



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAR 1 2007

OFFICE OF
WATER

Ms. Judy Duncan
Mr. David Speis
Co-Chairs, The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 822
Weatherford, TX 76086

Dear Ms. Duncan and Mr. Speis:

Thank you for your letter of January 22, 2007, and congratulations on the formation of The NELAC Institute (TNI). I am pleased to note the progress that TNI has made over the past several months.

As we discussed during our September meeting, EPA looks forward to collaborating with TNI, building upon the OW/NELAC collaboration over the past 10+ years, as TNI seeks to further develop and expand the accreditation program.

With respect to our drinking water program, we are committed to the following:

- continued participation in key TNI meetings (e.g., the November 2006 Chesapeake Summit, the January 2007 TNI meeting, the upcoming August 2007 TNI meeting);
- continued participation on the Proficiency Test (PT) Board;
- regular participation in the monthly Regional Evaluators' meetings;
- consultation regarding the development of TNI's accreditation standards; and
- revision of the Drinking Water Laboratory Certification Manual to include an additional emphasis on quality-systems.

With respect to the wastewater program, we note that laboratory accreditation for programs under the Clean Water Act are designed and operated by permitting authorities, typically states. We support TNI's efforts to coordinate with states on the operation of their wastewater accreditation programs.

We understand that the goal of TNI is to establish a truly national program, which will require further buy-in from across the states. As TNI evaluates options for the design of its standards and structure of its program, we encourage you (at least for

drinking water purposes) to further examine OW's drinking water Laboratory Certification program and Laboratory Certification Manual. Because the Laboratory Certification Manual and program have evolved over a long period of time (with input from a large number of stakeholders) and are generally widely supported, they may be appropriate models for TNI to consider as the organization pursues its goals.

I wish you well and look forward to our further collaboration with TNI.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Shapiro". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Michael H. Shapiro
Deputy Assistant Administrator

cc: Cynthia Dougherty
Ephraim King
Nanci Gelb
Pam Barr
Phil Oshida
Mary Smith
Lara Autry