

# The Institute Review

www.nelac-institute.org

Second Quarter 2011

## 2011 Environmental Measurement Symposium

By Lara Autry, USEPA and Jerry Parr, TNI

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 Bellevue on Seattle's east side from August 15 – 19, 2011. This will mark the fifth consecutive year the meetings have been combined and the sixth year TNI and EPA have co-sponsored NEMC.

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;
- ◆ Three training courses;
- ◆ Three special keynote presentations on topics of general interest;
- ◆ A special half-day session on responding to environmental disasters; and
- ◆ An open meeting of the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board.



**REGISTER TODAY!**

Deadline for pre-registration for the August 2011 Conference is:

**July 25, 2011**

### FORUM ON LABORATORY ACCREDITATION

The NELAC Institute's (TNI's) semi-annual meeting is an integral part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium (Symposium). Throughout this issue of The Institute Review, there are multiple articles provided to prepare you for the meeting: the mentoring sessions, the Assessment Forum, training courses, and the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC), which is held jointly with the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation under the Symposium. This article summarizes the meetings of TNI's four core programs. As these sessions become further developed, additional details will be available on the TNI website at <http://www.nelac-institute.org>.

#### ► Consensus Standards Development Program

The purpose of this program is to develop consensus standards for use by TNI's other programs. This program also has a support role in assisting other programs with activities such as guidance and standards interpretation. The Proficiency Testing (PT) and Quality Systems (QS) Committees will be discussing new Working Draft Standards that need to go through the consensus process. The Field Activities Committee will be discussing proposed changes to the field standards. The recently formed Environmental Measurement Methods Expert Committee (EMMEC) will be continuing their efforts on developing guidance for Minimum Practices for Scientifically Valid Calibration Procedures and Assessment. The Stationary Source Audit Sample (SSAS) Committee will be discussing the latest developments in the TNI SSAS Program in response to the EPA's approval of the TNI program.



Editor-In-Chief  
Lynn Bradley, TNI

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## 2011 Environmental Measurement Symposium (cont.)

Consensus Standards Development Program committee meetings are:

- ◆ Environmental Measurement Methods: Tuesday all day
- ◆ Field Activities: Thursday afternoon
- ◆ Laboratory Accreditation Body: Monday afternoon
- ◆ Laboratory On-Site Assessment: Monday afternoon
- ◆ Laboratory Quality Systems: Wednesday afternoon
- ◆ Proficiency Testing: Monday afternoon
- ◆ Stationary Source Audit Sample (SSAS): Wednesday afternoon

### ► Proficiency Testing Program

The purpose of the Proficiency Testing (PT) Executive Committee is to establish and maintain a national PT program to support a national environmental accreditation program. The Committee will meet on Monday, August 15, 2011 to discuss:

- ◆ Revised Fields of Proficiency Testing (FoPT) for chemistry
- ◆ Using the data in the PT database for future FoPT table updates

### ► National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP)

The purpose of the National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP) is to establish and implement an accreditation program for field sampling and measurement organizations (FSMOs). The NEFAP Executive Committee will meet Wednesday, August 17 to continue discussions on implementing an accreditation program for FSMOs.

### ► National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP)

The purpose of NELAP is to establish and implement a program for the accreditation of environmental laboratories. The Laboratory Accreditation System Executive Committee will meet on Thursday afternoon and the NELAP Accreditation Council will meet Thursday morning. The Technical Assistance Committee, that is sponsoring the Assessment Forum and Mentor sessions, will have a working lunch meeting on Wednesday. Topics in these meetings will include:

- ◆ Implementation of the new TNI Standards, including discussions with PT Providers.
- ◆ Building the program, including an update on new Accreditation Bodies (ABs) and an update on the on-going AB renewal evaluations underway.

## NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING CONFERENCE (NEMC)

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 (US EPA). The technical program is organized by a committee of environmental experts from government and private industry, which brings together a balance of technical and policy topics for each year's symposium with interest to all. NEMC 2011 will feature over 150 presentations and posters organized into concurrent technical sessions from Monday through Thursday with a general session on Wednesday morning featuring presentations on responding to environmental disasters. A keynote address on a major topic will kick-off the start of each day.

