performance that might be attributed to NELAC on-site assessments or laboratory implementation of a NELAC compliant quality system. Judy Morgan, a member of the subcommittee, also presented the results of her independent survey of NELAC-accredited laboratories, which included preliminary data on the laboratory's perspective on the costs and benefits of the TNI PT program.

Beginning in March of this year, the TNI PT Committee will use the objective data analysis studies from this subcommittee, along with other White Papers, international standards and other cost/benefit data associated with frequency of proficiency testing including information in the published literature, economic assessments of the impact of a change in frequency, and stakeholder opinions to determine whether the current PT frequency scheme should be changed. This comprehensive evaluation is expected to take several months and will include debate on the following key question: What is the purpose of proficiency testing in the context of the TNI laboratory accreditation program and what is the minimum number of PT studies needed to meet that purpose? If the committee decides the frequency needs to be changed, then the committee will begin work on a Working Draft Standard to be presented to the membership for their consideration no later than January 2010.

The committee plans to have completed their evaluation by August of this year and will provide an update at the TNI Meeting in San Antonio. The committee meets by teleconference the second Tuesday of every month. Any TNI member who wishes to participate in this effort is welcome to join the call by letting me know prior to the call.

The Emergence of TNI's Stationary Source Audit Sample Program

By Maria Friedman, TestAmerica

Stationary source testing is a field of environmental monitoring that measures the emissions of air pollutants from stationary sources, such as factories and power plants. To gauge the accuracy and effectiveness of this testing, the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) administers a Stationary Source Audit Program (SSAP) that provides free audit samples to state and local agencies. Over the past few years, there has been an increasing need for such samples, and a number of private providers have emerged. EPA feels it is inappropriate for it to compete with private entities; therefore, in December 2007, the OAR and The NELAC Institute (TNI) initiated discussions to establish what role TNI might have in transitioning the SSAP administration to the private sector.

In August 2008, TNI formed the Stationary Source Audit Sample Expert Committee to develop consensus Working Draft Standards (WDS) to establish the specifications for a new privatized SSAP.



Streamlining DMRQA

The Discharge Monitoring Report – Quality Assurance (DMRQA) program is approaching 30 years old. It evaluates the analytical capabilities of laboratories that service about 7,100 permittees in the National Pollution Discharge Elimination Program (NPDES). The program was created at a time when there was no national evaluation program and few, if any, state evaluation programs of water laboratories. Originally, EPA defined the scope of the program, made and distributed the proficiency test (PT) samples, and graded the results. After EPA privatized the water supply (WS) and water pollution (WP) PT programs, the Agency was no longer involved in preparing DMRQA samples or evaluating the results. The DMRQA program coordinator continued to work with the PT providers relative to the scope of the program. EPA's authority to operate DMRQA is based upon its authority to ask NPDES permittees for information under Clean Water Act Section 308. Although much of the environment in which DMRQA operates today has changed, its basic authority has not.

At the Miami Forum, EPA DMRQA staff met with state coordinators, PT providers, laboratories, and TNI representatives to gather and discuss suggestions for improving the DMRQA program. At this time,

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The Emergence of TNI's Stationary Source Audit Sample Program (cont.)

The WDS is based on EPA requirements and provides for the continuation of the SSAP by addressing the roles and responsibilities of program participants, the manufacture of audit samples, the oversight of audit sample providers, the management of audit sample results, and the establishment of acceptance criteria.

Three WDS (i.e., for Providers, Provider Accreditors, and Participants) were presented to the public for comment at the TNI Forum in Miami in January 2009. Many substantive comments were received, and the committee is now reviewing these comments to develop the Voting Draft Standards that will be voted on prior to this summer's conference. The results of the voting, together with comments received, will be discussed in San Antonio in August 2009. Additionally, the committee will present a preview of the web-based central database that will host the activities of the program.

The EPA is expected to withdraw from supplying audit samples no later than October 2009; therefore, the committee is working in an expedited mode to provide for the transition to the new SSAP under TNI. If you have any questions about TNI's activities regarding the SSAP, contact the committee chair, Maria Friedman, at maria.friedman@testamericainc.com.

