

The Institute Review

The NELAC Institute

Second Quarter 2007

Notes from the Chair

Welcome to the first issue of The NELAC Institute (TNI) newsletter! As you will see from the articles, a lot has happened since we met in Denver. One thing was the election of a new Board of Directors and the Board's election of officers. I want to express my thanks and appreciation to all of you for the support that resulted in my election to Chair. I pledge to you that I will do my best to honor the trust that you have placed in me.

The newly elected Board met in a strategic planning session in San Antonio on April 2 - 3, 2007. Several of the issues addressed at that time are discussed in other newsletter articles. I would like to call your attention to two other specific matters.

One of the issues that has been cited as an impediment to further adoption and implementation of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) standard by other states is the complexity of the standard as it applies to small laboratories. The Board discussed the possibility of "scaling" the standard to make it easier for small operations to comply. The summary points that were agreed to by the Board include:

- ◆ *There was consensus that we do not want to have multiple standards. By this we mean that the same quality system should apply to all labs.*
- ◆ *Documentation and management requirements should be appropriate to the scope of the lab rather than "one size fits all" as in the current standard.*
- ◆ *We need to look at the scope/function/complexity of a lab rather than size.*
- ◆ *TNI should bring interest groups to the table to talk about these concepts in detail.*

The Advocacy Committee will take the lead in contacting other organizations. We may need to support participation by some groups in our standards setting processes. We need to have discussions with others in TNI who are dealing with related issues including development of compliance tools. The Advocacy Committee has been charged with developing a proposal for the Board.

There was confusion at the Denver meeting regarding overlapping roles of some TNI Committees, particularly the Laboratory Accreditation System Committee (LASC) and the Technical Assistance Committee (TAC). The Board and Committee Chairs determined that the LASC primarily will be answering the "What do I do?" question and the TAC will work on "How do I do it?" You should see this clarification of roles play out in the future workings of these and other committees and programs.

TNI still has much to do and not everything is moving at the pace which we would like. However, much progress has been made due to the dedication of TNI volunteers and our wonderful support staff. Stayed tuned to the newsletter and the website for more information and, please, volunteer for participation in your particular areas of interest!!

— Judy Duncan



Special topics of interest:

- *New TNI Board seated April 2, 2007. Several positions are still vacant! (page 2)*
- *New TNI website is up and running and offers new features for members. (page 4)*
- *Interested in joining the new Website Committee? See page 3 for more information.*
- *The TNI Speaker's Bureau plays an active part in regional and national meetings. (page 4)*
- *TNI membership grows to over 500 members. (page 2)*

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Membership

Since the formation of TNI on November 6, 2006, we have grown to over 500 members. A snapshot of the members shows diverse stakeholder participation:

- ◆ Not surprisingly, with 39% of our membership, **Commercial Laboratories** are the largest group participating with 97 organizations in almost every state in the US.
- ◆ **Municipalities** (e.g., cities, counties, river authorities and other local government groups from 55 different entities) represent the second largest group with 22%.
- ◆ **State Agencies**, with individuals from 34 states and territories including representatives from state laboratories and state accreditation bodies, are 15% of our membership.
- ◆ At 3% of our memberships, the **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** is well represented with 7 regions and 5 program offices participating. **Other Federal Agencies**, including the US Geological Survey (USGS), Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Energy (DOE), are also at 3% of our membership.
- ◆ **Vendors**, those organizations that provide training, consulting services, proficiency test samples, and instruments and supplies to laboratories are 11% of our membership.
- ◆ All **Others**, including engineering firms, trade associations, lawyers, and retired individuals make up 7% of our membership.

You can get more information about our membership by going to the Membership Directory area of the TNI website. Note that this can be a valuable place to obtain contact information for other members.

New TNI Board Takes Office

TNI held the first election for the TNI Board of Directors (BOD) during the months of February and March. The new Board was seated on April 2, 2007 in San Antonio, TX, where the first strategic planning meeting was conducted. The newly elected Directors are:

Judy Duncan, Chair Oklahoma DEQ	Joe Aiello New Jersey DEP	Judy Morgan Environmental Science Corp.
David Speis, Vice-Chair Accutest Laboratories	Jack Farrell Analytical Excellence	Ken Olson DataChem Laboratories
Sharon Mertens, Treasurer City of Milwaukee	Ken Jackson New York DOH	Alfredo Sotomayor Wisconsin DNR
Steve Arms, Secretary Florida DOH	Tom McAninch Laboratory Consulting Services	Bob Wyeth Sewer Trent Laboratories
Aurora Shields, Past-Chair Kansas DHE	Dave Mendenhall Utah DOH	

Contact information can be found at the TNI website.