Technical Sessions for NEMC 2011 include:

### Monday, August 15

- ◆ Advanced Clean-up and Sample Preparation Techniques
- ◆ Air Methods and Monitoring
- ◆ Chromate: Prevalence and Analysis in Soil and Water
- ◆ USEPA Office of Water Method Activities

### Tuesday, August 16

- ◆ Analysis of Metallic Species and Organometallics
- ◆ Challenges in Low Concentration Nutrient Analyses



### *Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB)*

*ELAB is a Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) board to the US Environmental Protection Agency (i.e., EPA or the Agency) chartered to provide advice, information, and recommendations on enhancing the Agency's measurement programs and facilitating the operation and expansion of a national environmental accreditation program.*

*The Board has been very effective in their interactions with the Agency through recommendations to improve implementation efficiency, simplify requirements for the affected community, and limit the economic impact of rules and policies. Come hear the latest efforts of ELAB during their Open Forum Meeting on Monday, August 15, 2011 in Bellevue, WA and raise new areas of concern affecting the industry for their consideration.*




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## 2011 Environmental Measurement Symposium (cont.)

- ◆ Electronic Data Integrity
- ◆ Oil Spill Damage Assessment and Restoration

### Wednesday, August 17

- ◆ General Session (AM):
  - Responding to Environmental Disasters
  - EPA's Scientific Efforts for the Gulf Spill
  - Research Needs from the Gulf Oil Spill
  - BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: An Industry Perspective
- ◆ Breakout Sessions (PM):
  - Drinking Water Methods
  - Operational and Advocacy Issues Impacting the Environmental Laboratory Industry
  - Environmental Monitoring Needs Following Environmental Disasters

### Thursday, August 15

- ◆ Air Methods and Monitoring
- ◆ Contaminated Sediments and Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Products
- ◆ Creative Solutions in Academic Research
- ◆ Environmental Monitoring Needs Following Environmental Disasters
- ◆ Establishing a Geochemical Baseline for North American Soils
- ◆ Current Topics in Microbiology
- ◆ Innovative Approaches to Analysis for Conventional and Emerging Pollutants

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!!!

## Training Courses at the Environmental Measurement Symposium

By Ilona Taunton, TNI

As part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium, three training courses on a variety of topics are being offered on Friday, August 19. A brief summary of each course is provided below; with more information available at: <http://www.nelac-institute.org/meetings.php>. Please remember to register for each course you wish to attend, since seating is limited. An additional charge from the general registration fee also may apply.

### ***Collecting and Handling Water Samples per EPA Method 1669 for Low-Level Mercury and Trace Metals Analyses***

The objective of this unique course is to teach the information and skills necessary for the proper collection and handling of water samples per EPA Method 1669. This course will combine classroom instruction with practical experience for collecting ambient water samples for the analysis of low-level total and dissolved mercury, in addition to other trace metals, as well as, various metals species including methylmercury and inorganic arsenic species. The course will include half-day in the classroom with lectures covering the circumstances under which low-level detection limits would be desired or required; EPA analytical methods that must be used; proper handling and preservation of samples; necessary sampling supplies; considerations that should be made prior to and during sampling activities in order to collect samples correctly and avoid contamination; various sampling and field-filtration techniques; and field quality assurance sample collection requirements. The second half-day, students will engage in off-site field exercises at Lake Washington, where they will be given the opportunity to practice several surface water sampling protocols. The class fee includes lunch for all students.



### ***Mentor Session to Focus on Internal Audits***

TNI's Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) hosts a Mentor Session at each of TNI's semi-annual meetings to share information on topics of interest to laboratories and Accreditation Bodies.

The Mentor Session in Bellevue on August 15, 2011 will be an interactive discussion of internal auditing of your management system and include examples of scheduling, checklists, root causes, corrective actions, and verifications.



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## Training Courses (cont.)

### *Assessing Data Usability: Maybe You Can Use the Unusable*

The objective of this course is to familiarize data users with basic quality control measures that are used in a laboratory and how the results of these control measures may affect the use of the associated data. This course will include group activities that focus on data sets and the assessment of their usability. At the end of the course, the student should understand: the principles behind the most common quality control measures used in laboratories; how to logically evaluate data usability with failed (or acceptable) quality control measures; and when to use/accept/submit data for making decisions.

