

**1**  
**SUMMARY OF THE  
TNI  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**AUGUST 20, 2007**

The Policy Committee of The NELAC Institute (TNI) met on August 20, 2007 at 9:00 AM (ET) at the Environmental Measurement Symposium, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Chairperson Mr. Alfredo Sotomayor, of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, led the meeting. A list of committee members is given in Attachment A. A list of the action items generated during this meeting is included in Attachment B. The meeting agenda is given in Attachment C.

**WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, LOGISTICS**

Mr. Sotomayor welcomed attendees. Committee members introduced themselves. Mr. Sotomayor announced that part of the meeting would be a working session for the committee to review and finalize drafts of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

**ROLE OF THE TNI POLICY COMMITTEE**

Mr. Sotomayor reviewed the role of the TNI Policy Committee for the benefit of new attendees to the committee's section. He reiterated that the Policy Committee reports to the TNI Board of Directors, that it creates general policies and procedures that apply to more than one TNI Program, and that it reviews policies and procedures from all TNI programs to ensure consistency.

**OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE CHARTER**

The committee shared its Charter with attendees. The charter has not been approved by the TNI Board of Directors yet, but Mr. Sotomayor anticipated there would not be any obstacles impeding approval. Attendees agreed that the charter captured correctly the activities in which the committee should engage.

**OVERVIEW OF POLICIES APPROVED BY THE TNI BOARD**

At its meeting on August 8, 2007, the TNI Board of Directors approved three policies submitted by the committee. The policies dealt with creating general policies for TNI, conflicts of interest, and ethical conduct of TNI members.

The committee reviewed the policies briefly with attendees. Mr. Sotomayor clarified that the policy on creating general policies covered policies that applied to more than one program and that individual programs were still able to create their own policies.

Participants agreed that the policies on conflicts of interest and ethical conduct correctly defined expectations and obligations for TNI members. Mr. Sotomayor added that the policies would be followed by forms that members might need to complete to document they had read and

understood the policies and to declare possible or actual conflicts of interest. An attendee suggested that these two policies might need to be augmented by SOPs that could, for example, explain what constituted acting on behalf of TNI or define a monetary value for gifts that members could accept. Another participant suggested making this value \$25 to be consistent with other state regulations.

Discussing how prescriptive the SOPs accompanying these policies would have to be, an attendee cautioned the committee not to compile an extensive list of prohibited behaviors because that usually created a false impression that whatever was not listed constituted acceptable behavior.

The committee affirmed that it would work on internal policies regarding purchases, travel reimbursement, and other administrative functions.

## **REVIEW OF DRAFT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

### Format Guidelines for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of The NELAC Institute (TNI)

Mr. Sotomayor explained that after the SOP is approved, an electronic template would be made for use of all TNI programs. The template would automatically standardize format details such as font size, justification, and margin sizes. That could obviate the need for including those aspects in this or another SOP. Mr. Jerry Parr mentioned that once the SOP became final, we could engage the services of the Institute's virtual office assistant to create the SOP template. Ms. Brooke Connor could also help with this effort.

Highlights of the discussion included:

- The cover page should not require any signatures because they are difficult to obtain electronically.
- The cover page should be modified to include the date by which a committee or board approves an SOP as final, the date by which the Policy Committee determines the SOP is consistent and does not conflict with existing SOPs and policies, and the date by which the TNI Board of Directors endorses the SOPs.
- The footer of the cover page should include the addresses of the institute's headquarters and its website.
- The Policy Committee and the TNI Secretary should cooperatively maintain a master index of all SOPs indicating their revision status.
- The definitions for "must" and "shall" in Section 4.0 can be combined.
- Revision numbers will require distinguishing between editorial or minor revisions and substantive revisions.
- SOPs should list changes made to them chronologically. This information can be included in a separate section at the beginning or end of the SOP or in the "Summary" section.
- The reference to "Standard Written English" in item 10.5 should be replaced with a description of the type of language to use when writing SOPs.
- The Technical Assistance Program, the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation, and the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) will be included in the SOP indexing system.

## Operations of TNI Committees and Program Boards

The committee discussed this SOP for the rest of the session's allotted time. Because many of the committee members were available in the afternoon, the committee reconvened after lunch and completed the review of the SOP.

Highlights of the discussion included:

- The summary section should indicate the sections applicable to committees and the sections applicable to program boards.
- The committee agreed to draft an SOP on how to draft minutes of committee and program board meetings.
- The definition for program board will reflect that boards are units authorized by the TNI Bylaws.
- Definitions for committee chair and program chair will be added to the SOP.
- The term "affiliation category" will be replaced with "interest group" throughout the document. The TNI application form will also be modified accordingly.
- The deliberations of a committee's closed session will be documented, but not published.
- Applicants to committees will be notified when TNI receive their applications. Applicants not selected for a committee will be notified of the non-selection and of their right to appeal the decision.
- The procedures for removing a committee member will address what to do when a member resigns and an interest group gains dominance.
- The SOP will specify dates for electing committee chairs and for providing annual reports to the TNI Board.
- The sections on program board operations will try to mirror as much as possible the sections on committee operations.
- At least two members will be required to constitute a subcommittee.
- All committee and program board meetings, whether they be conducted by teleconference or face-to-face, will be open to the public.
- The section on the documentation of proceedings will reference another SOP on the format of minutes.

## Decision-Making Rules for TNI Committees and Boards

The committee deferred discussion of this SOP to a future teleconference.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The committee will make changes to the SOPs and schedule teleconferences for the remainder of the year.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM ET.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS  
TNI  
POLICY COMMITTEE  
AUGUST 20, 2007

Member		
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Advocacy

**TNI  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
AUGUST 20, 2007**

**ACTION ITEMS GENERATED AT THIS MEETING**

<b>Item No. Meeting Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1. 08/20/07	The committee will make the changes to SOPs 1 – 100 and 1- 101 discussed at the meeting.	09/08/07
2. 08/20/07	Mr. Sotomayor will poll committee members for available dates for teleconferences to be held during the rest of the year.	09/08/07
3. 08/20/07	The committee will review the draft of the SOP on decision-making rules.	09/30/07

**UNCOMPLETED ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

<b>Item No. Meeting Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
2. 01/31/07	Mr. Sotomayor will set priorities for developing policies and procedures needed by TNI.	02/28/07

The NELAC Institute  
Policy Committee

Forum on Laboratory Accreditation  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Monday, August 20, 2007  
9:00 –12:00 Noon

- 9:00 Welcome, Introductions, Logistics
- 9:05 Role of TNI Policy Committee  
Update of Committee Activities since Denver Forum
- 9:10 Overview of Committee Charter  
Overview of Policies Approved by the TNI Board  
--Creating General Policies  
--Conflicts of Interest  
--Ethical Conduct of TNI Members
- 9:30 Review of Draft Standard Operating Procedures  
--Format Guidelines for SOPs
- 10.00 BREAK
- 10:30 Review of Draft Standard Operating Procedures  
--Operations of TNI Committees and Program Boards  
--Decision-Making Rules for TNI Committees and Boards
- 11:50 Next Steps
- 12:00 Adjournment