

NELAC and INELA Agree to Explore Options for Combining Operations

June 15, 2006

On June 15, 2006, the Boards of Directors of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) and the Institute for National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation (INELA) ratified a nonbinding Memorandum of Understanding to explore the feasibility of combining the operations of both organizations. A partnership planning team (PPT) has been formed consisting of members from each organization to discuss the structure and outline the infrastructure needs of a combined organization. Further details of the planning process will be presented in Overland Park, Kansas at the NELAC meeting on August 12 and at the INELA meeting on August 14, 2006.

David Speis, Chair of the INELA Board of Directors and a member of the ACIL Environmental Sciences Section Executive Committee stated “it is clear that both NELAC and INELA have common goals and values and are performing complementary tasks related to national environmental laboratory accreditation. Combining operations will enable the new organization to capitalize on the synergistic elements of each organization resulting in a stronger more efficient environmental laboratory accreditation program.”

Ms. Aurora Shields, Chair of the NELAC Board of Directors stated “The NELAC Self-sufficiency Task Group (SSTG) evaluated a number of options and determined that INELA is an organization that shares NELAC’s vision for a national laboratory accreditation system and that NELAC and INELA shared similar constituencies. The NELAC SSTG concluded that working with INELA could provide a viable route for NELAC to become self-sufficient.”

The benefits of combining the operations of NELAC and INELA presents the commercial laboratory community with an opportunity to participate in a true consensus processes for environmental laboratory accreditation standards development and accreditation policy development. The standards and policies used for environmental laboratory accreditation under the current NELAC program were not the result of an ANSI recognized consensus process. Although many commercial laboratories participated in the NELAC standards development process, the new organization would be operating beyond government restrictions enabling commercial laboratories to have equal input to accreditation process development.