Several positions to the BODs are currently vacant. Because federal law restricts participation of federal employees as Directors of non-profit organizations, the TNI Nominating Committee deferred four positions in order to more fully understand this issue. The TNI Board of Directors believes several federal agencies are key stakeholder groups in the national accreditation effort and should participate on the Board, as allowed for by the Bylaws. This participation can occur by having individuals appointed by their organization as ex-officio (i.e., non-voting) Directors. TNI has requested DOD, DOE, EPA, and USGS to each designate individuals to serve as a liaison on the TNI Board to participate in the discussions, provide advice, and be a conduit of information to their organization on TNI's efforts.



Committee Members Needed

Many of our committees have openings for new Committee Members to begin serving three-year terms. As a Committee Member you will be expected to participate in the activities of the committee during their monthly teleconference calls. Further, although it is not required, you should plan on coming to at least one of the semi-annual meetings held each year.

If you are interested in serving on a committee, please complete the committee application form on the website and send it to Jerry Parr at jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org. After your information has been verified and entered into a database, the application form will be forwarded to all committees. Although the TNI policy on committee operations is not finalized, the TNI Board wants everyone to know that any TNI member can participate as an Associate Member of any committee by contacting the committee chair and indicating their desire to participate.



Contact TNI

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Advocacy Efforts

Last November, the TNI co-chairs, Judy Duncan and David Speis, sent a number of letters to key individuals within the EPA announcing the formation of TNI. Mike Shapiro, the Deputy Assistant Administrator (DAA) for the Office of Water has responded with a letter indicating support for the directions TNI has taken. A copy of this letter is on the TNI website. On April 23 - 24, the TNI Executive Director, Jerry Parr, and the TNI Advocacy Committee Chair, Aurora Shields, met with key individuals from the EPA Offices of Water and Solid Waste and provided the Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM) background information on TNI. These meetings were the first steps in a series of activities planned by the Advocacy Committee to better understand EPA's needs relative to data quality.

The Advocacy Committee has also begun reaching out to other trade associations to better understand their concerns about national accreditation and this year has started a process of establishing a dialogue with the following organizations:

- ◆ American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL),
- ◆ American Water Works Association (AWWA),
- ◆ Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL),
- ◆ National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), and
- ◆ Water Environment Federation (WEF).

STRATEGIC PLANNING EFFORT UNDERWAY

The newly elected TNI Board of Directors and the committee chairs met on April 3 - 4 in San Antonio to draft a strategic plan for TNI. During the meeting, a series of worksheets were completed that, when finalized, will describe the goals for each TNI program. TNI staff are currently summarizing all of this information with the goal that the strategic plan can be presented to the membership in August at the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation.

News from TNI Programs

Consensus Standards Development Board

The TNI Consensus Standards Development Board (CSDB) and all five TNI Expert Committees met during the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation in Denver.

The Field Activities, Accreditation Body, and On-Site Assessment Expert Committees posted their Interim Standard modules in advance of the Forum and briefly answered questions about their modules during their Forum sessions. Most of the agenda time for these committee meetings was devoted to discussing next steps towards implementation of these modules. The ongoing work of these Expert Committees is shifting to the process of assisting the Laboratory Accreditation System and the Technical Assistance Committees with policies, guidance documents, and other tools that will be needed to support the implementation of these modules in the laboratory accreditation process.

The Interim Standard modules from these Committees will be posted for preview March 15 in advance of the TNI membership vote to adopt the modules as Final Standards. The vote will take place April 1 to April 30 via the TNI website.

The Quality System (QS) and Proficiency Testing (PT) Committees solicited additional comments on their Working Draft Standard modules, while meeting at the Denver Forum. The official Working Draft Standards comment period closed on February 19, 2007. Both Committees are now reviewing and processing those comments over a 90-day window with the goal of issuing Draft Interim



Website Committee News

TNI has formed a Website Committee to improve the functionality of the current website. Among many action items for this group is to migrate information from the old NELAC website onto the TNI site. While individuals with expertise in web design are welcome to join the committee, such expertise is not a prerequisite. The primary goal of this committee will be to decide what functionality should be on the web site and prioritize the development. The actual building of these tools may be done by the committee, by TNI staff, or by outside contractors. If you are interested in joining this committee, please contact the committee chair, Art Clark at clark.arthur@epa.gov.



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News from TNI Programs cont.

Standards for TNI membership ballot and comment in advance of the TNI-NEMC (National Environmental Monitoring Conference) meeting in August 2007.

The Consensus Standards Development Board (CSDB) met to approve the TNI Procedures for Expert Committee Operations document and to discuss the formation of ad hoc CSDB Committees addressing Uniformity of Standards and Standards Policy Review and Development.

