

Summary of Advocacy Committee Meeting
May 5, 2016

1. Call to order

Steve Arms called the meeting to order at 12:00 Noon CDT, May 5, 2016. Attendance is recorded in Attachment 1. Since Carol Batterton was unable to attend, Lynn Bradley agreed to prepare minutes for this meeting.

2. Approval of minutes

Minutes from April 7, 2016, could not be approved because a fifty percent quorum was not present. Steve asked that any corrections be sent to Carol.

3. Newsletter update

Newsletter publication is expected shortly, once registration for the summer meeting opens. Final QA testing of TNI's newly developed meeting registration software is underway and should be completed within a few days.

4. New Outreach Issue from the Executive Director

Jerry Parr, TNI's Executive Director, has established a conceptual agreement with ACIL to share information that might be useful for each organization's members. To this end, ACIL provided Jerry with an announcement about its Customer Quality Service Award along with a short list of upcoming training webinars. Jerry wanted to discuss with Advocacy whether these items would interest many TNI members who are not already connected with ACIL, and whether we should invite additional organizations to join with TNI in a similar information-sharing partnership.

One participant suggested that perhaps we should develop some criteria for such partnerships, but consensus was that, for simple information dissemination – a low resource investment – this would be unnecessary. Participants agreed that including the ACIL-provided information in the upcoming newsletter as an article would be acceptable, and perhaps with a text box in the article inviting other groups to share and exchange information with TNI, as well.

5. Strategic Plan Advocacy Items

Multiple action items from TNI's Strategic Plan are assigned to the Advocacy Committee, especially two priority items:

1. Work with the EPA Office of Water to ensure that the TNI laboratory accreditation standard is deemed “equally effective” to the Drinking Water Certification Manual (DWCM).
 - Monitor changes to the DWCM.
2. Develop a document that summarizes the differences and similarities of the TNI and EPA Drinking Water programs. (Distill down from the crosswalk).

About the first item, participants were uncertain what it actually means. The EPA memo formally recognizing that NELAP accreditation is acceptable in place of drinking water certification for laboratories remains valid and has not been withdrawn. (NOTE also that the TNI standard continues to state that program requirements must be followed in addition to those of the standard.)

A formal crosswalk between the NELAC standard and the Certification Manual was done at one point, but found to be too complex to be useful. Still, TNI members and committees do indeed monitor changes to the Certification Manual.

Additionally, only EPA determines what “equally effective” actually means, and no guidance for that determination has been issued. The various non-NELAP state programs have widely different requirements and not all strictly follow the Certification Manual, but are all accepted by EPA as being adequate to support state regulation of state drinking water programs. Some of the non-NELAP states will recognize NELAP accreditations, some have a partial recognition with additional information required, and some accept only the state’s own audits of laboratories. Some are based on a quality systems approach, while others are strictly based on technical requirements, but the presumption is that every state implements its program consistently and audits its labs consistently – for both NELAP and non-NELAP states.

That said, perhaps TNI should consider restating its goal to articulate that the Certification Manual’s technical requirements approach and a quality systems approach are equal. Participants wrestled with how to accomplish this – to establish what criteria determine data quality and work backwards from there, or perhaps investigate what criteria the EPA regions use to evaluate the individual state programs. If, after further consideration, we determine that the goal as currently stated needs revision, then we can take that recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Given that EPA’s Technical Support Center for the drinking water program is presently looking at state programs in light of recent long-standing contamination issues, participants decided that now is a good time to reach out to that program leader, Carrie Miller in Cincinnati, and have a broad general discussion that establishes TNI’s desire to keep up with any drinking water program changes and retain the acceptable status for NELAP-accredited labs. Steve agreed to call Carrie about this topic.

Following establishment of that action item, Steve suggested walking through the Strategic Plan and evaluating status of all items assigned to Advocacy. Those discussions were shorter and are summarized below.

Goal 1.1 – this is a visionary but unlikely objective, to have all states use the TNI standard for accreditation. Still, many more states incorporate the TNI standard into their certification programs in some way, even if they don't recognize NELAP accreditations, *per se*. Our ongoing outreach keeps this objective in sight.

