THE INSTITUTE REVIEW

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THE NELAC INSTITUTE

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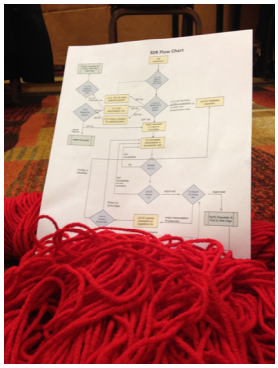
Highlights from the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation

By Jerry Parr, TNI Executive Director

More than 200 individuals attended the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation in Louisville, Kentucky from January 27-30, 2014. The Forum was packed full of meetings and information for attendees. This article summarizes some of the activities not mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter.

There were at least a dozen first time attendees at the **Assessment Forum**, and the "root cause" session was both lively and crowded. The microbiology session was well presented and the session on the new SIR process included a demonstration with yarn that was memorialized in several good photographs.



The **Laboratory Accreditation Systems Executive Committee** briefed attendees on the improvements to the Standard Interpretation Request (SIR) backlog as well as the new SIR process, and explained that a number of Frequently Asked Questions are being compiled, with answers, for posting on the TNI website for those items that don't actually qualify as interpretation requests. Draft revisions to the Standards Review SOP 3-103 were reviewed in detail, and should be finalized at the committee meeting in February.

The **Non-Governmental Accreditation Body (NGAB) Workgroup** reviewed the draft SOP for evaluating NGABs. That procedure will be finalized and accompanying policies developed in time for the summer meeting in DC.

The **Consensus Standards Development Executive Committee** discussed an updated Standards Development SOP 2-100 is in use and awaiting final Board approval. The committee is developing guidance for format and version control of standards revisions and that will be coordinated with the existing document control SOP 1-104. Renewed charters from all Expert Committees are in development. The committee will request that the Board approve a new expert committee for whole effluent toxicity (WET).

The **Proficiency Testing Expert Committee** announced the revised Volume 3 will be posted soon and there should be a Working Draft Standard available for Washington, DC. The committee is beginning to revise Volume 4, and hoping that it will be non-controversial to remove the TNI requirements and put them into policies rather than the standard. There were a few minor cleanup items to Volumes 1 and 2. PT should have four volumes for comment at the Washington, DC meeting and hopefully a Voting Draft Standard by the end of 2014.

The **Laboratory Accreditation Body (LAB) Expert Committee** received a full briefing on the draft Database Development Plan for the generic laboratory application, and will address this again at its February teleconference. The plan, developed by the IT Committee and TNI's Database Administrator, Dan Hickman, is well done. Many concerns were raised at conference about the Third Party Assessor (Contract Assessor) web page, listing available assessors, with some assessor organizations claiming they did not receive the notification of its availability, but after discussion, it became obvious that some emails were simply overlooked. Additional individuals and organizations are expected to provide their completed templates in the near future, and the LAB will begin considering how to develop phase three, the verification of qualifications.

The **Chemistry Expert Committee** finished the response to comments on the calibration standard, which is now ready for the next phase. Comments on the Method Detection Limit (MDL) draft were received from EPA, and the committee has addressed a few SIRs, resolving at least one response with others still in review.

The **Proficiency Testing Program Executive Committee** discussed how to ensure that random concentrations of PT samples are indeed random. The committee is considering a possible microbiology subcommittee to address the question of whether qualitative PTs are needed.

The **Information Technology Committee** has completed a draft database development plan for the generic laboratory application, which will benefit both labs and Accreditation Bodies (Abs), and sees an ongoing role in the future development of that database. They are concerned that LAMS is relatively unknown even within the

Highlights from the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation cont.

TNI community, and that it is greatly underutilized, and envision a future webinar on enhancements to LAMS and extracting data from the system. Discussions of the method compendium included a beta-test demonstration; what remains now is to get the actual methods (or sources for purchase for proprietary methods) into LAMS. The number of methods to be linked to the Method Code table is vast. The committee charter has been reviewed and adopted, and they discussed with TNI's webmaster the transition to a new internet service provider (ISP).

On a final note, many of the attendees truly enjoyed their Louisville experience, especially those that received their certificate for completing the "Urban Bourbon Trail."

The 30th National Environmental Monitoring Conference at the Environmental Measurement Symposium

By Lara Phelps, USEPA and Jerry Parr, TNI

For the eighth consecutive year, the Environmental Measurement Symposium, which represents the combined meetings of the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) and the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation (the Forum), will be meeting at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill in Washington, DC from August 4 – 8, 2014.

