

**Field Activities Committee Meeting
January 14, 2009
Forum on Laboratory Accreditation
Miami, FL**

Committee members present:

Marlene Moore, Chair

David Speis

Pat Conlon

Elaine Sorbet

Jan Wilson

Mike Miller

John Moorman

Jane Wilson, Program Administrator

Marlene Moore welcomed the group and the attendees gave self introductions. Many attendees were at the morning keynote address during which Marlene reviewed the Field Activities Committee activities and provided an overview of the National Environmental Field Activities Accreditation Program (NEFAP) feasibility plan.

NEFAP Feasibility Plan Review

Marlene described how she had developed the feasibility plan from previous work of the committee and interactions with TNI Board, TNI staff, etc. She noted that it will be reviewed by TNI Board during their meeting on Friday January 16th.

For implementation of the TNI Field Activities standards, nothing is in place to ensure consistency among different accreditation bodies (ABs) that might offer service to the TNI standards. When trying to incorporate the framework of a program into the existing TNI structure, the field activities sector has not been recognized as being part of NELAP. While the feasibility plan describes what the framework of a new NEFAP program may look like, it does not attempt to provide too much detail at this point, so as to provide flexibility to the TNI Board on implementation of the plan.

NEFAP Structure:

In the proposed NEFAP Board membership, some of the defined members may have dual roles in terms of who they represent, e.g., one person could be both an AB and a member of the Field Activities Committee. It was suggested to redefine the membership as stakeholder groups only. It can be described as an uneven number of members from all interested stakeholders that has balance with respect to interest group and media. The NEFAP Board should be included in the TNI bylaws, which may need to specify a number of members. The Board should be as small as possible while still providing representation to all stakeholders. Depending on the number of interested ABs, a separate AB committee could be formed that reports to the NEFAP Board.

The Structure section of the feasibility plan should also provide a brief description of what functions each part of the structure will provide.

The attendees discussed how the Stationary Source Audit Sample (SSAS) project fits into the overall vision of NEFAP. Marlene stated that the SSAS process should continue on its own path for the time being, as it is not clear how it relates to the NEFAP structure. The field activities standards provide for a proficiency testing program, but audit samples are intended for a different purpose. There are some similarities to the DMRQA program, but audit samples are performed for a compliance event. Audit samples and field activities proficiency testing may merge at some point down the road. Regulators will have to decide which provides more value.

What role does the Consensus Standards Development Board (CSDB) have in NEFAP? The Field Activities Chair will continue to provide the liaison role to CSDB. The CSDB doesn't address the technical content of the standards, just the compliance to the consensus process.

Goals and Objectives:

The feasibility plan doesn't address the costs of the program – who pays for it? It is anticipated that ABs would pay fees to be ABs, ABs charge fees to accredit field organizations, etc. In other schemes, each AB pays for their own people so there are many different options to be considered. ABs could use a peer evaluation process rather than an assessment. In peer evaluation, there are no “non-conformities”, the evaluation provides findings of “inconsistency” instead.

The committee is considering a pilot program in which the program would be implemented by just a segment of the industry, such as stack testing. This would allow the NEFAP Board to put procedures in place on a temporary basis to learn from the pilot.

Marlene emphasized the need to make sure the TNI community understands that the same goals of TNI are intact for the NEFAP, but there are some differences that need to be accommodated for field activities. There is a blur between where laboratories end and field activities begin. It's evolving state by state. It may be possible to expand under NELAP for labs that also do sampling instead of managing them under a separate program. But organizations that just do sampling would not be included under that type of program.

The attendees discussed how ABs would be managed. FSMOs should not request to be accredited by a specific AB. A mutual recognition system will help address this. The goal is to have multiple TNI recognized ABs in the market. ILAC signatory requirements or NACLA requirements can limit the market in some programs.

Mike Miller motioned to adopt the NEFAP proposal as amended by meeting discussion. Pat Conlon seconded. All were in favor.

Other business

Patrick Conlon is resigning from the Field Activities committee and joining the Quality Systems expert committee.

Marlene noted that additional committee members are still needed and explained the TNI application process.

The January 5th meeting minutes will be approved at next scheduled meeting. Marlene will send out the date for next conference call.