THE INSTITUTE REVIEW

October 2015

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THE NELAC INSTITUTE

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Registration is Open for the 2016 Forum on Environmental Accreditation

By Jerry Parr, TNI

Registration is open for the 2016 Forum on Environmental Accreditation to be held at the Hyatt Regency in Tulsa, OK from January 26-28, 2016. The Forum will feature open public meetings of all TNI committees to allow quality professionals, chemists, analysts, microbiologists, engineers, and managers from federal and state agencies; commercial, municipal, state, and federal laboratories; and many others who are actively involved and interested in accreditation issues to review what has been done and participate in the efforts to establish a national environmental accreditation program.

The 2016 Forum will include:

- Meetings of all TNI committees;
- An Assessment Forum with topics on preparing for an assessment, common findings, root cause analysis and corrective action reports;
- A meeting of the EPA's Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB);
- A general session with updates about TNI programs; and
- Training courses on radiochemistry.

For more information, go to the 2016 conference website at http://www.nelac-institute.org/meetings.php.

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Highlights from the July 2015 TNI Forum on Laboratory Accreditation in Chicago, IL

By Jerry Parr, TNI

Assessment Forum and Mentor Session

Barbara Escobar led the planning of these sessions, which were well received and well attended. The morning session of the Assessment Forum focused on writing deficiencies, findings, and non-conformances. The concepts discussed will be summarized for posting with the meeting's presentations, as well as for possible use by the LASEC for training development. The afternoon session discussed what makes an effective QA Manager, a topic initially suggested by Scott Siders. A lot of good information was presented and participants clearly desired more on the topic.

Attendance at the Mentor Session was impacted by competition with NEMC sessions, but the approximately 25 participants were enthusiastic about the hands-on technical writing skills used to turn observations into findings. Corrective actions, root cause determination and repair will make a good follow-up session.

Consensus Standards Development Program

Bob Wyeth noted that there is considerable interest in forming an *Asbestos Expert Committee* and asked that anyone interested in being part of that (or persons who can suggest qualified participants) contact him directly.

The *Quality Systems (QS) Committee* worked mostly on §5.5.13.1, support equipment, but their efforts will need to be redone to match the changes to Volume 3 and the new term "lot" as used there. QS has a large parking lot of items to be addressed in the future.

The *Proficiency Testing Expert Committee* worked on V1M1 and V2M2 in the morning. This went well and they finished early. The afternoon session focused on Volumes 3 and 4, addressing many comments from the vote on the Voting Draft Standard (VDS.) They hope to move to the Interim Standard (IS) by the end of this calendar year.

The *Chemistry Committee* completed review of the comments on the Detection and Quantitation standard from the vote, but still needs to edit the document itself. They received additional input from the LASEC in the joint meeting, and plan to have an Interim Standard for the Detection and Quantitation standard in a few weeks.

The *Microbiology Committee* members reviewed the three comments from the vote. Two were editorial changes and one a formatting change, so this module is ready to move to the IS stage. For the second half of the session, they reviewed the Small Lab Handbook for microbiology issues.

The *Field Activities Committee* had a brief meeting about the EPA guidance and specs for sample containers, and then began working on the scope and accreditation guidance.

The *Radiochemistry Committee* finished with the comments from the VDS and will soon be going to IS for its revision of the standard.

Proficiency Testing Program

The Field of Proficiency Testing (FoPT) tables for chemistry and solid and chemical materials (SCM) have been changed. The non-potable water and SCM tables await NELAP Accreditation Council (AC) approval. The revised Drinking Water FoPT table awaits the EPA's decision about vinyl chloride. The WET FoPT table is awaiting input from the WET Expert Committee. A few new analytes have been requested for addition to the appropriate FoPT tables, and these await approval from the NELAP AC. The SOP subcommittee awaits feedback from Policy Committee reviews of the provisional versions of the SOPs.

Highlights from the July 2015 TNI Forum on Laboratory Accreditation in Chicago, IL cont.