This year's theme is ***'The Next Generation of Environmental Monitoring'*** and some of the highlights for the week include:

- Over 150 technical presentations and posters on a variety of cutting-edge environmental monitoring issues;
- Meetings of The NELAC Institute (TNI) Committees to further TNI efforts on environmental laboratory accreditation, proficiency testing, and accreditation of field sampling and measurement organizations;
- An exhibit program showcasing the latest innovations in environmental monitoring;
- An new innovative technology showcase;
- Three special keynote presentations on topics of general interest – including Mark Ruefenacht, Dogs4Diabetics and Dr. R. Rajagopal, The University of Iowa;
- A special half-day session of senior government officials – including the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Administrator (Gina McCarthy) (or Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe) and Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Installations & Environment (John Conger); and
- An open meeting of the EPA's Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board.

The National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) provides the principal forum for addressing policy and technical issues affecting monitoring in all environmental media (i.e., water, air, soil, and waste) and across all environmental programs. NEMC is co-sponsored by TNI, under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The technical program is organized by a committee of environmental experts from government and private industry, which brings together a balance technical and policy topics for each year's symposium with interest to all.

NEMC 2014 will feature over 150 presentations and posters organized into concurrent technical sessions from Monday through Thursday, with a general session on Wednesday morning. A keynote address on a major topic will kick-off the start of each day. Session topic areas will include:

- Academia
- Advances in Sample Prep
- Air
- Collaborative Efforts
- Data Management
- Sensors and In-situ Monitoring
- DoD LCS Study
- High Performance LC in Environmental Monitoring
- Laboratory Accreditation
- Metals / Metals Speciation.

Please take a few minutes to look over the preliminary program and register today. To view abstracts and the preliminary program in addition to conference arrangement details, visit http://www.nemc.us. We look forward to seeing you in August!!!

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Board Election Begins

By Steve Arms, TNI Board of Directors

Elections for the 2014 Board of Directors began on March 24 with the announcement of a slate of candidates on the TNI website. Nominations opened on February 10 to receive applications for potential candidates. The Board has 6 potential vacancies, with 3 terms expiring for Directors in the "Accreditation Body," and "Other" stakeholder groups. The TNI Bylaws allocate a Board of 10-18 members, so not all vacant slots need to be filled, but the Nominating Committee always seeks nominations from as large and diverse a cross-section of the TNI membership as possible. Something new this year as a result of recent changes in the Bylaws is that the election will include the ratification of ex-officio Directors, who are now also voting members of the Board. All balloting will continue until April 1, and newly elected Directors will assume office on April 10 during the Board's regularly scheduled monthly teleconference.

The Nominating Committee, which consists of Lara Phelps, Aurora Shields, and Steve Arms, has meticulously reviewed the qualifications of the nominees and will have assembled the ballot for voting by the TNI membership. Each nominee is eminently qualified to serve and willing to give of their time and talents to the further the mission of TNI.

Directors need a broad understanding of the issues facing TNI and must uphold the Institute's mission, goals, priorities, and Code of Ethical Conduct. Each must demonstrate a commitment to TNI's priority to be a highly functioning organization committed to balance and inclusion. Directors must have strong interpersonal skills and be able objectively to consider various perspectives while making major policy decisions.

Having these qualifications helps to ensure that elected Directors are prepared to fulfill their designated responsibilities, which include:

- exercising fiduciary responsibilities and stewardship with regard to TNI's goals, policies, and resources;
- contributing to a policy governance model that provides leadership for TNI with a focus on mission; and
- identifying and cultivating future leaders.

All TNI members are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to vote for the candidates of their choice!

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Planning for the Future of National Accreditation

By Carol Batterton, TNI Program Administrator

Over the course of the twenty years since the national environmental laboratory accreditation program was conceived, the state and federal regulatory landscape has shifted dramatically. The NELAC Institute (TNI) believes it is time to re-evaluate our approach to expanding national accreditation and chart a new course. In order to chart a path forward, TNI needs to find out what is working and will work for states, the USEPA, laboratories, and other stakeholders, as well as what is not working.

The Institute will begin by seeking input from states not currently recognized as NELAP accreditation bodies to get their perspectives on environmental accreditation. In particular, TNI will be asking what they see as the positive aspects of the current program, as well as any reasons why a national program might not feasibly include state and federal participation. TNI will also solicit input on the following topics:

- factors considered in the state's decision not to seek recognition as a NELAP accreditation body;
- use (if any) of the TNI Standard in their non-NELAP program;
- interaction with other state accreditation programs for reciprocity and information sharing, and any potential for workload reduction by additional collaboration/cooperation with other states;
- how the use of third-party non-governmental accreditation bodies to grant NELAP accreditations might impact the state's acceptance of NELAP accreditation;
- areas for improvement in the current NELAP program, including challenges for their current state program and any possible assistance TNI can provide;
- what the state sees as critical elements of a re-designed national accreditation program; and
- whether or not the state has plans to accredit field sampling and measurement organizations or mobile laboratories.