### *How to Modify a Method through an Alternate Test Procedure*

The class will step through the requirements that a laboratory must perform to complete an Alternate Test Procedure (ATP) at a local or regional level (i.e., Tier 1 or Tier 2) for a method modification under the requirements of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The areas that will be focused on are:

1. Development of the method modification justification for a Tier 1 or Tier 2 ATP.
2. Determine what method modifications will or can be made without requiring an ATP.
3. Determine what method modifications will or can be made without requiring a new method under EPA requirements.
4. Develop the experimental parameters.
5. Minimum statistical requirements for method comparison.
6. Writing the new method in EPA format.
7. Writing and submitting the summary reports.

## Update from the NELAP Accreditation Council (AC)

By Lynn Bradley, TNI

The renewal cycle for Accreditation Bodies (ABs) continues with eight evaluations underway for FL, KS, LA DHH, NH, NJ, PA, NY, and UT. Since AB operations are not governed by state regulations, the programs themselves can transition and evaluations are being conducted against the TNI Standard (Volume 2). The AC had to replace a team member for PA, due to workload issues, and is in process of modifying the Evaluation Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) (i.e., SOP 3-102, presently awaiting Policy Committee approval) to accommodate more flexibility in team selection. The SOP keeps the same technical competence, but accommodates the recent problems of potential evaluators, who cannot travel out of state. The AC has also approved a new SOP, "Standard Operating Procedure for the Issuance of Provisional Recognition of Accreditation Bodies According to the TNI Standard (SOP 3-108)." The AC awaits final approval from the Policy Committee.

The AC recently affirmed and clarified the decision to use "rolling implementation" of the 2009 TNI Standard due to political realities by explicitly stating that "rolling implementation" means the ABs will mutually recognize accreditations issued in compliance with the 2003 NELAC Standard or the 2009 TNI Standard for a period of at least two years. This will allow all ABs the time necessary to adopt the TNI Standard into law or regulation. The previously published status of each AB's intended transition to the TNI Standard is still in effect. Each AB will communicate directly with their accredited labs concerning the transition period and what is expected from the labs themselves.

As before, the AC and each of the 15 ABs fully commit to maintaining reciprocal recognition regardless of which Standard is in use by any individual AB. From the previous newsletter, you may recall that the AC had asked the Laboratory Accreditation Systems Executive Committee (LAS EC) to recommend an Implementation Policy; the ensuing recommendation to delay implementation of the PT sections of the TNI Standard was thoroughly considered, but in the end, not accepted by the AC as a suitable course. ABs will transition to the entire TNI Standard for labs (Volume 1) when the time arrives. If a lab's primary and secondary ABs will be using different Standards for some time period, the ABs commit to continuing reciprocal recognition and to prevent this duality from causing any problems for the laboratories. The only possible exception will be the labs that must use NY's proficiency testing program; NY will notify its primary and secondary laboratories as soon as possible, once that issue is resolved.



### *Quality Systems Checklist for TNI Laboratory Standard*

*TNI's Laboratory Quality Systems Expert Committee has prepared an Excel spreadsheet to provide guidance to laboratories and laboratory assessors in assessing laboratories to TNI Standard EL-V1, Management and Technical Requirements for Laboratories Performing Environmental Analyses. This checklist is available for download.*

*In order to achieve NELAP accreditation, laboratories are required to have an official copy of TNI Standard EL-V1. This document contains copyright protected language from ISO/IEC 17025:2005. Once you have purchased a copy of the TNI Standard containing the ISE/IEC language, under the fair use clause of U.S. copyright law, you may download the Quality Systems Checklist.*

*To access the checklist, go to:  
<http://www.nelac-institute.org/qcheck2009-access.php>.*



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## Field Sampling and Measurement Organizations are Getting Ready for Accreditation!

By Justin Brown, EMT, Inc.

The National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP) is rapidly approaching launch in August! Many exciting things have happened over the past several months in preparation for the initiation of the NEFAP Program. Members of both the NEFAP Executive Committee (EC) and the TNI Field Activities Committee (FAC) have been working diligently to complete the processes and procedures needed for a successful program.

Applications have already been submitted from four Accrediting Bodies (AB) and we anticipate completing the document review for the AB evaluations in the upcoming weeks. We expect the first Field Sampling and Measurement Organization (FSMO) applications to be submitted to the ABs this fall. It's time to get ready! If you are an AB potentially interested in playing a part, or an FSMO considering whether or not to participate, please contact us so we can provide you with information on the many benefits of the Program.