NELAP

In the morning AC session, Dan Hickman gave updates on the generic application as well as LAMS. Then the group talked about options for updating the evaluation process and streamlining it to lower costs. The LASEC discussed reviews of the standards that have taken place thus far, and the recommendations made. The Asbestos and WET modules (revised and approved in 2012) are recommended for adoption, and this will be transmitted to the NELAP AC soon. Also, the Standards Review SOP 3-106 revisions were discussed in light of the reviews underway now and those coming soon. The afternoon joint session with the AC was lively, with some progress about "sticking points" in the Calibration and Detection and Quantitation standards, as well as an update on changes just made to the PT modules/volumes.

NEFAP

Enthusiasm for NEFAP seems renewed and there are new members. The executive committee is now eight FSMOs, four ABs, and four "others." They finalized advice from the Strategic Planning Committee and are looking for ways to collaborate with the Non-Governmental AB (NGAB) TNI Recognition Committee (TNRC).

Advocacy Committee

The Advocacy Committee discussed its mid-October newsletter, with Stacie Metzler as editor, and also its progress on the high priority objectives from the TNI Strategic Plan. Details of the pilot plan to recruit "ambassadors" for non-NELAP states were reviewed as well as the TNI update letter to EPA's Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM). They reviewed progress on the Handbook on Good Practices, noting that sixteen chapters now have editors, with five or six of the chapters having a first draft completed.

Information Technology Committee

The IT Committee discussed the Method Compendium, which continues to increase its capability and deserves additional publicity, since this is a tremendously valuable resource for the entire environmental laboratory community. Its methods are neatly tucked into the analytical methods portion of LAMS. Copies of the methods are provided in the database, unless copyright issues interfere, in which case a link to the purchase site is provided. Dan Hickman discussed the status of LAMS and that while a few states still need to enter their fields of accreditation, all demographic data are available now. The second half of this meeting was devoted to the generic laboratory application, which is nearly ready for beta-testing. It will soon be handed back to the LAB Expert Committee as being what the Database Development Plan promised to provide.

New Schedule Set for the 2016 Board of Directors Election

By Steve Arms, Florida Department of Health

With the passing of another year, the time has come once again to elect new Directors to fill the vacancies created as 3-year terms expire. Something new for this year is that the process to elect new directors will begin in December. On the advice of the Advocacy Committee, the Board of Directors has determined that the election should coincide with the winter meeting. This will give the membership the opportunity to meet the candidates in person and to vote while attending the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation, to be held this coming January 25-29 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

2016 Board of Directors Election Schedule

December 1, 2015	Begin submitted applications/nominations
December 31, 2015	Deadline for nominations
January 18, 2016	Voting opens—slate of candidates announced on website
January 25 – 29, 2016	Forum on Laboratory Accreditation – Candidates Meet and Greet
February 15, 2016	Voting closes
March 9, 2016	Newly elected directors assume office

Elections for the 2016 Board of Directors will begin on January 18, 2016 with the announcement of the slate of candidates on the TNI website. Nominations will open on December 1 to receive applications for candidates to fill 7 potential vacancies. The Bylaws allocate a Board of 10-18 members, so not all vacant slots need to be filled, but the Nominating Committee always seeks nominations from as large and diverse a cross-section of the TNI membership as possible. The election will also include the ratification of ex-officio directors, who represent federal agencies. Balloting is scheduled to continue through February 15, with newly elected directors to assume office on March 9 during the board's regularly scheduled monthly teleconference.

Directors need a broad understanding of issues facing TNI and must uphold the Institute's mission, goals, priorities, and Code of Ethical Conduct. Each must demonstrate a commitment to TNI's priority to be a highly functioning organization committed to balance and inclusion. Directors must have strong interpersonal skills and be able objectively to consider various perspectives while making major policy decisions.

The deadline to submit applications for nomination is December 31, so if you or someone you know has been involved in the activities of TNI and is looking for a way to serve a more broad role, consider nominating yourself or that other person. The success of the national accreditation program rests on the shoulders of enthusiastic and knowledgeable individuals with strong leadership abilities.

Charlie Carter Award

By Lara Phelps, EPA

During the opening remarks of the Environmental Measurement Symposium on July 13, 2015, the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) Steering Committee announced the formation of an achievement award in memory of Dr. Charles (Charlie) William Carter.

