Attendance:

Tom Widera – Chair ERA (Provider)	Committee member	**Present**
Vacant – Vice Chair		
Andrew Chew EPA (Federal Government)	Committee member	**Present**
Ed MacKinnon TRC Env. Corp. (Stationary Source Tester)	Committee member	**Present**
Gregg O'Neal North Carolina DAQ (State Gov.)	Committee member	**Absent**
Katie Gattis Element One, Inc. (Laboratory)	Committee member	**Absent**
Michael Klein New Jersey DEP (State Government)	Committee member	**Present**
Mike Hayes Linde (Provider)	Committee member	**absent**
Paul Meeter Weston Solutions (Stationary Source Tester)	Committee member	**Absent**
Michael Schapira Enthalpy Analytical, LLC. (Laboratory)	Committee member	**Present**

Jim Serne TRC Env. Corp. (Stationary Source Tester)	Associate member	**Absent**
Stanley Tong EPA Region 9 (Federal Government)	Associate member	**Present**
Jeff Ogle ALS Environmental (Laboratory)	Guest	**Present**
Tom Maza MI - DEQ (State Government)	Guest	**Present**
Marge Heffernen Alliance Source Testing (Laboratory)	Guest	**Present**

Call to Order

This meeting was rescheduled from 4/10/17 to 4/17/17, Tom Widera (Tom hereafter) began the meeting at 2:07 EDT. A quorum was not present.

Membership

Mike Schapira was approved by TNI. Welcome back Mike.

Bob O'Brien from Sigma was contacted to determine if he still wanted to remain active on the committee. Bob indicated that he had changed jobs and would no longer be able to attend our meetings. Bob is trying to find a replacement for him on the committee.

Nishant Bhatambrekar was contacted to determine if he still wanted to remain active on the committee. Nishant did not return the communication.

Tom has contacted TNI to request that both Bob and Nishant be removed from the SSAS Expert Committee. Bob Wyeth, chair of the Consensus Standards Development Executive Committee, was contacted regarding this issue. Bob Wyeth has contacted both Bob and Nishant to inform them that they have been removed from the SSAS Expert Committee.

This removal does not create any balance issues.

Tom asked the participants on the call if they knew anyone who was interested in participating and also asked if anyone who has been participating regularly as a guest if they would be interested in joining the committee.

Monthly Meetings

Minutes from the March 13 meeting could not be voted on since there was no quorum. Tom indicated that he would circulate the minutes for an email vote.

Significant Figure Discussion

The discussion about significant figures, started on the March 2017 call, continued. Currently the SSAS standard only addresses that Providers present the assigned value to 3 significant figures.

Recently several labs have reported data to more than 3 significant figures. With one lab, these extra figures caused a failure of the reported results.

Currently the SSAS modules do not address significant figures for reporting of data or for acceptance limits.

The question was asked if Providers can either round data to 3 significant figures or provide direction on instruction sheets for labs to report data to 3 significant figures.

Tom discussed this topic with the ERA SSAS team, who indicated that ERA would be willing to add a statement to the audit sample dilution instructions that labs should report data to 3 significant figures. Tom mentioned that the ERA IT team has informed him that to have the current data system round data to 3 significant figures would involve significant programming changes. This would not be feasible at ERA for the near future.

Tom made the suggestion that a statement regarding the reporting of data to 3 significant figures should be placed in the SSAS Modules and opened this topic up for discussion. Jeff Ogle agreed that it should be in the modules. Tom asked where to put the significant figure statements in the modules and what would be proper wording. Tom also indicated that ERA would keep this item in their instructions even after it is placed into the SSAS modules.

Tom suggested an addition to Section 10.2 of V1M1 to indicate that the Provider shall present acceptance limits to 3 significant figures. Michael Klein added, shouldn't it be to evaluate to 3 significant figures and not to present.

There was discussion about how to handle significant figures if acceptance limits were tighter than the current tight limits of 10%, say down to 5%. Tom indicated that the significant figures did not apply to the limits in percentage but rather to the limits in actual concentration. So if the limits are ± 10%, that percentage would be applied to the assigned value and presented in concentration units to 3 significant figures.