We have spent time reaching out to the environmental community at conferences and programs with presentations and marketing materials to spread the word about the merits of the NEFAP Program. We are in the final stages of the "Advocacy Materials Approval Process", which we will use to review and approve advocacy materials. If you know of a program or conference that would be interested in the NEFAP Program, please forward the information to Justin Brown, JoAnn Boyd or any member of the NEFAP EC or the FAC. Contact information is available on the TNI website.

We are also in the last steps of finalizing a formal "Training Approval Process", which will be completed soon. This process will review proposed training programs and materials for content and consistency with the FSMO Standard. NEFAP-vetted training programs will be available for interested parties soon, as well.

*Like what you hear?* Then come and join us! We are looking for committee members for both the TNI EC and the FAC. If you are interested in becoming an active member in this very exciting program, or if you know someone, we strongly encourage you to submit a nomination today! TNI is currently accepting nominations for these committees to fill vacant positions on the EC by September and the FAC by January. Please submit your nomination on the TNI website.

To learn more about this program and get your copy of the Standard, please visit [www.nelac-institute.org](http://www.nelac-institute.org).

Contact Justin Brown, Director of Groundwater and Field Services, EMT, Inc. at: Phone 847-324-3350; Email [jbrown@emt.com](mailto:jbrown@emt.com).

## EPA Approves TNI SSAS Program

By Maria Friedman, TestAmerica, Inc.

TNI is proud to announce that the TNI Stationary Source Audit Sample (SSAS) Program has been approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Measurement Technology Group, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards. This means that the TNI SSAS Standard meets EPA's minimum requirements for an audit sample program as outlined in EPA's final rule published in the Federal Register on September 13, 2010 (75 FR 55636) entitled, "Restructuring of the Stationary Source Audit Program." Audit samples produced under the TNI SSAS Program can be used in compliance tests using the test methods found in 40 CFR Part 51, 60, 61, and 63.

The TNI SSAS Standard is available on the TNI website at <http://www.nelac-institute.org>, and has also been posted on the EPA website at <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/emc>. Accreditation of prospective Stationary Source Proficiency Test Providers is in progress, and the TNI and EPA websites will be updated as audit samples become available. Additional Providers are being sought; if you represent a Provider who has not yet applied for accreditation, we encourage you to apply.

For more information about the TNI SSAS Program, please visit our website or contact Maria Friedman, Chair of the TNI SSAS Expert Committee, at (714) 656-4311 or [maria.friedman@testamericainc.com](mailto:maria.friedman@testamericainc.com).



### Special Outreach Session

On Wednesday, August 17, TNI's Advocacy Committee will be hosting a special session organized into two sections: the first as a meeting of TNI's Small Laboratory Advocacy Group to discuss the new TNI Handbook for Small Laboratories, and the other a meeting with representatives of the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) to discuss the efforts of the joint task group formed in January. See the additional article on this work elsewhere in this issue of The Institute Review.



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## Status of Working Draft Standards for QS and PT

By Bob Wyeth, PACE Analytical Services

The Consensus Standard Development Program Executive Committee (i.e., CSDPEC or the Committee), whose mission is guide the maintenance of the Standard, is pleased to announce substantial progress on the presentation of Working Draft Standards (WDS) from both the Quality Systems (QS) Committee and the Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee.

Silkie Labie, Chair of the Quality Systems Expert Committee, and her committee members have worked diligently to prepare a new Working Draft Standard, which has been submitted for posting on the TNI website for public comment. Silkie reports that most of the changes are necessary for "clarification" of language in the current TNI Standard and for inclusion of ISO language.

Revised Volume 1, Modules 2-7 are available for comment from the website. A module by module summary of changes was submitted with the proposed WDS and should also be available from the website. The QS session at the August meeting in Bellevue, WA will be a forum for presentation and discussion of the comments on the WDS and will present the opportunity to move the WDS forward to a Voting Draft Standard (VDS) for consideration at the Winter meeting in Sarasota, Florida.

As previously reported in The Institute Review, the Accreditation Council (AC), despite passage of the Standard, was concerned that the Standard could not be implemented due to requirements of the Proficiency Testing (PT) sections of each module.