Following our interviews with state programs, TNI is planning a series of webinars to get additional input from other stakeholders groups. These webinars will be followed by a face-to-face work session on August 8, 2014, in Washington, D.C., during the Environmental Measurement Symposium http://www.envmeasym.org/. The goal of this session will be to further develop the ideas TNI receives from states and stakeholder groups.

TNI is interested in gathering input from as wide a cross section of laboratory stakeholders as possible. If you have thoughts on any of these topics, please feel free to email Carol Batterton, TNI Program Administrator, at carbat@beecreek.net or Steve Arms, Chair of TNI's Advocacy Committee, at Steve.Arms@flhealth.gov.

Turning the Corner to Fiscal Self-Sufficiency

By David Speis, QC Laboratories & TNI Treasurer

In 2009, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded TNI a five-year grant for "Support to Develop Measurement Tools, Accreditation Standards, and Technical Support" in the amount of $750,000. That grant is scheduled to be completed by August, 2015. TNI has used the funds from this grant to support many TNI activities including standards development, the implementation of a Laboratory Accreditation Management System (LAMS), development of a methods compendium, and the development of the TNI Educational Delivery System. EPA's support under this grant accounts for about 20% of TNI's total revenue and has been a key factor in TNI's fiscal self-sufficiency over the last four years.

Recognizing that this grant funding may not continue past 2015, TNI's Finance Committee met in Chicago last December and developed a plan to ensure TNI's viability if the grant is not extended or renewed. This plan was presented to the TNI Board of Directors in January of this year and the plan is now being implemented. The plan includes a number of measures to both increase revenue and decrease costs. Some of the changes that have already been implemented include:

- a modest increase in membership dues from $50 to $55 for a one-year membership, and similar increases in other membership types,
- an increase in the fees paid to TNI by non-governmental Accreditation Bodies, and
- a change in the price structure for TNI's standards with the elimination of free standards, consistent with other standards development organizations.

There were several other minor changes and TNI anticipate further changes in 2015. Our goal is to have every TNI program operating on a self-sufficient basis without being dependent on EPA funding. TNI will continue to seek out new grant opportunities. However, any new grants would apply to new tasks and initiatives and would not mitigate the need to take the steps taken to assure the continued financial viability of TNI.

Nominations Open for NEFAP Executive Committee

By Ilona Taunton, TNI

The National Environmental Laboratory Field Activities (NEFAP) Executive Committee is accepting nominations for open positions on the Committee. Everyone is welcome to apply and you may self-nominate or nominate anyone that would be willing to serve. The application forms can be found on the website (http://www.nelac-institute.org/comm-app.php). Nominations will close on April 1, 2014, so please have your applications submitted by that date.

The purpose of the National Environmental Field Activities Program is to establish and implement a program for the accreditation of field sampling and measurement organizations (FSMOs).

The mission of the NEFAP Executive Committee is to ensure the implementation of a national program for FSMO accreditation that is consistent with the TNI FSMO Standard requirements. The Executive Committee will support the field accreditation program with appropriate guidance, procedures and policies to facilitate implementation of these accreditation standards on a national level. The Executive Committee is committed to establishing and maintaining a program in support of the TNI FSMO Standard that will ensure continual improvement of field accreditation process and which incorporate practical, effective, and clear standards of performance that are consistent with the needs of the environmental community as well as regulatory and industry specific requirements.

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California Withdraws from NELAP

By Lynn Bradley, TNI

On December 30, 2013, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) notified the NELAP Accreditation Council (AC) of its intent to withdraw from TNI's National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP). The NELAP AC accepted this withdrawal, effective January 31, 2014. As of February 1, 2014, CDPH does not hold a valid Certificate of Recognition as a NELAP Accreditation Body (AB) and is no longer able to issue NELAP accreditation certificates.

This action terminated the evaluation process for CDPH as a NELAP AB. For CDPH, as for other NELAP ABs, the evaluation process is a rigorous peer review. EPA Region 9 was part of the California Evaluation Team and thus Regional Office remained fully informed throughout the evaluation process. ABs normally address any findings by proposing and completing appropriate corrective actions, with that completion confirmed before the recommendation for renewal of an AB's Certificate of Recognition is approved by the Accreditation Council. Renewal is the expected outcome of an evaluation, and NELAP ABs believe that these evaluations are opportunities for improvement and a chance to learn from one another.