Goal 2.1 – three objectives here involve assistance and incentives for voting and having more members volunteer to be involved with TNI activities. Steve noted that our ongoing communications through the newsletter and occasional emails help achieve these objectives. Completion of both the generic application and the upgraded access to the compendium of methods will bring an additional communication later this year, announcing that the help page for the generic application is available as well as an improved access tool for the compendium.

Voting on standards is encouraged by changes in the standards development process, providing webinars to discuss changes at the onset of voting for individual module revisions as well as an additional review layer by LASEC.

Our systems for encouraging volunteers still needs improvement. The new member reception in Tulsa was promising, and Jerry committed to checking the committee applications to see if any of the attendees have submitted since Tulsa. One participant noted that we long-timers definitely need to mentor younger replacements, as the original NELAC participants are retiring rapidly. Jerry noted that he now offers a free 6-month introductory membership, where individuals may “try out” TNI while presumably awaiting processing of their request for payment by their employer or for other reasons.

Additional goals remain to be discussed, beginning with Goal 2.2.

6. Ambassadors

Ambassador reports were not invited due to time shortage.

7. Handbook

One additional handbook chapter was circulated for review before sending it for final editing. This item was not addressed during the meeting.

8. Review of QS Position Paper

This item was not addressed due to time constraints.

9. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Advocacy Committee will be June 2, 2016. The agenda will include discussion of the drinking water crosswalk and position statements.

Attachment 1

	Name	Stakeholder Group	Present/Absent
1.	Lara Phelps	EPA (Other)	Present
2.	Steve Arms	Other	Present
3.	Lynn Bradley	Other	Present
4.	Stephanie Drier	Lab	Absent
5.	Martina McGarvey	AB	Absent
6.	Stacie Metzler	Lab	Absent
7.	Zonetta English	Lab	Present
8.	Marlene Moore	Other and NEFAP	Absent
9.	Elizabeth Turner	Small Lab Advocate	Absent
10.	Gary Ward	AB	Absent
11.	Michael Wichman	Lab	Present
12.	Janice Willey	Federal	Absent
13.	Trinity O'Neal	Lab	Present
14.	Robin Cook	Lab	Absent
	Associate Members		
	Kirstin Daigle	Lab	Absent
	Judy Morgan	Lab	Absent
	Aurora Shields	Lab	Absent
	JoAnn Boyd	Lab and FAC	Absent
	Judy Duncan	Other	Absent
	Kenneth Jackson	Other	Absent
	Keith Chapman	Other	Absent
	Sharon Mertens	TNI Board Chair	Present
	Teresa Coins	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Andrea Teal	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Devon Morgan	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Bob Pullano	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Lee Wolf	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Paul Junio	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Staff		
	Jerry Parr	TNI ED	Present
	Carol Batterton	TNI PA	Absent

Attachment 2

Regional Meetings

Event	Date	TNI Speaker
AIHA, Falls Church, Virginia Contact: Cheryl Morton	March 17, 2016	Marlene Moore
Texas Water, Fort Worth, Texas Contact: Elizabeth Turner	April 22, 2016	Jerry Parr and Carol Batterton
Kansas Laboratory Education Association, Manhattan, Kansas Contact:	May 3, 2016	Robin Cook
TCEQ Trade Fair, Austin, Texas Contact:	May 3-4, 2016	Jerry Parr
Oregon Environmental Laboratory Association, Salem, Oregon Contact:	May 11, 2016	Jerry Parr
Michigan WEA Lab Practices Seminar, East Lansing Michigan Contact:	May 18, 2016	Monitor for possible participation next year
Florida Society of Environmental Analysts, Sand Key, Florida Contact: Suzanne R.?	May 25-27, 2016	Steve Arms
NYAAEL/PaAAEL 2015 Environmental Laboratory Convention, State College, PA Contact:	July 17-19, 2016	Martina McGarvey
VA AWWA/VWEA Lab Practices Conference, Charlottesville, VA Contact: Peter DeLisle	July 25-26, 2016	Stacie Metzler
Georgia Association of Water Professionals (WEF MA) Contact: Jeff Fulton	Fall Meeting	Monitor/contact
Laboratory Section of ORWEF School Contact: Kristin Thomas and Chuck Lytle	March 2017	Monitor/contact