The PT Expert Committee (PTEC) and the AC developed a "task force" to work through the issues and concerns raised during the AC review of the Standard. While not all issues have been resolved, Kirstin McCracken, Chair of the PTEC, reports the Committee is working on a WDS for Volume 1, Module 1; Volume 2, Module 2; and Volumes 3 and 4. The PTEC plans to have their WDS completed and posted on the TNI website for public comment in July 2011. The Committee will review the changes proposed along with the reasons for the changes during their scheduled meeting in Bellevue, WA.

The PTEC is continuing to work on the WDS for Whole Effluent Toxicology and other sciences including radiochemistry and asbestos. The Committee plans to issue a separate module for Whole Effluent Toxicology, but the timeline for this and other changes is not known at this time.

## The State Primacy Laboratory Accreditation Task Force

By Ken Jackson, TNI

The Federal Safe Drinking Water Act requires every state to designate a primacy laboratory, which must be certified or accredited to perform drinking water analysis. Laboratory certification is provided by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regions, who hold laboratories to the standards in the EPA Manual for the Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water. Alternatively, the EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, in a memorandum dated October 1, 2002, allows NELAP accreditation to be accepted in lieu of drinking water certification when producing data for compliance monitoring purposes. Several state primacy laboratories choose to be NELAP accredited laboratories, and must obtain accreditation from a NELAP accreditation body (other than their own). Compared with EPA certification, NELAP accreditation holds laboratories to a higher quality system standard, and therefore, should be preferred. This is especially so as the new TNI Standard is phased in by the ABs. The TNI Quality System Standard is fully compliant with ISO 17025, which is recognized nationally and internationally as the gold standard for environmental laboratory accreditation. However, NELAP accreditation requires payment of a fee, while EPA currently provides its certification at no cost to the state laboratory. Also, EPA certification requires less frequent proficiency testing that further reduces costs. It may not be surprising, therefore, that most state primacy laboratories are EPA certified and only a few are NELAP accredited.

To address this problem, the TNI Advocacy Committee has formed an ad-hoc subcommittee, the State Primacy Laboratory Accreditation Task Force (SPLATF), with the following tasks:

- ◆ developing an acceptable approach for accreditation of primacy laboratories in the TNI system;



### EMMEC Report

By Richard Burrows,  
TestAmerica, Inc., and  
Chair of EMMEC

*At the January TNI meeting, the Environmental Measurement Methods Expert Committee (EMMEC) decided to start working on calibration, leaving detection and quantitation for later. In part this was because there is quite a lot of US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) activity on calibration at present, and in part because we hope that calibration considerations might be less complex and controversial than detection and quantitation. Whether this hope is borne out remains to be determined!*

*We have been working on two documents in preparation for the Seattle meeting. The first is a background document outlining the current state of calibration in environmental methods, and examining some of the flaws and possible improvements to today's methods. We are primarily focused on routine day-to-day calibration techniques, but are also considering development of calibration criteria for new methods. The second document is an outline for a TNI Standard on calibration. We plan to spend most of our full day meeting in Bellevue working from this outline.*



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## The State Primacy Laboratory Accreditation Task Force (cont.)

- ◆ designing a system to help EPA assure the quality of state primacy laboratories and assure EPA's Office of Water that all primacy laboratories are meeting the drinking water program requirements;
- ◆ creating specifications for accreditation of primacy laboratories and/or assistance to those seeking accreditation; and
- ◆ providing training for laboratory staff on how to manage their NELAP accreditation.

The task force has an approximately equal mix of TNI members and members of the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), and has held two conference calls to date. Currently, the SPLATF is focused on the first bulleted task above, which is seen as the most difficult task to address. Most state primacy laboratories have been certified by EPA for a long time, and it may be difficult to persuade them to switch to NELAP accreditation, especially in the current fiscal climate where the biggest barrier may be cost. During the most recent conference call, the task force held a "brainstorming" session aimed at finding innovative ways to accredit primacy laboratories in a consistent manner at low cost. These are still embryonic ideas that need to be developed further before they can be presented to the membership, but those interested in following the progress of the task force can find the minutes of the conference calls on the Advocacy Committee's web page (<http://www.nelac-institute.org/cms/posts/1213765248.php>).