CDPH provided NELAP with contact information for all its primary NELAP-accredited laboratories and NELAP contacted each of those laboratories to advise that they needed to obtain primary NELAP Accreditation from another NELAP AB if they intended to remain a NELAP accredited laboratory. As of January 31, 2014, all of the California labs had applied to either Oregon's Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ORELAP) or Utah (one lab,) and were issued new NELAP accreditation certificates. A few of the California labs either chose to take more time or else to work only in California. None of the laboratories accredited by CDPH are "suspect" in any way, and no problems with the laboratories have become evident as a result of this transition. Site visits for the former California labs should be completed within 4-5 months.

Most of the NELAP Accreditation Bodies (ABs) will be able to transition the laboratories' secondary accreditations smoothly, now that the new primary certificates are in hand. A few NELAP ABs require that the lab has undergone its site assessment before they can issue secondary accreditation based on the new primary's certificate. NELAP's communication with the California labs urged them to contact each of their secondary accreditations promptly, so that labs should now be aware if possible short lapses in their secondary accreditations might occur, and would have had the chance to seek a different AB to avoid that situation. In addition, many NELAP ABs did pro-actively reach out to the CA labs holding secondary accreditations in their particular state to ensure that their requirements and timelines were clearly communicated.

NELAP is exceedingly grateful to each and every one of the TNI Proficiency Testing (PT) Providers who quickly and accurately provided summaries of the California labs' PT information to assist with the transition to a new primary AB. The NELAP AC also recognizes that ORELAP did an exceptional job of reviewing material for nearly thirty former California labs and issuing new certificates, in less than a month.

TNI sincerely hopes that California will re-apply to become a NELAP AB once its organizational location in the state executive branch is resolved and managers are in place within that new structure.

Small Lab Advocacy Group — Lab Survey

By Elizabeth Turner, Small Lab Advocate

The TNI Small Laboratory Advocacy Group (SLAG) is conducting a survey of its members and environmental laboratories to:

- Gain a better understanding of the demographics of our community;
- Gain a better understanding of the resources used by laboratories; and
- Gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by laboratories of different sizes.

Participants do not need to be an accredited laboratory through the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) or a small laboratory to participate in this survey.

The survey is will take 10 to 20 minutes to complete and you will not be required to answer each survey question. Everyone who completes the survey and provides the required contact information will receive a copy of the tabulated survey responses. The survey includes questions related to the number of samples analyzed per year and the number of tests performed by your laboratory. The survey will also inquire about the minimum education requirements for your laboratory's positions. It may be helpful to gather the educational information prior to starting the survey. The survey is designed so that it may be completed in multiple sessions and does not require participants to complete the survey at one time. Participants can re-enter the survey at a later time and as many times as desired to finish the answers to the survey questions. Please note that the survey is open through March 31, 2014 and located at the following site: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SLAG.

Please share the survey link with your laboratory contacts; we welcome responses from non-certified, certified and accredited laboratories of all sizes. Thank you for your participation in this important endeavor!

If you would prefer to complete a hardcopy of the survey or have questions or concerns, please contact the Small Laboratory Advocate at eturner@ntmwd.com.

ELAB's Findings and Recommendations on the Helium Shortage's Impact to the Analytical Community

By David N. Spies, QC Laboratories

USEPA's (the Agency) Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) is specifically chartered to provide the Agency with consensus advice, information and recommendations regarding the enhancement of measurement programs and the facilitation of the operation and expansion of national environmental laboratory accreditation. In 2013, the Agency requested that ELAB examine the impact of potential helium shortages to the analytical community. They also requested that ELAB determine whether the flexibility provided by 40 CFR 136.6 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) was sufficient for the substitution of alternatives gases to helium while meeting the requirements specified by 40 CFR 136.6.

In response to the Agency's charge, ELAB gathered information from numerous industry and government sources to determine the impact of short and long-term shortages on the analytical community. The recommendations provided by ELAB were intended to assist the Agency in determining whether further regulatory action was needed to allow the use of alternative gases in analytical methods.

The existing helium shortage was primarily regulatory induced. In the past, the helium supply had been managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which undervalued the commodity, selling helium for a loss. The legislative decision for BLM to sell off the reserves and exit the business created price spikes and supply shortages caused by a hesitancy of the private sector to make up for the shortages due to the lower price.

The shortage was resolved through legislative action with passage and signing of the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013. This bill averted an abrupt shutdown of the helium reserves on January 1, 2015, and allowed BLM, which controls 30 percent of the world's existing helium supply, to employ a more gradual, phased approach to the exit plan. The Act includes a new pricing model based on market conditions that will incentivize the private sector to expand its helium operations.

Although an acute shortage has been averted, a general supply shortage is likely to continue until private industry develops the capacity and capability to meet the demand. Once the production rate increases, helium availability will be less of an issue, but prices will be higher. Until that occurs, helium prices are expected to steadily increase. Helium users are being advised by suppliers to reduce consumption by using creative approaches to limit usage during inactive periods or substitute alternative gases if possible.