National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP) is Underway

By Marlene Moore, Advanced Systems

The NELAC Institute (TNI) Field Sampling and Measurement Organization (FSMO) Standard has been written, adopted, and published. All that is left is *implementation!*

The TNI Board has voted on the acceptance of the Field Activities Committee (FAC) report and strategic plan for the implementation for the National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP). The TNI Policy Committee will review the TNI bylaws to ensure the integration of this program with other TNI programs, and the FAC and its associate members have begun the process of developing a recognition program and associated procedures which will govern the implementation of the FSMO Standard.

Several accreditation bodies have approached TNI about adopting the Standard, and one AB has already accepted it and is working toward implementation. Several organizations have indicated that they are considering mandatory accreditation for their contracted FSMO's. This accreditation would be used to qualify FSMO's that perform sampling and testing in various media using a variety of sample collection and field testing methods. A progress report on the implementation of the FSMO Standard will be presented to the Board in the summer of 2009.

Pilot Program in Development

The FAC is currently working on the development of a pilot program that will be used to develop the process for evaluating the Accreditation Bodies implementation of the TNI FSMO Standard.

The goals of the program:

1. Build a recognition process for ABs to ensure uniform implementation of the TNI FSMO Standard.
2. Work with the TNI Board to revise the TNI Bylaws, if necessary, to ensure reasonable fit with this program.
3. Review TNI Policies and SOPs, especially in the implementation of a national program that ensures consistent implementation.



Streamlining DMRQA (cont.)

EPA believes that the program would benefit from several changes that would streamline DMRQA and make it more efficient for those involved in the process. While some work remains to be done, the outcome from this discussion is that laboratories will be able to use results of WP PT samples done during the same calendar year as DMRQA, as long as the WP study closes before the DMRQA study season. Another likely outcome from these discussions is that laboratories in the future accredited under NELAP would not be required to participate in DMRQA.



Basic NELAC Assessor Training Course

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is hosting a NELAC Basic Assessor Training class to be held in Harrisburg, PA from June 2-4. The class instructor is Marlene Moore of Advanced Systems Inc. For registration information, contact Marlene Moore at mmoore@advancedsys.com.



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National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP) is Underway (cont.)

4. Implement the FSMO Accreditation Program.
5. Establish the voluntary adoption and formal acceptance of NEFAP in contracts, regulatory program, and other forms of requirements.
6. Develop government (federal, state, and local) acceptance of the TNI accreditation program.
7. Evaluate the Stationary Source Audit Sample (SSAS) effort to see if it should be incorporated into this program.
8. Review TNI Policies and SOPs, especially in the standards development area, to ensure reasonable fit with this program.

If you are an accreditation body and would like to become part of this program, please contact Jerry Parr, Executive Director TNI (jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org) or Marlene Moore, TNI Field Activities Committee Chair (mmoore@advancedsys.com) to discuss this new opportunity. Government and third party ABs are needed TODAY!

If you perform sample collection for any program, or perform field measurements (i.e., not within a mobile lab), and would like to become part of this program, please contact Jerry Parr, Executive Director TNI (jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org) or Marlene Moore, TNI Field Activities Committee Chair (mmoore@advancedsys.com) in order to learn how to be the FIRST in your business to be an accredited FSMO. This accreditation will demonstrate to your clients your commitment to quality!

To learn more about this program and get your copy of the Standard, please visit www.nelac-institute.org.

Laboratory Accreditation Survey

By Judy Morgan, Environmental Science Corporation

On November 7, 2008, I sent a survey to over 1000 NELAC-accredited laboratories in an attempt to contact all laboratories with a current NELAC accreditation. The survey was initiated as part of my MBA program with approval from Western Kentucky University. A total of 510 completed surveys were received from 42 states and 6 countries.

The survey was composed of 10 general questions on laboratory size, type, services, certifications, and affiliation and 91 questions on motives for seeking accreditation, benefits of accreditation, quality systems, proficiency testing, and general observations. Each section also offered the ability to provide comments and 374 detailed comments were received. The majority of the comments were very constructive and I plan to summarize the comments for TNI's Advocacy Committee as input to the committee's work regarding the future direction of the TNI program.