Dr. Carter dedicated over 30 years to the environmental laboratory business and community. Considered a highly respected environmental testing genius by everyone fortunate enough to know him, he was brilliant and had relentless energy, work ethic, and passion for advancing the environmental testing industry by providing critical scientific expertise and support. Charlie was deeply involved in many environmental organizations and a frequent speaker at conferences, forums, and meetings. He was a leader in the industry and one you could count on always pushing the envelope to help the environmental measurement, monitoring, and laboratory community excel in meeting the highest levels of integrity and quality.

This award has been established to recognize a technically competent individual and leader in the environmental measurement, monitoring, or laboratory industry, embodying Charlie's strengths in scientific expertise, communication, and mentoring. Details about the award and how to make a nomination for the award can be found at: http://www.nemc.us. Submissions for the inaugural award must be made by 11:59pm (ET) on December 31, 2015.

Advocacy Committee Sends TNI Ambassadors to "Non-NELAP" States

By Carol Batterton, TNI, and Steve Arms, Florida DOH

During TNI's most recent strategic planning effort, we recognized the need to increase our outreach and communication to non-NELAP states (those states that are not NELAP-recognized accreditation bodies). The strategic plan includes an objective calling for TNI to assign an "ambassador" to each non-NELAP state. The Advocacy Committee has been leading this effort and has recently begun a pilot project to implement this objective.

Eight states were selected to be part of the pilot project, and TNI members have been assigned to serve as ambassadors to each of these states. The ambassadors are all active TNI members, are also active in other groups such as state advisory groups or state laboratory associations, and are advocates for laboratory accreditation. These ambassadors and the states they serve are as follows:

Arkansas:	Teresa Coins
Georgia:	Andrea Teal
Kentucky:	Zonetta English
Nevada:	Devon Morgan
South Carolina:	Bob Pullano
Tennessee:	Judy Morgan
Washington:	Lee Wolf
Wisconsin:	Paul Junio

The role of an ambassador is primarily to keep state accreditation/certification programs informed about TNI activities, and to serve as a conduit for information to TNI about state program developments. The ambassadors will find out what the state program's needs are and ask how TNI can help with resource issues, training, technical information, and database needs. Another key role of the ambassador is to help clear up any misconceptions the state may have about how national accreditation works, and to identify any barriers the state may have in establishing an accreditation program consistent with national standards.

EPA Method 8 Audit Sample Issues

By Tom Widera, ERA

In June 2013, the privatized Stationary Source Audit Sample (SSAS) program began shipping samples. The TNI SSAS Expert Committee has been monitoring the results of the audit program since then. The results thus far have shown that most of the analytes are showing pass rates greater than 90%, with the exception of the EPA Method 8 audit samples for sulfuric acid mist, which is showing a pass rate of only 80%.

An initial investigation of this issue has begun. There were several interesting points that surfaced.

As of July 2015, there were 171 data points reported by a total of 28 laboratories. Of those 171 data points, 112 were reported by 6 laboratories. The remaining 59 data points were reported by the other 22 laboratories. The results of the 6 laboratories yielded 102 passing audits out of 112, for a 91.1% pass rate. The results from the other 22 laboratories yielded 39 passing audits out of 59, for a 66.1% pass rate.

The concentration range for sulfuric acid mist is 5.0-150 mg/dscm. The statistics were broken down into subsections of this range. There were 83 data points reported below 30 mg/dscm with a pass rate of 71.1%. There were 47 data points reported greater than 50 mg/dscm with a pass rate of 91.5%.

EPA Method 8 indicates that the analysis technique for the sulfuric acid mist should be titration. Several laboratories that were interviewed indicated that there are inherent difficulties in the titration method so they have turned to analysis by Ion Chromatography.

The initial investigation has shown that there are several potential causes for the higher than expected failure rates. As a result, the SSAS Expert Committee has commissioned a subcommittee to try to determine why the failure rates for sulfuric acid mist are higher than for the other analytes. The subcommittee has contacted all the laboratories that have submitted audit samples and have asked for more detailed information regarding the analysis technique and other issues they are encountering during the analysis. The subcommittee is still waiting for responses from several of the laboratories. Once all the data have been collected, the SSAS Expert Committee will analyze the information and try to determine a root cause for this issue.

On a Mission to Recognition: TNI and NGABs

By Carol Batterton, TNI and Alfredo Sotomayor, MMSD

We have not landed yet, but we are resolutely on our way.