In response to the pending supply shortage, Dr. Steven Wendelken (USEPA Office of Water) issued a letter on March 19, 2012, indicating that the use of hydrogen was acceptable for drinking water methods, which stated the following:

> *"Per the terms of the Alternate Test Procedure (ATP) program, the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water's Technical Support Center (OGWDW/TSC) has determined that hydrogen is an acceptable carrier for gas chromatography and may be used in place of helium in drinking water compliance methods. This replacement is allowed as long as all of the quality control criteria in the method are met. Please consult your instrument manufacturer for any special instructions regarding this conversion."*

The Method Update Rule allows the use of hydrogen as a carrier gas as long as the method modification has been validated for CWA testing. This is accomplished through a method revision and comparative analysis using the new method version versus the current version. If comparable results are obtained with the revised version, the revision is considered validated. Although regulatory allowances have been established for the use of alternative gases, it was uncertain whether quality criteria or comparable performance can be achieved in every case that those alternatives are employed.

ELAB's Findings and Recommendations on the Helium Shortage's Impact to the Analytical Community cont.

ELAB collected information from approximately thirty sources that provided input on their experiences using helium alternatives. The information collected was very diverse ranging from claims that employing helium chromatographic carrier gas substitutes, hydrogen in particular, could be easily accomplished to the potential for equipment damage and an inability to achieve mass spectrometer tuning criteria when substitutes were employed.

Following the collection and evaluation of the available information ELAB recommended that the Agency pursue several options to assure that method QC criteria are achieved under 40 CFR 136.6 when alternative gases are employed for analysis as follows:

1. Emphasize that alternative gases are acceptable, provided that all method QC criteria can be achieved.

2. Make no changes to 40 CFR 136.6. Encourage the use of instrument manufacturer recommendations that limit the use of helium and employ alternative gases when instruments are not actively engaged performing analysis. The helium shortage is likely to be relatively short-lived; however, the increased costs are likely to be enduring. The commercial community can certainly implement cost containment procedures based on the higher price of helium going forward. In cases where it cannot, the additional cost will be passed on to the consumer.

3. Recommend hydrogen alternatives (with proper explosive warnings) for GC methods in which its use has no effect on the ability to achieve method QC criteria and comply with 40 CFR 136.6.

4. Include warnings and recommendations for the safe use of hydrogen in all situations in which hydrogen is employed. This includes the use of hydrogen sensors for equipment employing hydrogen and automatic gas shut-off systems when leaks are detected.

Finally, if these recommendations regarding 40 CFR 136.6 are implemented, ELAB concludes that 40 CFR 136 is sufficient as currently written to easily accommodate the use of helium alternatives.

The full text of ELAB's report to the Agency, which includes detailed information, provided by users and instrument manufacturers and will soon be posted to the ELAB newsroom: http://www.epa.gov/elab/newsroom.htm.

Handbook on Good Practices for Environmental Laboratories

By Carol Batterton, TNI

Over the next few months, members of the Advocacy Committee will be compiling a Handbook on Good Practices for Environmental Laboratories. This handbook will be based on EPA's 1979 ***Handbook for Analytical Quality Control in Water and Wastewater Laboratories***. The committee's goal for this handbook is to provide useful information to insure the reliability and validity of analytical laboratory data.

The Advocacy Committee is soliciting volunteers to help with this effort. Chapter headings and editors are listed below. First steps will include reviewing the existing manual to determine if significant changes are needed. If you are interested in assisting with any of these chapters, please contact me at carbat@beecreek.net.

INTRODUCTION: History of Environmental Laboratories (where we've been, where we are going?)
Editor: Jerry Parr

IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY CONTROL (how to implement in your lab, other references, Standard Methods, ASTM, etc., additional training opportunities)
Editor: Steve Arms

LABORATORY SERVICES (air, water, electricity, etc.)
Editor: Jerry Parr

SAMPLE HANDLING AND PREPARATION
Editor needed

INSTRUMENT SELECTION
Editors: Michael Wichman and Janice Willey

GLASSWARE
Editor: Sharon Mertens

REAGENTS, SOLVENTS, AND GASES
Editor: Sharon Mertens

QUALITY CONTROL FOR ANALYTICAL PERFORMANCE
Editors: Paula Hogg and Aurora Shields)

DATA HANDLING AND REPORTING (including statistics)
Editor: Jerry Parr

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR TRACE ORGANIC ANALYSIS
Editor: Steve Arms

