



June 24, 2021

Dr. John Griggs, Chair
Environmental Methods Forum
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Dr. Griggs:

The NELAC Institute (TNI) has made significant advancements in the expansion of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP), the National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP), proficiency testing, and educational delivery and outreach since our last formal report to EPA in 2015. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been an invaluable partner in these efforts. We appreciate your ongoing support and would like to update you on our progress in expanding and supporting national environmental accreditation. Our significant activities and accomplishments are summarized in the attachment. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and the Environmental Methods Forum to discuss our ongoing programs.

TNI is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization with a mission 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. TNI is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as a Voluntary Consensus Standards Body (VCSB) and all our active accreditation standards are ANSI Standards. TNI now has over 1000 members including state and federal officials, commercial and municipal laboratories, and sampling organizations, as well as suppliers, data users, and consultants.

TNI's recent studies on the impact of accreditation leave no doubt that accreditation to the TNI standard makes a difference in the quality of the data generated by accredited laboratories and their overall performance. The results are presented in a new white paper, "Laboratory Accreditation Makes a Difference: Data You Can Trust." This white paper is posted on the TNI website at: <https://nelac-institute.org/news.php?id=4370>.

We look forward to our continued collaboration with EPA in the future. Please contact Jerry Parr, Executive Director, if you would like to schedule a briefing to discuss future activities.

Sincerely,

Alfredo Sotomayor
Chair, TNI Board of Directors

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The State of National Accreditation 2021

Consensus Standards Development Program

- TNI develops standards using a consensus process consistent with OMB Circular A-119.
- NELAP adopted the 2016 Environmental Laboratory Sector (ELS) Standard which was based on the 2005 version of ISO/IEC 17025 (laboratories) and the 2004 version of ISO/IEC 17011 (Accreditation Body (AB) operations). This standard provides enhanced requirements for all aspects of laboratory accreditation.
- NEFAP adopted the 2014 Field Sampling and Measurement Organization (FSMO) Standard which was based on the 2005 version of ISO/IEC 17025 (sampling and field testing) and the 2004 version of ISO/IEC 17011 (AB operations). This standard provides heightened requirements for all aspects of FSMO accreditation.
- The Stationary Source Audit Sample Program (SSAS) was recognized by the USEPA in 2011.
- The Proficiency Testing Program (PTP) adopted standards for proficiency testing (PT) providers and their accreditors based on ISO/IEC 17043.
- TNI is updating the standards for ABs, which would incorporate the 2017 version of ISO/IEC 17011 into the laboratory and FSMO standards.
- TNI is updating the ELS and FSMO standards to incorporate the 2017 version of ISO/IEC 17025.

National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP)

- Fourteen states are now NELAP-recognized ABs, including Oklahoma which gained recognition in 2018.
- Additionally, another 28 states with laboratory accreditation programs utilize some aspect of the TNI Standard or recognize NELAP accreditation as equivalent to their own state programs. The Department of Energy and the Department of Defense use the TNI Standard as the basis for their accreditation programs as well.
- In 2015 TNI implemented a process to recognize Non-Governmental Accreditation Bodies (NGABs) to accredit laboratories and FSMOs to the TNI standard. Four NGABs can now accredit laboratories to the TNI standard.
- TNI has actively worked with California to support the state's efforts to revise its Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program rules to incorporate TNI's quality management system requirements.

National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP)

- NEFAP is a unique, voluntary program that accredits organizations collecting field samples and obtaining field measurements to a quality management system created for the complexity and variety of FSMOs.
- NEFAP is the only accreditation program specifically designed for the field industry and is implemented by those wanting to demonstrate their competency and proficiency.
- TNI recognizes four NGABs to accredit to the 2014 TNI FSMO Standard.

Proficiency Testing (PT) Program

- TNI's PT program is utilized by virtually every state, by EPA's Discharge Monitoring Report-Quality Assurance (DMRQA) program for wastewater testing, and by the EPA drinking water program. PT samples are available for drinking water, non-potable water, and solid and chemical materials.
- For 2021, TNI is looking at the feasibility of adding PTs for air and emissions and per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water. TNI is also evaluating the impact of PT preparation methods, and whether to add uncertainty evaluations for non-potable water and solid and chemical materials radiochemistry PTs.

Educational Delivery System (EDS) and Other Resources

- TNI recognizes the importance of training that is accessible to anyone who wants to keep current or train for new jobs in environmental testing. To that end, TNI currently provides over 100 online and in-person training courses. TNI will develop even more classes each year going forward. In 2020 there were over 700 attendees participating in online live courses and recorded webcasts. A list of available courses can be viewed at TN's EDS webpage (<http://www.nelac-institute.org/content/eds-home.php>).
- TNI provides resources useful to stakeholders of the environmental laboratory community nationwide. These include the Laboratory Accreditation Management System (LAMS) database (www.nelac-institute.org/lams), which contains method and analyte codes used by virtually all state programs as well as a "generic application" that will allow laboratories to enter their information once and have it either transmitted electronically or printed in each AB's required format for manual signature and delivery. TNI offers Quality Manual and SOP templates and a laboratory handbook for purchase usable by anyone, but particularly designed for small laboratories.
- In May 2021, TNI will launch a mentoring initiative that is designed to help small laboratories implement a quality management system based on the TNI standard.