TNI continues to make progress in moving to recognize non-governmental accreditation bodies (NGABs) as accreditors of laboratories to the TNI Standard. The Institute recently appointed Ms. Ilona Taunton to coordinate applications and to serve as lead evaluator. TNI has received three applications for recognition.

The Institute offered encore evaluator training sessions via webinar and we now have a pool of trained and interested evaluators from which to assemble teams to conduct on-site evaluations of the applicant NGABs in late fall (2015) through early winter (2016). We expect to recognize the first class of NGABS in early 2016. Once the NGABs achieve recognition, they will be able to assess laboratories and accredit them to the TNI Standards.

Contact Information:

Judy Morgan; Chair, TNI
NGAB Recognition Committee; Alfredo Sotomayor
NGAB Work Group Chair; Ilona Taunton, TNI

LAMS Update

By Dan Hickman, TNI

Fields of Accreditation (FOA) Download

LAMS now provides the ability to download an electronic copy of a lab's entire Field of Accreditation (FOA) as uploaded by the Accreditation Bodies. It will download as a text (.CSV) file and contain all accredited FOAs, both primary and secondary. Labs should be able to use this file to compare with their current certificate, while Accreditation Bodies will be able to use this file to grant secondary accreditation.

To download the FOA file:

1. Open LAMS and select "Search". Use the selection criteria to find the lab. Select the lab and you will be taken to the lab information page.
2. On the lab information page, click on "Go to Fields of Accreditation" located at the bottom of the page. This opens the FOA list.
3. Now, click on "Download FOAs (CSV)" at the top of the table and you will get the .CSV file.
4. Open the file in Excel and add a filter for the top row. Now you can filter for any group of data you need.

Test Method Filters

We have also added a filter on the methods table page for EPA SW-846 Update III, IV and V, allowing you to choose only those methods listed in a specific update. As part of the methods compendium project, we now include a copy (PDF) for all those methods, including the new 2014 versions. Select a method and on the methods information page you will see a link to download the method.

Final Update V of SW-846 Published

By Jerry Parr, TNI

EPA has provided notice of the availability of Update V to the manual, SW-846: Test Methods for Evaluating Solid Waste, Physical/Chemical Methods. Update V contains 8 new and 15 revised methods, 5 revised chapters, a revised policy statement, and other information. The Agency issued this Update as guidance since the changes in this document to the SW-846 analytical methods are not required by RCRA's hazardous waste regulations. Any required analytical methods have not been changed. http://1.usa.gov/1fipFze *(8/13/15; 80 FR 48522)*

The methods and other documents can be found at www.regulations.gov using Docket ID EPA-HQ-RCRA-2012-0072. (Note: The docket number in the FR notice was incorrect.) Note, that in many cases, two versions of the same method are listed in the docket with the same revision number, but a different revision date.

On a related matter, EPA also finalized a Policy Statement that responds to concerns the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) has expressed regarding the official version and status of various methods regarding a need for clarification of the status and definitions (e.g., validated, final, superseded) of methods in SW-846. For example, the policy statement is clear that the most recent version of an approved method in SW-846, should be used.

Table 1 provides a listing of the 5 revised chapters and 23 methods in Update V.

Table 1 — Final Update V

Analytical Method	Method or Chapter Title
	Table of Contents
	Chapter One—Quality Control
	Chapter Two—Choosing the Correct Procedure
	Chapter Three—Inorganic Analytes
	Chapter Four—Organic Analytes
	Chapter Five—Miscellaneous Test Methods
1030	Ignitability of Solids
3200	Mercury Species Fractionation and Quantification by Microwave-Assisted Extraction, Selective Solvent Extraction, and/or Solid Phase Extraction
3511*	Organic Compounds in Water by Microextraction
3572*	Extraction of Wipe Samples for Chemical Agents
3620C	Florisil Cleanup
4025*	Screening for Polychlorinated Dibenzodioxins and Polychlorinated Dibenzofurans (PCDD/Fs) by Immunoassay
4430*	Screening for Polychlorinated Dibenzo-p-Dioxins and Furans (PCDD/Fs) by Aryl Hydrocarbon Receptor PCR Assay
4435*	Method for Toxic Equivalent (TEQS) Determination for Dioxin-Like Chemical Activity with the CALUX Bioassay
5021A	Volatile Organic Compounds in Various Sample Matrices Using Equilibrium Headspace Analysis
6010D	Inductively Coupled Plasma-Atomic Emission Spectrometry
6020B	Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry
6800	Elemental and Speciated Isotope Dilution Mass Spectrometry
8000D	Determinative Chromatographic Separations
8021B	Aromatic and Halogenated Volatiles by Gas Chromatography Using Photoionization and/or Electrolytic Conductivity Dectectors

Final Update V of SW-846 Published cont.