As shown below, the surveys returned were well distributed across laboratory type and size

| Laboratory Type | % of Responses | Laboratory Size | % of Responses |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Commercial | 46.3 | 1-2 | 15.7 |
| Municipal | 14.1 | 3-10 | 35.5 |
| Governmental | 10.8 | 11-50 | 33.7 |
| Industrial | 8.6 | 51 - 100 | 9.2 |
| Pubic Health | 14.5 | 101 - 250 | 3.5 |
| Other | 5.7 | >251 | 2.4 |



Update to Field of Proficiency Testing (FoPT)

The PT Board discussed four (4) options surrounding experimental analytes and decided to discontinue the use of Experimental Analyte Tables. Each new analyte will now be added directly to the accreditation tables and a default study mean of +/- 3 standard deviations will be applied to that parameter until sufficient data is generated to determine better analyte specific acceptance criteria.

The Chemistry FoPT Subcommittee is now working on implementing this decision. They hope to have draft tables complete by April and hope to have these preliminary updates to the tables finalized by July 2009. New tables have also been completed and submitted to the PT Board for review for whole effluent toxicity testing.



NEFAP

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Laboratory Accreditation Survey (cont.)

The NELAP program received high scores in most categories and had notable positive results in the following categories:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Improved Quality System | 87% Favorable |
| Data Defensibility | 85% Favorable |
| Improved Data Quality | 79% Favorable |
| Improved Employee Quality Awareness | 86% Favorable |
| Improved Training Procedures | 81% Favorable |
| Improved Processes and Procedures | 81% Favorable |
| Ethics and Data Integrity | 80% Favorable |
| Reduced Deficiencies | 72% Favorable |

Overall, 74% of the respondents believe the cost to implement and maintain the program is justified by the benefits and 80% of the respondents believe other laboratories should be accredited.

The survey results represent a large volume of information that has yet to be completely summarized. Preliminary cross-sectional comparisons have shown that regardless of laboratory size or type, the results are proportionally representative of the collective responses of all laboratories. Initial results are posted on the TNI website on the Miami conference page. I plan to continue to work to further summarize this information for future publications in several industry-related journals, as well as share the data with TNI and other organizations such as the Environmental Lab Advisory Board (ELAB) and the American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL).

Update on Accreditation Body Renewals

By Carol Batterton, TNI

At the Miami meeting, NELAP Board Chair Dan Hickman reported that the State and EPA evaluation teams have almost completed the first round of accreditation body renewals. The NELAP Board has approved accreditation body program renewals for New Hampshire, Kansas, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Utah, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. A recommendation for renewal for Florida is pending with the NELAP Board.

Technical reviews have been completed on the remaining four accreditation bodies: Texas, Oregon, Louisiana DEQ, New Jersey, and Illinois. State and EPA evaluators have scheduled onsite evaluations for Oregon in March and Texas in April. The evaluation teams expect to have these renewals completed by July 2009.

Following completion of these evaluations, Paul Ellingson, Quality Assurance Officer, will report his findings and impressions to the NELAP Board.

EPA Region 2 to Require Accreditation

EPA Region 2 has been successful in adding accreditation language into its Superfund Program field contracts, interagency agreements, and responsible party consent agreements, requiring that any environmental laboratory utilized by these entities shall be currently certified (by a state certification program) or accredited by a national accreditation organization such as NELAP. Currently, the Region 2 Superfund Program has 8 field contracts, more than 150 individual interagency agreements with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and numerous consent agreements with responsible parties. A recent survey of the field contractors revealed that 118 of the 140 laboratories are NELAP-accredited. Region 2 expects to be near full compliance by the end of 2009.



New Accreditation Body Applications

TNI invited several states interested in becoming NELAP Accreditation Bodies to make presentations on their plans at the plenary session during the Miami meeting. Virginia, Minnesota, and Oklahoma all gave overviews of their plans and timelines for submitting their applications to the NELAP Board.

Cathy Westerman reported that Virginia will likely be the first to submit an application since their application process is being driven by state statute. Virginia expects to have their application submitted by March 2009. Susan Wyatt reported that Minnesota will be shortly behind, and Judy Duncan reported that Oklahoma is a year or more away. Once an application is received, the NELAP Board will appoint an evaluation team to review it.

The NELAP Board and the Technical Assistance Committee also held a mentoring session at the Miami meeting for states interested in applying to become NELAP Accreditation bodies (ABs). Dan Hickman and Ken Jackson reviewed the application process for accreditation bodies and shared tips for developing successful lab accreditation programs.