TNI NELAP Board

The TNI National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Board is focusing on developing a procedure for renewing existing accreditation bodies under the TNI structure. The TNI NELAP Board took comments in Denver and most commenters appeared to favor a process that kept the EPA involved and perhaps incorporated a contractor as the assessment coordinator. The TNI NELAP Board believes that EPA involvement with this process should satisfy the EPA's primary requirements for the Drinking Water Program. The TNI NELAP Board has set early summer as the target date to have the new procedure defined. The TNI NELAP Board is also reviewing the draft documents that the EPA regional evaluators' group has developed for use in evaluating accreditation bodies. The TNI Board of Directors is working with the EPA to define and formalize their level of participation in the evaluation process.

The NELAP Board has also developed a voting procedure which describes the voting process to be used by the TNI NELAP Board for making decisions. The types of decisions that the board has defined include general business decisions, decisions that affect accreditation, and decisions regarding the approval or renewal of accreditation bodies. The voting process will have different requirements depending on which type of vote is before the group.

Laboratory Accreditation System Committee

The Laboratory Accreditation System Committee has organized subcommittees to review the 2003 NELAC standard and previous NELAC policies to determine what TNI policies for laboratory accreditation need to be developed. The first priority for the committee is the development of a draft policy for standards interpretation. This policy will spell out how differences in standards interpretation and application among accreditation bodies will be reported to and resolved by the Laboratory Accreditation Committee in conjunction with the TNI NELAP Board.

PT Board

The TNI Proficiency Testing (PT) Board's primary objective at this time is to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) and policies needed in order for the TNI PT Board to assume NELAC PT Board tasks. This Board met in Denver and received comments on their draft charter and SOPs and other procedures needed. The draft SOPs are being circulated to the Laboratory Accreditation committee and TNI NELAP Board for review and comment prior to finalizing.

National Database Committee

The National Database Committee met in Denver and responded to comments received on the national database IT Quality Assurance (QA) plan. The committee had a face to face meeting on April 5-6 to draft the database development plan for the national database. The goal is to have a final plan presented at the summer meeting.

TNI CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS — WEBSITE

You may check the TNI website Events Calendar for future schedule of all TNI Committee meetings. Please contact the applicable Expert Committee Chair if you wish to receive details on teleconference arrangements. The meeting minutes for each committee are also posted.

Do not forget a web-based forum for members is available. You can use this forum to post your comments and suggestions and to communicate with other members.



The Speaker's Bureau

TNI's Advocacy Committee is charged with maintaining a Speaker's Bureau, an informal, ad-hoc group of individuals that are willing to attend regional and national meetings and give presentations on behalf of TNI. The following meetings will have someone representing TNI at the meeting and providing information about our organization and activities:

- *Texas Environmental Trade Fair: May 2, Austin, Texas*
- *Florida Society of Environmental Analysts: May 26, St. Petersburg, Florida*
- *EPA's Quality Conference: June 11-15, Cleveland, Ohio*
- *Association of Public Health Laboratories: June 3-5, Jacksonville, Florida*

If you would like to have someone at your meeting, contact Lara Autry at autry.lara@epa.gov.



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Past and Future Meetings

Report from Denver

The Forum on Laboratory Accreditation held in Denver from January 28 through February 2, 2007 was a productive meeting with close to 250 attendees. The highlight of the meeting was the extensive working sessions of the new TNI committees. A number of presentation topics such as the formation of The NELAC Institute, and presentations from the Assessor Forum, have been posted on the TNI website (<http://www.nelac-institute.org>) under *Presentations*.

All Play and No Work?

The Greek word "symposium" is defined as convivial meeting for drinking, music, and intellectual discussion. Although the days in Denver were spent in intellectual discussion, the conference participants had an opportunity to fully embrace the tradition of a symposium during two evening receptions sponsored by our exhibitors (i.e., Advanced Systems, Analytical Products Group, Artel, Environmental Express, Environmental Resource Associates [ERA], NSI Solutions, ManSci, Promium, RT Corporation, Scott Specialty Gases, and Wibby Environmental). ERA invited conference participants to a dinner at the Denver Museum of Natural History. The museum exhibits were opened to everyone and a planetarium show about black holes "Beyond Infinity" was shown. Many of those in attendance also took time out on Thursday night to go bowling.

Environmental Measurements Symposium in Cambridge, MA

The next **Forum on Laboratory Accreditation** will be in Cambridge, MA from August 20 - 24, 2007. This year, the Forum is being held concurrently with the **National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC)**. This change will reduce the travel costs and time commitments for those who have attended both meetings and provide new opportunities for those who have only participated in one of these events. This is an exciting development because NEMC focuses on the latest innovations in environmental monitoring; many technical papers will be presented at this meeting. This partnership will also allow communications with other environmental professionals.