SKILLS AND TRAINING
Editor: Elizabeth Turner

SAMPLE COLLECTION
Editor: Elizabeth Turner

MICROBIOLOGY
Editor needed

Standards Development Activities

By Ken Jackson, TNI

The revision and adoption of the **Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Standard** remains on target for 2015. The **Laboratory Proficiency Testing (PT) Expert Committee** is putting the finishing touches to the *Laboratory* requirements (Volume 1, Module 1) and *Accreditation Body* requirements (Volume 2, Module 2), and plans to present them to the membership as Voting Draft Standards (VDS) this Spring. A Working Draft Standard (WDS) for *PT Provider* requirements (Volume 3) is almost complete, and it is planned to present it for discussion and membership input by webinar, also in the Spring. Finally, the committee has started work on Volume 4 (*PT Provider Accreditor* requirements) and intends to present it as a WDS at the summer meeting in Washington, DC. The **Chemistry Expert Committee** amended the calibration standard, as a result of voters' comments collected during the VDS period. This document will be published shortly, together with the response -to-comments document describing the committee's action on every comment. The **Microbiology Expert Committee** received input at the Louisville meeting prior to developing a WDS for Volume 1, Module 5 and is planning a webinar in the near future to solicit more input. Also on track to develop a WDS is the **Radiochemistry Expert Committee** (Volume 1, Module 6), who previously gathered input during a webinar in November 2013.

In addition, both volumes of the **Field Activities and Sampling Measurement Organizations** Standards have gone through the standards development process and will be published as official TNI standards. Once this process is completed, application will be made to the American National Standards Institution (ANSI) for their designation as American National Standards. The **Stationary Source Audit Sample Committee** is developing Working Draft Standards for all three of its Modules. Meanwhile, the committee will soon be making a Tentative Interim Amendment (TIA) to Stationary Source Audit Sample Providers (Volume 1, Module 1) as a result of no adverse comments on the published standard proposal. The modification will enable the Audit Sample Providers to manufacture fewer differing lots of audit samples. The **Chemistry Expert Committee** is in the early stages of gathering input for a WDS on detection and quantitation related to field activities and sample measurement organizations.

NELAP Update

By Lynn Bradley, Program Administrator

The NELAP Accreditation Council (AC) has begun a new round of evaluations, as of December. Six new evaluations are underway and the remainder will be spaced out over the coming three years. There are two holdovers from the previous evaluation cycle, but those are rapidly coming to closure, with site visits completed and the reports written and transmitted. As you will see elsewhere in this edition of the Institute Review, California chose to withdraw from NELAP so there are now fourteen active Accreditation Bodies (ABs). The entire AC, and especially Oregon, worked hard to make the transition as easy as possible for the affected labs.

The new round of evaluations differs from previous cycles, in that the Lead Evaluator is a contractor rather than a federal or state employee. This was recommended to TNI and the AC when EPA determined not to mandate that its regional offices continue participation in the evaluation process. Two contracts are in place -- the primary one with Wade Consulting Services, and an "alternate" contract with AQS, Inc., in the event of a conflict of interest or some unforeseen need. These two were selected from among the responses to a formal Request for Proposal, where all technical responses were reviewed and scored by a 3-person panel with the cost portion of the responses reviewed by the TNI Finance Committee. Staff from the NELAP ABs will continue to participate in each team. All EPA regions were invited to participate and about half chose to do so.

The backlog of Standard Interpretation Requests (SIRs) has diminished considerably. Some SIRs have been approved and are now posted on the NELAP and TNI Standards Interpretations web page. Fewer than a dozen SIRs remain unresolved with the AC itself. On closer scrutiny, some SIRs were determined not to be actual requests for interpretations but rather "how to" questions; the submitters have been so notified and the Laboratory Accreditation Systems Executive Committee (LASEC) plans to address some of these through a series of "Frequently Asked Questions." Yet other SIRs have been sent back to the appropriate Expert Committee to address particular concerns with the initial interpretation. New SIRs continue to arrive and are processed in accordance with the updated SIR SOP 3-105 Rev 1.

Both LASEC and the AC are updating their SOPs for the review and eventual acceptance and implementation of new or updated standards. This is a sequential process flowing from the Corrective Action Task Force's recommendations – first the Standards Development SOP needed to be revised by the Consensus Standards Development Executive Committee, and now that is accomplished, the later stages of review for implementability (LASEC) and eventual acceptance (AC) can be updated, all in alignment with the procedural changes recommended.

At conference in Louisville, all parts of the NELAP program – the AC, LASEC and also the Laboratory Accreditation Body Expert Committee (LAB) – were briefed on the Draft Database Development Plan for a Generic Application, prepared by Dan Hickman, TNI's Database Administrator, with the Information Technology Committee (IT.) This activity was assigned to LAB by the AB Assistance Task Force, and LAB has worked with IT and the AC to bring together information to accomplish all the needed functions. Actual development of this database should begin soon, and we believe it will ease some of the burden of completing multiple applications for primary and secondary accreditations for the labs. Even if not all ABs choose to use it right away, it will surely ease the process for some!