Table 1 — Final Update V cont.

Analytical Method	Method or Chapter Title
8111	Haloethers by Gas Chromatography
8270D	Semivolatile Organic Compounds by Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry
8276*	Toxaphene and Toxaphene Congeners by Gas Chromatography/Negative Ion Chemical Ionization Mass Spectrometry (GC-NICI/MS)
8410	Gas Chromatography/Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometry for Semivolatile Organics: Capillary Column
8430	Analysis of Bis (2-Chloroethyl) Ester and Hydrolysis Products by Direct Aqueous Injection
9013A	Cyanide Extraction Procedure for Solids and Oils
9014	Titrimetric and Manual Spectrophotometric Determinative Methods for Cyanide
9015*	Metal Cyanide Complexes by Anion Exchange Chromatography and UV Detection
9320	Radium 228

**new method*

Other significant changes are discussed below. Please review the entire Notice as many other changes were described.

Chapter One (Quality Control)

This chapter has been significantly revised. For example, Section 4 on Laboratory Operations has been deleted along with all of the QA/QC language that appeared in this section. The chapter now follows the guidance EPA has published on the systematic planning process. All QC samples and related activities are now listed in a glossary. Revisions were also made to improve and clarify the language on LLOQ and blank contamination. EPA refined the procedure for establishing the LLOQ to consider sample matrix effects; include a provision to verify the reasonableness of the reported quantitation limit (QL); and recommends a frequency of LLOQ verification to be balanced between rigor and practicality. The FR notice contains extensive discussion on this topic. In terms of blanks, the definition has been revised to indicate blanks may contain analyte concentrations greater than acceptance limits if the associated samples in the batch are unaffected (i.e., targets are not present in samples or sample concentrations are >=10X the blank).

Chapter Two (Choosing the Correct Procedure)

Table 2-40(A) includes the current sample preservation guidance for styrene and vinyl chloride in aqueous samples (i.e., deletion of previously recommended practice of collecting a second set of samples without acid preservatives and analyzing immediately, if styrene and vinyl chloride are analytes of interest), and Table 2-40 (B) includes Mercury Speciation hold times in addition to totals.

Chapter Three (Inorganic Analytes)

Changes included finalizing the revised definition for Instrument Detection Limit (IDL) to be consistent with the revised Methods 6010D and 6020B, replacing the term accuracy with bias, and establishing a consistent definition for linear range in Methods 6010D and 6020B. The definition for the spectral interference check (SIC) solution has replaced the definition for the interference check sample (ICS) and is consistent with Methods 6010D and 6020B. The definition of LCS (laboratory control sample) recommends the use of a spiking solution from the same source as the calibration standards. Sections 3.6 and 3.7 were finalized to include the collision/ reaction cell technology as an effective method for removing isobaric interferences when analyzing by ICP-MS. Table 3-2 now includes a minimum mass of 100g for solid samples collected for sulfide analysis.

Final Update V of SW-846 Published cont.

Chapter Four (Organic Analytes)

Table 4-1 has now been finalized to exclude the recommendation to collect a second set of samples without adding an acid preservative and analyze in a shorter time frame if vinyl chloride and styrene are analytes of concern for aqueous samples. A study showed that there were no significant differences in sample recovery of those samples preserved with acid versus those not preserved.

Method 6010D – EPA added language to address the reporting of flagged data and other options in interpreting data when the desired LLOQ has not been met.

Method 6020B – EPA revised the requirements for the Initial Calibration Blank (ICB), when multi-calibration standards are used, to read as follows: “If the ICB consistently has target analyte concentrations greater than half the LLOQ, the LLOQ should be re-evaluated.” In addition, EPA clarified the statement that if there is no regulatory limit and the method blank is >10% of the lowest sample concentration, then the method blank may be considered to be acceptable if 10X the concentration in the blank. The data may also be reported with flags.