Most of the TNI committees will be meeting to present the results of their efforts over the last six months and a number of special sessions are being planned as well. Michael Shapiro, the Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of Water, will give the keynote address on the activities of EPA's Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM). This will be followed by a special presentation on recent EPA activities to implement the performance approach. In addition, a special session on *Detection and Quantitation Limits* will occur on Wednesday, August 23. This session will focus on activities of EPA's Federal Advisory Committee on detection and quantitation.

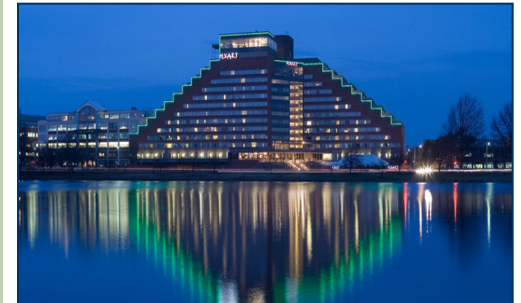
TNI will be offering the following training courses in conjunction with the Cambridge Forum:

- ◆ *Metals Speciation Analyses*
- ◆ *Collision Cell ICPMS*
- ◆ *Manual Integration*
- ◆ *Uniform Federal Quality Assurance Project Plan*
- ◆ *Tools to Calculate and Evaluate Measurement Performance*

The Forum will be held at the Hyatt Regency on the Charles River across from Boston. An important part of this conference will be the Exhibits and Receptions to be held Monday and Wednesday evening. If you are interested in exhibiting, please contact Jerry Parr at jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org. More details about the conference will be available on the website in early May.



TNI Board and others enjoy a night of bowling in Denver.



Site for the 2008 Forum on Laboratory Accreditation

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OTHER NEWS

■ On March 12, 2007, EPA published 40 CFR Part 122, 136, et al. Guidelines Establishing Test Procedures for the Analysis of Pollutants Under the Clean Water Act; National Primary Drinking Water Regulations; and National Secondary Drinking Water Regulations; Analysis and Sampling Procedures; Final Rule, or what is commonly known as the Methods Update Rule (MUR). This rule affects sampling procedures and analytical methods for wastewater and drinking water as required by the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The MUR has a great impact on accreditation programs and accredited laboratories. The rule included:

- ◆ the addition of vendor-developed methods;
- ◆ new EPA and Voluntary Consensus Standard Body (VCSB) methods;
- ◆ updated versions of currently approved methods;
- ◆ revised method modification and analytical requirements;
- ◆ withdrawal of certain outdated methods; and
- ◆ changes to sample collection, preservation, and holding time requirements.

The MUR also added a provision that allows for the flexibility to automate analysis by an approved CWA method. A letter on this issue was published by EPA April 2, 2007.

■ On March 27, 2007, EPA published 40 CFR Part 136 and 503. Guidelines Establishing Test Procedures for the Analysis of Pollutants; Analytical Methods for Biological Pollutants in Wastewater and Sewage Sludge; Final Rule. This rule includes new methods for E.Coli, Enterococci, fecal coliform, and Salmonella. A new table for has been added to include all approve microbiological methods for ambient waters.

■ On April 10, 2007, EPA published in the federal register an action notice for "Expedited Approval of Test Procedures for the Analysis of Contaminants Under the Safe Drinking Water Act; Analysis and Sampling Procedures." This proposal will establish a new process for the approval of alternative testing methods for drinking water compliance samples. The publication can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/openc.html>.

■ EPA has made available a new document to help users of CWA chemical methods with technical advice. The document, "Solutions to Analytical Chemistry Problems with Clean Water Act Methods", is a revision of the "Pumpkin Book" that contains enhancements, such as more information on inorganic chemistry methods; citations to regulations that provide a more performance-based approach to method modifications, and updated solutions to analytical problems. The publication can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/methods/>.

■ EPA has also announced a group email, OSTCWAMethods@epa.gov, that the EPA methods team monitors for questions about CWA methods.



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.



TNI Merchandise Available!



TNI has made available for purchase by members a black Pima Pique knit cotton polo shirt with the TNI logo in gold.

The shirt is available in a variety of men's and women's sizes for \$35.00.

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Organizational Members

We are grateful for the generosity of the organizations that have joined us as members:

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Oklahoma DEQ
TestAmerica Analytical Testing Corp.

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Stakeholder Group:
A = Accreditation body
L = Laboratory
O = Other



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