## Quality Manual Template

By Ilona Taunton, TNI

The NELAC Institute (TNI) has just released a new Quality Manual Template designed for laboratories to help prepare a Quality Manual compliant to the 2009 TNI Standard. The prefabricated sections of the Quality Manual follow the ISO 17025 outline, but are completely fluid so that you can put sections, examples, links, or references anywhere you would like. The template includes helpful notes, examples, and text that can be edited to match each laboratory's particular circumstances. It can be used by a laboratory to create a Quality Manual from scratch, or ideas and sections can be used to update a current Quality Manual. Laboratories can create their own Quality Manual by:

- ◆ using our example text,
- ◆ creating their own text,
- ◆ modifying our example text to accurately reflect their particular situation, or
- ◆ deleting or labeling sections that do not apply as not applicable.

There are lots of things that need to be documented to be a NELAP accredited laboratory, and most of them are NOT required to be specifically located in the Quality Manual. The basic task is to make sure required policies and procedures are addressed **somewhere** (like in a Standard Operating Procedure or Policy, if not in the Quality Manual). TNI has captured the documentation requirements found in the *2009 TNI Environmental Laboratory Sector Standard, Volume 1: Management and Technical Requirements for Laboratories Performing Environmental Analysis* for a typical laboratory.

Access to an on-line example library that is continually updated is a new tool that will be available to anyone who purchases the Template. TNI also plans to launch a Discussion Board where users of the Template can share ideas and download the latest revisions.

The Quality Manual Template can be purchased for \$95 (TNI member price). For more information, go to: <http://www.nelac-institute.org/howto.php>.



### *Assessment Forum to Focus on Method Updates and Audit Consistency*

*TNI's Technical Assistance Committee hosts an Assessment Forum at each of TNI's semi-annual meetings to share information on topics of interest related to laboratory assessments. The Assessment Forum that will be held in Bellevue, Washington on August 16 will be organized into three sessions on the following topics:*

- ◆ *Demonstration of Capability*
- ◆ *Report from the Consistency Improvement Task force*
- ◆ *Report from the Accreditation Body Task Force*




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## Accreditation Body Task Force — Final Report

By Carol Batterton, TNI

On July 13, 2011, the TNI Board of Directors accepted the final report of the Accreditation Body Task Force (ABTF) and directed the Executive Director to begin implementation of the recommendations. This report presents findings and recommended options for improving the effectiveness of TNI's National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP). The TNI Board formed the Task Force in June 2010 and directed them to explore opportunities for TNI to assist Accreditation Bodies (ABs) in dealing with changes in the economy and its effect on state government funding.

The Task Force developed eight specific recommended options and identified a timeframe, priority, and suggested leader for implementation. In presenting the Task Force recommendations, Judy Duncan complimented the Board's approach of creating a task force to first gather information about the many affects of the changing economy on laboratories and ABs, and suggesting TNI actions that could be helpful to all parties.

Recommended options include:

- ◆ having TNI develop assessor training, both for technical training and for assessment techniques;
- ◆ developing a number of support services (e.g., tracking proficiency test data) that TNI could provide to ABs to relieve some of their workload;
- ◆ continuing implementation of the national database of accredited laboratories to enhance reciprocal accreditations;
- ◆ developing a system so that NELAP ABs could better share information and resources;
- ◆ enhancing the process by which NELAP recognized ABs can use third-party assessors, especially to assess laboratories in states that do not participate in NELAP;
- ◆ using the laboratory assessments performed by the Department of Energy (DoE) or the Department of Defense (DoD) Accreditation Bodies in lieu of assessments performed by NELAP ABs;
- ◆ developing a process to allow the use of surveillance assessments to extend the time frame for a reassessment to beyond two years; and
- ◆ developing a process to allow non-governmental ABs (also called third-party ABs) to offer accreditations that would be accepted through reciprocity by the existing NELAP recognized ABs, especially in states that do not operate a NELAP accreditation program, or where an existing state program may be privatized. A non-governmental AB could include a separate, but closely affiliated organization, as a way to offer accreditations and other services.

The Task Force recognized that no one solution will solve the problems of every AB, but the goal was to develop multiple solutions that can assist ABs. A full review of the final report will be presented at the Environmental Measurement Symposium during the Assessment Forum on August 16, and can also be found on TNI's website under News (<http://www.nelac-institute.org/cms/posts/1311052971.php>).