LAB also created a listing of Contract Assessors (Third Party Assessors) and is seeking additional individuals and organizations to provide information for the listing page. Templates to facilitate comparison of various listings are provided along with the listings at http://www.nelac-institute.org/howto.php#pab1_5.

The AC reports regularly to the TNI Board of Directors about the status of ABs in implementing the 2009 TNI Environmental Laboratory Sector Standard (ELSS.) The report provided in February, 2014, is shown on the next page. Please note that conformance with the 2009 TNI ELSS is acceptable to all NELAP ABs.

NELAP Update cont.

Status of the Implementation of the 2009 TNI Standard listed by each Accreditation Body (AB)

AB	Standard in Effect Now	Status/Progress
FL	2003 NELAC	Officially adhering to 2003 NELAC, but in practice, allows either Standard. Is discussing awaiting the 2015 TNI Standard revisions to revise its regulations.
IL	2003 NELAC	Officially requires 2003 NELAC, but accepts 2009 TNI Standard. Is in early stages of rulemaking to transition to TNI ELSS.
KS	2003 NELAC	Regulation still requires 2003 NELAC, but accepts 2009 TNI Standard. Is discussing with counsel possible ways to avoid the need for rulemaking with future standard changes.
LA DEQ	2009 TNI ELSS	Transitioned to 2009 TNI Standard effective June 10, 2013.
LA DHH	2009 TNI ELSS	Transitioned to 2009 TNI Standard in December 2012.
MN	2003 NELAC	Accepts either Standard. Intends to change to 2009 TNI ELSS once its evaluation is completed.
NH	2003 NELAC	Accepts 2009 TNI ELSS.
NJ	Assessing to 2009 TNI Standard; each non-conformance has a citation for both the TNI and NELAC Standards.	
NY	2003 NELAC	Will transition to 2015 TNI Standard once adopted, skipping 2009 TNI ELSS, but assessment citations reference for both the 2009 and 2003.
OR	2009 TNI	Transition effective in 2011.
PA	2009 TNI	Transition accomplished fall of 2011.
TX	2009 TNI	Transition effective July 2011.
UT	2009 TNI	Completed transition in October 2011.
VA	2003 NELAC	Regulations to adopt the 2009 TNI Standard are in development.

Stationary Source Audit Sample (SSAS) Program Update

By Maria Friedman, SSAS Expert Committee Chair

The TNI SSAS Program continues to gain momentum as it heads into its 10th month of operation. To date, over 105 stack testers and 50 laboratories have participated in audit sample collection and analysis, and 90 regulatory agencies spanning 41 states have taken part. In all, over 1,300 results of audit sample analyses have been reported to the SSAS Central Database, and this number continues to grow each day.

Two Tentative Interim Amendments (TIAs) were approved for the TNI SSAS Standard, promoting the sustainability of the SSAS Program by ensuring that Audit Sample Providers will continue to supply audit samples in a timely and cost effective manner. The SSAS Expert Committee is currently working on updates to the TNI SSAS Standard, and plans to present a Working Draft Standard for public comments in the next three months.

For more information about SSAS, visit the TNI website or contact the Chair of the SSAS Expert Committee, Maria Friedman, at maria.friedman@testamericainc.com.

Additionally, the SSAS Expert Committee is seeking additional membership from representatives of Regulatory Agencies. Contact Maria for more information, and apply to join the committee by visiting the Member Page on the TNI website.

THE INSTITUTE REVIEW
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TNI's Laboratory Accreditation Management System

By Dan Hickman, TNI

The Laboratory Accreditation Management System (LAMS) is available by navigating to The NELAC Institute webpage and selecting the large orange button under "Resources" or by clicking here: TNI LAMS.

LAMS contains a search function for anyone interested in looking for an accredited laboratory. The search uses filters such as method, analyte, state, or matrix to assist in locating a particular laboratory. This web location is also where you will find all the current Method and Analyte tables. The Method table can be filtered by current EPA approval (Drinking Water or Waste Water), and the table also contains the technology, official title and method source.

One can refer to the table to find the actual approval date of Standard Method methods (listed as "Revision Date"). In addition, the analyte table is a great place to locate Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) numbers. Both the Analyte list and the Method list can be downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet by selecting the "csv" option at the top of each webpage.

Weblinks:
TNI Website
LAMS webpage

TNI On-Demand Training

By Ilona Taunton, TNI

Conferences and meetings are not the only way to take advantage of training courses offered through The NELAC Institute (TNI). The Institute offers a number of webcast trainings that can be taken to fit into your schedule. A menu of available courses can be found on the Educational Delivery System tab on the website. Once you select an On-Demand Training class, you will receive a link to the training. This link provides access to the webcast and any handouts or quizzes needed to take the class. You can view the course in time segments that work for you.