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Update on the Small Laboratory Advocate

By Len Schantz, City of Rochester, New York

As TNI's Small Laboratory Advocate, I had the opportunity at the recent Miami conference to deliver a presentation on TNI's efforts to assist small laboratories (SLs). This was my first face-to-face interaction with TNI members, since being appointed Small Laboratory Advocate. I spoke with many people during the week, and I left encouraged by everyone's desire to help find solutions to SL issues. If there was one disappointment, and it was not the weather, it was that I did not speak with one person that currently worked in a SL.

I attempted to communicate four points during my presentation. First, limited staffing is not the only characteristic of a SL. Some other characteristics might be: simplicity of methodologies, limited scope of testing, few or maybe just one customer, routine sample sites, and limited reporting requirements. These traits, and certainly there are others, influence the degree of complexity, or lack thereof, inherent in SL operations, which in turn influences data uncertainty, and, ultimately, the safeguards needed to ensure that data are of known and documented quality.

My second point was that SLs count, literally. I estimated that there are at least 5,000 non-commercial SLs in the United States alone today. The point is that SLs are a very significant member of the environmental laboratory community that need to be heard and accommodated if TNI is to fully succeed.

Third, I presented a brief summary of TNI's efforts to assist SLs. These efforts have included: templates for Quality Manual and SOPs, a true consensus process for standard development, and outreach programs to the American Water Works Association (AWWA) and the Water Environment Federation (WEF). TNI also expects to have future discussions on documentation requirements; frequency of PTs; better tools, templates, and guidance; and scalability of standards to the size of laboratory operations.

Finally, I discussed my goal as Small Laboratory Advocate, which is to facilitate feedback from the SL community. The goal is simple to state, but will be difficult to achieve. As a first step, a Small Laboratory Advocacy Group is being created to provide a forum for individuals from SLs to raise and discuss issues important to SLs. Membership in TNI is not necessary to join this group — just experience working at, or with, SLs. The group will meet monthly via conference calls and members are needed.

If you wish to learn more about the Advocacy Group or receive a copy of the presentation on TNI's efforts to help SLs, please contact me at lgs@cityofrochester.gov.

The Laboratory Accreditation Systems Committee Recommends to Implement TNI Standards

By June Flowers, Flowers Chemical Laboratories

"Bumps, Bruises, and Scars!!" This was not a sporting event, but the demonstrated teamwork equaled that of a great game. The Laboratory Accreditation System Committee (LASC) has completed its review of the TNI accreditation standards for suitability, as charged in the TNI Bylaws, for use in TNI accreditation programs. There were some bumps and hurdles, like having a 4-month deadline (over the holidays) to complete the review of the standards. There were some bruises, like telling an expert committee that all of their hard work in preparing the final standards still had inconsistencies. The scars are the lessons we learned in this process: LASC must perform the cross volume / module review of new standards prior to the voting process.



Election for the TNI Board of Directors

The NELAC Institute will have an election for 7 individuals to serve as Directors of the organization for three year terms beginning on April 8, 2009, and is encouraging all members to cast a ballot. The Board election will occur from March 16 through March 31, 2009. In order to vote, you must log in to the Members Only area of the website and click on Board Election. If you have any questions about this process, please contact Jerry Parr at jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org or 817-598-1624.



2009 Board Nominees

Joe Aiello
New Jersey DEP
Accreditation Body

Jack Farrell
Analytical Excellence
Other

Aaren Alger
Pennsylvania DEP
Accreditation Body

David Speis
Accutest
Laboratory

Judy Duncan
Oklahoma DEQ
Accreditation Body

Curtis Wood
Environmental Resource
Associates
Other

Ken Olson
ALS/Datachem
Laboratory



TNI Small Laboratory Advocate

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The Laboratory Accreditation Systems Committee Recommends to Implement TNI Standards (cont.)

At the Miami meeting, LASC provided a presentation of their consensus findings. TNI Standard Operating Procedure 5-102, "Review of Accreditation Standards for Suitability" was the reference document used to form these recommendations. The committee voted at the Miami meeting to forward recommendation for adoption of the standards with suggestions on improvement or clarification of some of the modules.

Each recommendation was presented by the LASC to the Expert Committees that developed the standards. The Committees either agreed with the finding or offered further explanation and justification. Details of the standard language and the responses from the Expert Committees can be referenced in the LASC Minutes from the January 14, 2009 meeting. The LASC provided a listing of the recommended editorial changes, guidance documents, and Tentative Interim Amendments (TIA) that can also be reviewed in the minutes posted on the TNI website.