Mike Schapira asked if ERA could only allow labs to enter 3 significant figures. Tom mentioned that would involve significant IT programming. ERA allows entry to more than 3 figures to allow data entry on both sides of the decimal point.

Tom also suggested an addition to V1M3 Section 4.4 to require labs to report data to 3 significant figures. The questions was raised regarding whether data reported to more than 3 significant figures should be rounded by the Provider or evaluated as reported. Tom indicated that for PT analysis, data is evaluated as reported.

Michal Klein asked how often the significant figure issue comes into play and if we are putting emphasis on a topic that rarely occurs. Tom mentioned that is has happened twice in the past two months but had not happened up to that point. Also that in the case where the figures caused a failure, the Regulator evaluated the data and indicated that he felt there was not an issue and accepted the results. Michael Klein added that most reasonable regulators would evaluate all data prior to making a decision.

Jeff Ogle added that a simple 3 significant figure statement should be added to the modules and labs should take ownership of the requirement. Mike Schapira said that Providers should evaluate data as reported by the lab. Jeff Ogle agreed.

Tom wanted to know if we should make the change to the modules. This would require committee vote and the sending out for public comment. Mike Schapira asked if we are close to the time for the required review of the modules anyhow. Tom said that we are close. So, Mike suggested that we do our review of the modules a little early and include the significant issue topic in the review. It was agreed that this would be done. The review of the modules will begin in May 2017.

SSAS Table Concentration Review

Tom manually reviewed 245 HCl audits to determine what concentrations were being requested. The reason for this is to determine if lowering the concentration from 5 to 1 would then just cause a bottle neck of requests at 1 instead of 5. Of the 245 requests reviewed, 108 were asked exactly at 5. Only 10 of those actually showed requests that were between1-5. For the rest it could not be determined what the calculation tool concentration was. Calculation tools were included with the requests only 2-3% of the time. 150 requests were at 10 or below. Of the 245 audits, only 20 were requested > 100.

Stan Tong wants to know what questions could be asked to determine if all requests for HCl would shift to 1 if this would be the new low concentration. Tom added that if lowering the concentration to 1 would benefit the program technically, then it should be done even if it just changes the bottle neck for Providers from 5 to 1.

Marge Heffernan gave us a summary of the requests made by Alliance Source Testing showing that the tool calculated concentrations below 5, but they requested 5 because that was the lowest possible value.

Tom asked whether we wanted to address where the testers should order audits in the module. Both Stan Tong and Michael Klein said no. Michael Klein added that the audits should be blind and random and that requiring where testers should order would eliminate both of these requirements.

Tom asked if we wanted to continue this effort or are we putting effort into this and not getting any benefit.

Stan thought originally we were doing this to provide some relief to the providers. The question needs to be asked whether this would actually provide relief or not.

Marge wondered if it would help to provide a range to suggest as opposed to a specific concentration. Tom indicated that batches can be made 10% apart which would prevent labs from knowing a concentration due to several batches made at virtually the same concentrations.

Marge added that she could go through more orders from Alliance to see how many times their needs are between 1 and 5.

Mike Schapira asked what the pass rate was for HCl. Tom indicated that the pass rates for both Methods 26 and 26A were 96%.

Blanket Regulator Approvals

The final topic was a discussion of requiring Regulator approvals for audit samples.

ERA customer service has noticed that there are regulators from several states who either do not respond at all to requests from ERA or that will approve ERA request 100% of the time. The question was raised whether there was a possibility of circulating a waiver to see if states would give providers a blanket approval to just send an audit sample without getting approval on each occasion. ERA felt that this would streamline the process and reduce several days from the timeline.

Section 8.1 of V1M1 requires providers to contact regulatory agencies prior to sending audit samples.

Stan mentioned that some states have indicated that the request takes time because it must go up through an approval chain. In some cases Providers have the wrong contacts. Stan has offered to go to states that don't respond and ask if they would be agreeable to the waiver. Both Michael Klein and Stan would be agreeable to this waiver if it would have to be renewed, say on an annual basis.

Next Meeting: May 8, 2 pm Eastern
Meeting Adjourned 3:20 pm

Next Minutes Authors

May 8 Ed MacKinnon
June 12 Katie Strickland