Once the course is finished you can contact Ilona Taunton to receive a Certificate. You will also be given the contact information for the course instructor so you can contact them with any questions you might have about the course material. Courses are offered on an individual basis or a group option may be purchased if multiple people at your location would like to attend the training. Please contact Ilona if you need assistance in planning group training sessions.

There are a number of courses/topics currently available and new courses are being added:

- NEFAP as seen through the FOG – Quality for Field Operations – Full Day
- NEFAP Assessor Training – TNI FSMO Standard Volume 1 – Full Day
- A series of 10 Brown Bag trainings - Practical Implementation of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Requirements. Topics in this series include Corrective Action, Ethics Training, Document Control, Internal Audits, etc… Each Topic is about 2 Hours.
- Implementing the 2009 TNI Standard – 4 half-day Sessions
- The 2012 EPA Method Update Rule – 1 Hour

Trainers are encouraged to contact Ilona and complete an online application for On-Demand training proposals to continue to meet the training and information needs of the TNI membership.

For training certificates, On-Demand Training Proposal applications or Group Training sessions, please contact: Ilona Taunton (Ilona.taunton@nelac-institute.org).

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TNI Spotlight:
Stephen Arpie, Absolute Standards, Inc.

By Stephanie Drier, TNI Advocacy Committee

About Stephen Arpie:

Stephen grew up in Corning, New York as part of a family with three brothers and three sisters. On growing up, **Stephen** would describe the household more so to resembled the fictional family of the 'The Waltons' more than 'The Brady Bunch'. The members of the family loved music and several played instruments. Today, **Stephen** has a family of his own that is comprised of his wife and two children. His wife is a native of France, so his wife and children maintain dual citizenship.

Favorite place Stephen has lived or visited:

Paris, because he met his wife there, on an American Airline's flight from Paris to New York. **Stephen** said he looked up towards her as she was boarding the plane and said, "Hey, you are late to get on the plane", and then they exchanged stories and phone numbers and the rest is history.

The importance of math education:

Stephen teaches math every morning to his two young children, because math skills are very important as they provide opportunities that tend to allow greater wealth and professional success. **Stephen** has an Associate's Degree in Mathematics from Corning Community College, Bachelor's Degree in Biochemistry from Southern Connecticut State University, and a Master's Degree in Analytical Chemistry from Southern Connecticut State University.

What drives Stephen towards success?

"I have a love for math and science, and great customers."

> *"I have a love for math and science, and great customers."*

His Adventures at Absolute Standards, Inc.:

He joined Absolute Standards, Inc. in July 1993 as an analytical chemist with an understanding of how important calibration was to standards preparation. "The opportunity to join this standards company offered an opportunity to build in the field of certified reference materials." **Stephen** was hired on as the Director, and wears many hats that include marketing and advertising, new product development, IT, and maintaining ISO Accreditations. **Stephen** also recognizes the talents and contributions of the additional 16 employees at Absolute Standards, Inc., who contribute greatly to the manufacturing and quality control.

The Absolute Standards, Inc. Difference:

Absolute Standards, Inc. is always planning for the future. Currently, the company has a growing demand to produce standards and proficiency testing for drugs that are commonly abused. Additionally, they are currently working on THC/POT standards and proficiency tests for the quality control of medical marijuana.

TNI Spotlight:
Stephen Arpie, Absolute Standards, Inc. cont.

Noteworthy accomplishments:

Surviving 21 years of accreditation, as Absolute Standards, Inc. maintains several accreditations (e.g. ISO 9001, 17025, 17043, ISO G-34 and DEA License).

Stephen finished the following statement:

TNI needs to… go to New York City, and then to Paris!

Stephen on retirement:

"I'll be in the South of France, working a temporary job at the Jacque Cousteau Institute, taking pH measurements and drinking wine."

One More Thing:

Call **Stephen** on his work phone, as his mobile phone is usually broken or has a dead battery.

Company Information: Absolute Standards, Inc.
City: Hamden, Connecticut, USA
Phone: 1-800-368-1131
Web: www.absolutestandards.com

Upcoming Meetings of Interest to Members

Department of Defense
Environmental Data Quality Workshop
April 10–12; Omaha, NE
http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Trade Fair
April 30 - May 1; Austin, TX
http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/

Florida Society of Environmental Analysts
Spring Meeting
May 21–23
Clearwater Beach, FL
http://www.fsea.net

The NELAC Institute
Environmental Measurement Symposium
August 4–8; Washington, DC
http://www.envmeasym.org

Water Environment Association of Texas
Laboratory Topics Biennial Conference
August 27-28
Allen, Texas
http://www.weat.org/

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