These recommendations are to the "suitability for use" and are not intended to countermand the decision of the committees that developed the standards. Many LASC members had been on an expert committee that was tasked with editing the NELAC 2003 standard to be ISO compliant. Each of the many TNI committee volunteers was very familiar with the part of the TNI standard that they worked on. It was when the cross volume / cross module review was performed that issues came into view that may affect either how an AB could accredit, how a PT provider could operate, or how a lab could perform.

The NELAP Board is expected to have their response to LASC within the next month, then LASC will work with the Consensus Standards Development Board (CSDB) and Expert Committees to make any adjustments prior to the NELAP Board's final vote in May 2009. In the meantime, the CSDB is working on the editorial changes and the Expert Committees are working on the items that they agreed to complete. The LASC will then offer assistance in the review of documents prepared by the respective committees. We are in the home stretch. No more bumps and bruises, but maybe a few scars to commemorate the efforts of many.

ELAB Pursues Solutions to SW-846 Implementation Dilemma

By Dave Speis, Accutest Laboratories

The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB), in response to concerns raised by the environmental laboratory community, has initiated discussions with the USEPA's Office of Solid Waste (OSW) to resolve numerous accreditation and use issues associated with the release of SW-846 Update IV. These discussions resulted in a beneficial exchange between ELAB and members of the EPA Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER or OSW) at the public ELAB meeting held at the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation in Miami, Florida this past January.

The Miami ELAB meeting focused on the identification and implementation of solutions to eliminate regulatory status uncertainty. The stakeholder community had expressed concerns about the use status of the new methods, indicating that OSW had not provided clear language that would eliminate application ambiguity. The quality control requirements of the revised SW-846 version conflict with previous method versions, causing laboratory and regulatory community confusion determining which to apply. The confusion is shared by the regulatory community, who are also confused about the use status of the methods. This has resulted in piecemeal recognition for monitoring and remediation



Method Modifications — The Art and Science

On Tuesday, January 13, 2009, in the Assessment Forum, a panel of experts convened to discuss modification of methods. The panel consisted of Chung-Rei Mao (USACE), Carl Kircher (Florida—AB), Larry Penfold (ACIL), Silky Labie (State of Florida—data user), Kim Kirkland (USEPA-OSW), and by phone conference Ray Anderson (SAIC—MICE Line) and Shen-Yi Yang (USEPA-OSW). There was lively discussion on method modifications without clear identification of any solutions to this issue. As discussed, it all starts with the data user and the use of the data. There was no one party with clear responsibility for method modifications, but there was identification by the participants that everybody is involved. It was clear, that there will be ongoing discussions on the issue in future TNI meetings.

— Bob Di Rienzo
ALS/Datachem



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ELAB Pursues Solutions to SW-846 Implementation Dilemma (cont.)

uses and interstate accreditation recognition difficulties resulting from inconsistent interpretation of the method's use status.

OSW representatives used this public meeting to obtain a better understanding of the SW-846 method implementation issues, since the issue was raised by the laboratory community and are in a good position to participate in the solution. Senior OSW management has made a commitment to work with ELAB and the affected stakeholders to achieve a beneficial solution and is open to further stakeholder input as discussions continue. While no immediate solutions were identified, the open forum environment brought the key issues to the foreground. As part of the proceedings from the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation conference, the presentations made by both ELAB and OSW are posted on the website at www.nelac-institute.org.

ELAB is planning additional meetings with the OSW staff to evaluate the suggestions that were proposed and develop a solution that will enable the states to take the next steps to resolve the accreditation issues. Interested stakeholders and accreditation bodies are invited to bring their suggestions or concerns to ELAB and volunteer to participate as work continues on this issue. To follow the discussions and progress, please visit the ELAB website, www.epa.gov/elab, to see monthly meeting minutes as they are approved, in addition to any documentation developed by the Board during these efforts.

TNI to Comment on ELAB-Initiated Comparison of EPA's Drinking Water Certification Program and the 2008 TNI Laboratory Accreditation Standard

By Jack Farrell, Analytical Excellence

ELAB, the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board, has undertaken an effort to compare TNI's National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) to the USEPA Office of Water Drinking Water Certification Program. As federal advisory committee to the EPA, ELAB works closely with the Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM) by providing advice to the Agency on action items, such as supporting the achievement of national environmental laboratory accreditation. ELAB intends to use this comparison, and possibly others, as a basis for providing recommendations to EPA on what changes the Agency could make towards reaching this national goal. Although ELAB can only direct recommendations to the Agency, all findings and suggestions of the Board are considered public information and can be used by others to change or enhance their programs as well.