Method 9014 (Cyanide) – The Notice contains confusing language on calibration models indicating the details of how a laboratory will conduct and approve calibrations should be included in the individual laboratory's Quality Management Plan (QMP) or in its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for each method.

Method 9040 (pH) – In the Notice, EPA stated pH is a Method Defined Parameter (MDP) and the Agency cannot revise the method through a Notice of Availability, but instead must use notice-and-comment rulemaking procedures.

Expert Panel Recommends Reforms for California ELAP

By Lara Phelps, US EPA and Steve Arms, FL DOH

An Expert Review Panel was convened in 2015 to conduct an external examination of the State of California's Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP). The Panel identified a number of fundamental weaknesses in ELAP that hinder the program's ability to achieve its mission of ensuring the State has access to quality data for use in its environmental decision-making. More importantly, the Panel observed that these deficiencies have cost the program credibility among key constituencies – notably, the state agencies that rely on data generated by ELAP-accredited laboratories.

There is, however, hope. The Panel believes ELAP is well-positioned to reestablish itself as a respected accreditation program, and recommends moving forward with a series of immediate reforms. These reforms should be weighed and evaluated through the lens of a clear Mission Statement, which the Panel recommends as: "Implementation of a sustainable accreditation program to effectively evaluate the competency of organizations generating environmental and public health data of known and documented quality to meet stakeholder needs." The Panel's recommended reforms fall into five main themes:

- Establish a management system
- Adopt laboratory accreditation standards
- Ensure relevant analytical methods
- Expand resources
- Enhance communication

The Panel's full report is available at http://sccwrp.org/elap. In late 2016, the Panel will revisit ELAP's progress and codify in a second Panel report any mid-course corrections and additional recommendations. If ELAP is successful in implementing the recommended reforms, the panel believes it can regain credibility, achieve financial sustainability, operate an accreditation process that the State and stakeholders can support, and reliably ensure that environmental and public health data being used in State decision-making are of known and documented quality.

Update on the 2015 Quality Systems Standard

By Paul Junio, Northern Lake Services

Module 2 of the TNI Environmental Laboratory Standard (EL-V1M2) is undergoing two minor changes as a result of changes made in other Modules. These changes will maintain a consistency among the Modules and Volumes.

The Quality Systems Committee has proposed adding a definition for “Lot” to Section 3.0 of Module EL-V1M2. The term Lot has been added to the Proficiency Testing (PT) Modules. Not only is this term used to differentiate PT samples from each other for the purpose of laboratory requirements, the term is important in its ability to define what a second source is. By using the same term in both the PT and Laboratory Modules, consistency across the Volumes will be maintained (the term was not previously defined in EL-V1M2). By its definition, the Standard will address issues that have arisen regarding second source verification of calibration curves.

Meanwhile, Section 5.5.13.1 of Module EL-V1M2 is also undergoing revision. This section of the Module describes the requirements for verification of support equipment. The revision was initially due to changes made in EL-V1M5 (the Microbiology Module) regarding thermometer calibration. The Microbiology Module adopted changes that allowed for single point verification of thermometers that are used over a narrow range, which was in conflict with the requirements of the Quality Systems Module. Again, in the interest of maintaining consistency among the Modules, EL-V1M2 was modified to allow for the same single point thermometer verification. Concurrent with that change, other changes have been made to clarify the requirements for volume verification of support equipment in the laboratory (changes that were first made in EL-V1M5).

NEFAP Mobile Laboratory Subcommittee Update

By Paul Bergeron, Subcommittee Chair

The Mobile Laboratory Subcommittee of the National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP) Executive Council (EC) completed its deliberations on a new survey to obtain data on mobile laboratories and accreditation. The survey was issued on May 18, 2015. The survey is accessible through this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/J23MLXM.

The survey begins with general questions concerning the interest in mobile laboratory accreditation, the location of the respondent, and the location of the respondent's activity. The next section focuses on the respondent's accreditation body (AB): where the AB is located, if the body accredits mobile laboratories, if sampling and/or analytical activities are accredited, the rules the AB uses for accreditation, and whether or not on-site assessment is required. Following the AB section is a section for the respondent's mobile laboratory. Questions cover the respondent's existing or preferred rules for accreditation, the importance of a universal definition of a mobile laboratory, and the preference and importance of primary versus secondary accreditation for mobile laboratories. The subcommittee strongly encourages all stakeholders to complete the survey to obtain as much information as possible to present to the TNI Field Activities Committee and NEFAP Executive Committee meeting in 2016.