### Upcoming Meetings of Interest to Members

New York and Pennsylvania  
Association of Accredited  
Environmental Laboratories  
ANNUAL MEETING  
July 24—26  
Canandaigua, NY  
<http://www.nyaael.org>

Virginia Water Environment  
Federation  
GOOD LABORATORY PRACTICES  
CONFERENCE  
August 1—2  
Charlottesville, VA  
<http://www.vwea.org>

The NELAC Institute  
ENVIRONMENTAL MEASUREMENT  
SYMPOSIUM  
August 15—19  
Bellevue, WA  
<http://www.envmeasym.org>

Department of Energy Consolidated  
Audit Program  
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If you know of any upcoming meetings of interest to environmental laboratory professionals, please contact Jerry Parr at [jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org](mailto:jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org).



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## Member Spotlight—Kirstin McCracken

By Lara Autry, US EPA

So, how many of you missed reading the “Member Spotlight” section from the last newsletter? I certainly did and was more than willing to step-in, as a substitute only, to interview our very own “Member Spotlight” Columnist, Kirstin McCracken. She is taking a much needed break from the computer to reduce the neuromuscular stress that comes from the repetitive motion of typing and will hopefully be able to avoid having surgery, which I know I can speak for everyone in saying that we wish her the very best. I am honored, though, to have had the opportunity to get to know Kirstin a little better from our interview and know you all will enjoy getting to know her better, as well.



Since Kirstin’s parents divorced at a young age, she spent time in Arkansas, Michigan, and Georgia, but she and her older brother primarily grew-up in Crystal Lake, Illinois, which is a northwest suburb of Chicago. With the close proximity to Crystal Lake, Kirstin chose to attend the University of Iowa where she obtained a Bachelor’s Degree with Honors in Geography and study focus in Pre-Law for Natural Resource Policy and Environmental Economics, now we know who the smarty pants really is! Once she got out of school, Kirstin moved to Colorado where she watered plants at the University and spent timing skiing until her mother shared a magazine article with her about Ecosystem Studies at Yellowstone, which led to her receiving an internship in Montana for eight months. Pretty much broke at that point, Kirstin decided to move in with her family in Savannah, Georgia where she applied to Savannah Laboratories in 1995 and got her first start in the laboratory industry with a job in the extraction lab.

Given Kirstin’s interest and studies in policy, she pursued an available quality assurance position within the laboratory and moved quickly into a quality assurance manager position that opened soon after, which is the work she has now been doing for fourteen years. Along the way, the laboratory changed hands to Severn Trent Laboratories and ultimately TestAmerica, but her move within the laboratory chain came in December 2001, when she applied to be the quality assurance manager at the South Burlington, Vermont location where she still resides today. Before she left Savannah Kirstin was not only introduced to the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) by working to ensure the accreditation of five laboratories through the State of Florida, but she also was encouraged to get involved and went to her first National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) in Williamsburg, Virginia. This community immediately learned they had a new gem because Kirstin engaged everyone by expressing her opinions and folks listened.

Although it took a little time to get onto a committee, Kirstin became a lifelong member of proficiency testing and now serves as chair of the Laboratory Proficiency Testing Committee. She thinks the transition to the consensus process has been good, but offered some challenges and a learning curve. Changes to the Standards take more time than they did under the old system, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. I asked Kirstin what her favorite meeting location had been, thus far, and she said it was going back to Chicago the first time because it is a city she loves from growing up in the area, the food was awesome, the weather was great, and the hotel (the Westin) was in a fantastic location with some nice Blues bars close-by, as well. The more we talked, though, she quickly realized each meeting has been unique and always offered a memorable experience with the most unfortunate being her snowboarding accident at the Denver, Colorado meeting, which was understandably scary and has led to her not snowboarding (or skiing) since. Kirstin is excited about the upcoming meeting in Bellevue, Washington because it is only one of four remaining states she has left in visiting every state in the United States (i.e., others remaining are Oregon, Alaska, and Hawaii).

It is a pleasure for me to get to know Kirstin better and I look forward to spending more time talking with her in the future, which I hope all of you will do as well. She loves the outdoors and is a Master Gardener with a focus at her house in perennials and veggies. She enjoys finding special antiques and heading to the lake for fishing, canoeing, or kayaking. One of the recent books she read was called “Off Grid,” which is about off grid living, but her enjoyment of furthering her knowledge in economics and gardening through her reading reconfirms for me just how very smart, as mentioned previously, Kirstin is and how fortunate this community is to have her in it.



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### VISION

*All entities generating environmental data in the United States will be accredited to consensus national standards.*



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