ELAB has initiated an interactive process with program stakeholders, including the Office of Water and TNI. A draft document comparing these two programs has recently been prepared by an EPA contractor at the direction of ELAB. Stakeholders have been asked to review and validate the draft comparison document and provide any suggestions or thoughts they have to ELAB. TNI intends to take full advantage of ELAB's leadership and efforts to plan future enhancements to the consensus standard development process.

In response to this ELAB initiative, the TNI Board of Directors has formed a workgroup consisting of members of the Policy committee, the Consensus Standard Development Board, TNI Board members, and staff to review the comparison document and provide comments to ELAB. This workgroup is charged to verify the accuracy of the draft document in relation to the TNI standard, TNI policies, and NELAP operating policies, and subsequently to provide recommendations on how



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The NEMC Board of Trustees invites you to submit an abstract for consideration for presentation at the 25th Annual National Environmental Monitoring Conference to be held at the Hyatt Regency San Antonio from August 10-14, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas.

In keeping with the theme, New Frontiers in Environmental Monitoring, for the 2009 conference, the NEMC Board is particularly interested in abstracts related to the global topics of climate change, clean energy, and nanomaterials.

Organized jointly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), The NELAC Institute (TNI), and the Independent Laboratories Institute (ILI), NEMC provides the principal forum for addressing policy and technical issues affecting monitoring in all environmental media (i.e., water, air, soil, and wastes) and across all environmental programs.

NEMC brings together scientists and managers from federal and state agencies, the regulated community, and laboratory and engineering support communities. It includes a policy session, technical sessions, training courses, exhibits, and networking opportunities. As in the past two years, NEMC will be combined with TNI's Forum on Laboratory Accreditation as the Environmental Measurement Symposium.

Please provide your abstract by March 18, 2009: <http://www.nemc.us>.



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TNI to Comment on ELAB-Initiated Comparison of EPA's Drinking Water Certification Program and the 2008 TNI Laboratory Accreditation Standard (cont.)

the two programs are similar, how they are different, and provide comments and recommendations on how the two programs can be harmonized. This is an extensive effort as the comparison document is very thorough and contains many details. It is expected to take several months for the workgroup to complete its task and provide its comments to ELAB.

ELAB plans on reviewing the comments provided by stakeholder groups, including TNI, and providing a report on its efforts as part of their public meeting at the Environmental Measurement Symposium in San Antonio this summer.

TNI members that are interesting in assisting the workgroup are encouraged to actively get involved by contacting Jerry Parr. More information about ELAB and its efforts can be found at www.epa.gov/elab.

Member Spotlight: *Dr. Ken Jackson*

By Kirstin McCracken, TestAmerica

This time the spotlight's on long-time TNI member, Dr. Ken Jackson. Dr. Jackson is the current Chair of the TNI Consensus Standards Development Board (CSDB) and has played a pivotal role in the development of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program, since its inception. On February 24, 2009, he retired from the New York State Department of Health, where he served as Director of the New York State Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (NYELAP) since 1987.

If you have ever spoken with Dr. Jackson, you probably thought from his brogue that he must be from the United Kingdom, and if so, you would be right! Ken was born in Shipley, a town located in the county of Yorkshire, but he spent most of his childhood in the seaside resort town of Hornsea in East Yorkshire. The house in Hornsea overlooked the cliff-based shoreline and to his mother's dismay (had she known, that is) he spent much of his youth clambering over the seaside cliffs and playing in the surf on the beach.

After high school, he moved to the City of Hull, where he worked in the research labs of a chemical manufacturer before moving to a new position with a company called Blue Circle Cement, performing classical chemistry tests in their analytical laboratory. While working at the cement company, he pursued a degree in Chemistry. Dr. Jackson obtained his Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry at Imperial College. The focus of his dissertation was electrothermal atomic absorption spectrometry and it was this research experience that brought him to the United States.

In 1972, Dr. Jackson accepted a position in the environmental analytical laboratory of the New York State Department of Health (NYDOH) and moved to the United States. In this position, he continued his research in atomic absorption, pioneering the use of vidicon technology that allowed for multi-element atomic absorption. Two years later, Dr. Jackson was asked to oversee the state's blood lead analysis program in the clinical laboratory and he stayed in this position for three years before deciding to move back to the UK to accept a faculty position at Sheffield Hallam University. He spent seven years at Sheffield continuing his research and teaching analytical chemistry before moving to Saskatoon,



Ken Jackson (left) and Bob Di Rienzo enjoy good food and conversation at the Forum.



Other Upcoming Meetings of Interest to Members

Department of Defense
Environmental Monitoring and
Data Quality Workshop
March 30 - April 3
San Antonio, TX
<http://www.navylabs.navy.mil/DoDChemistMeeting.htm>

EPA Quality Conference
May 12-14
San Antonio, TX
<http://www.epa.gov/quality/2009.htm>

Texas CEQ Trade Fair
May 12-14
Austin, TX
<http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/assistance/events/etfc/etf.html>

Florida Society of
Environmental Analysts
May 20-22
St. Petersburg Beach, FL
<http://www.fsea.net>

If you know of any upcoming meetings of interest to environmental laboratory professionals, please contact Jerry Parr at jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org.



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Member Spotlight: *Ken Jackson (cont.)*

Saskatchewan as Professor and head of the newly formed division of analytical chemistry at the University of Saskatchewan. Wow — three moves across the Atlantic in less than ten years!

At the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Jackson built the undergraduate and graduate program for analytical chemistry from the ground up. Ken said the work, research, and teaching were incredibly rewarding, but the Saskatchewan winters were brutal and he, along with his wife, Pauline and their young son, Paul, being avid skiers longed for the mountains. In 1987, Ken was asked to give a seminar at NYDOH and during this seminar he was asked if he would like to return to his former employer to continue his research and fill the newly formed position of QA Officer of the environmental analytical labs. He accepted the offer and the family moved back to New York. In addition to the position at the New York Department of Health (NYDOH), Ken also was appointed a Professor to the State University of New York – School of Public Health where he was able to continue with teaching and research. Six months into the new position at NYDOH, he was asked to oversee the laboratory certification program, ELAP, and it is in this role that he has worked ever since. Initially, he was able to maintain his work in research but eventually, the demands of the new position took over, time for research became scarce, and Ken turned his attention towards the movement to build a national accreditation program and he has played a prominent role in the NELAC/TNI ever since.

Ken recognized the immediate benefits a national program would provide and says that the NELAC process has given him a strong appreciation for the importance of quality systems in the generation of environmental data. He says, when decisions are being made regarding public health or the environment, QA/QC is essential — something he knew well from his work in the blood lead analysis program. Overall, Ken believes that NELAC has improved his state program for laboratory accreditation. Put simply, NELAC raised the bar for quality in environmental laboratories – and for the programs that manage laboratory accreditation. Different state agencies now have a forum to communicate and exchange ideas – something that did not occur prior to the NELAC program.

Ken has attended every single NELAC/TNI meeting since the inception of the program. Of course, his favorite meeting was the meeting in Saratoga Springs, New York (NELAC 5, 1997). That year he was Chair of NELAC, so his agency served as host. Although organizing the conference was a lot of work, it was an exciting meeting as this was the meeting the first round of states were recognized as accreditation bodies.

Ken would encourage every TNI member to attend a meeting. He says when you attend the meetings, you see first hand how the process works and you can't help but get involved. The TNI consensus process gives all stakeholders the opportunity to participate and contribute to build a better program. Besides, there are plenty of opportunities at the meeting to hone your skills of debate, and who doesn't enjoy a good technical argument every once in a while!

As Ken moves into retirement, he is looking forward to more leisure time and a break from the toll of government bureaucracy; managing state programs is tough work. He has a goal to ski at least 100 days per season rain or shine, and in the summer you might catch him sailing on Lake George or in Long Island Sound, but it's more likely you'll see him at the next TNI meeting. Retirement will not keep Ken away; he tells me he is looking forward to continuing his association with TNI and actively working to build a better national accreditation program.



TNI MISSION

The NELAC Institute is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization whose mission is to foster the generation of environmental data of known and documented quality through an open, inclusive, and transparent process that is responsive to the needs of the community.



VISION

All entities generating environmental data in the United States will be accredited to consensus national standards.



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