The subcommittee chair also gave a presentation to the NELAP Accreditation Council Assessors' Forum via teleconference on August 6, 2015, and again at the September 28, 2015 State Assessors' Forum on mobile laboratory assessments and how they are being performed in Louisiana. The presentation focused on the applicable sections of the 2009 TNI Standard, Environmental Laboratory Sector, Volume 1 and 2 with a state agency mobile laboratory serving as the subject of the assessment. The presentation covered the assessment process beginning with assessment preparation, emphasizing key information that must be obtained from the mobile laboratory including name, address, relationship to a corporate headquarters, and human and technical resources.

The assessors should have documentation from the applicant for accreditation that explains the scope of accreditation and if the mobile laboratory will be assigned a particular deployment. In addition, assessors shall have a copy of the mobile laboratory's quality assurance plan, standard operating procedures and other quality system documents for review prior to the assessment just as they would a fixed facility. If an AB subcontracts the assessment to a third party, the subcontractors must be compliant with the requirements of the standard for training and qualification. With the tendency for some mobile laboratories to change personnel and equipment frequently, subsequent assessments may have to be scheduled or performed as rigorously as the initial assessment. The frequency of proficiency test study participation is also affected: ABs must decide if proficiency test results must be submitted for each mobile laboratory, per each instrument in each mobile laboratory, or only when the mobile laboratory is deployed.

After the preparation phase (document review and PT requirements) of the assessment was covered, the onsite phase of the assessment was presented. With mobile laboratories, the opening conference may be conducted within the mobile laboratory itself or in a fixed base office. Communication should be such to accommodate the management located offsite by phone or internet link should this be the agreed method to conduct the conference.

Following the opening conference, the onsite would proceed in the same manner as if it was a fixed base assessment. In the case of the state agency mobile laboratory — a Winnebago recreational vehicle refitted for air analyses — the assessors inspect the instrumentation and accompanying maintenance and calibration logs, EPA Protocol gas standard labels and certificates of analyses, and LIMS quality controls. The assessors will conduct interviews with mobile laboratory team members and observe any test runs being conducted along with any corrective, preventative or contingency actions for out-of-control data. Assessors would note the ambient conditions in the laboratory as they would a fixed facility, as they will affect the results of bias, interference, and/or calibration checks. The mobile laboratory must have a steady supply of power to ensure that the interior temperature and instruments are compliant with the required testing conditions. Light and water sources will be verified for adequacy. The software for the instruments and the LIMS must be protected from unauthorized access or changes. Mobile laboratories, which operate in plants which do not allow wireless or satellite connections, must have portable backup drives for data storage.

NEFAP Mobile Laboratory Subcommittee Update cont.

When the assessors are ready to conclude the onsite, the closing conference will be conducted in the same manner as the opening conference.

The final phase of the assessment is the reporting phase. The presentation stressed the need for the assessors to determine the address where the correspondence — the final report and responses to the corrective action plan — must be directed. Deadlines were also reviewed as well as the conditions for releasing the report to the general public. At the end of the presentation, the subcommittee chair making these presentations covered a number of additional topics related to mobile laboratory for participants to consider:

- The Field Sampling and Measurement Organization (FSMO) Sector of the TNI Standard covers much of the same requirements for accreditation under the TNI-NEFAP program. If agencies are looking for an alternative for accreditation of mobile facilities that are not necessarily located in the same state as the fixed facility, this may be a good option.

- NELAP ABs that accredit mobile laboratories may actually be accrediting sampling if the method listed on the scope also includes sampling. The NEFAP Executive Committee understands that the only sector of the Standard which governs sampling accreditation is the FSMO Sector, not the Environmental Lab Sector.

- EPA mobile laboratories are mainly being accredited by NELAP or ABs using ISO 17025; not necessarily by the TNI-NEFAP FSMO Standard.

- Are any NELAP ABs requiring or planning on requiring demonstration of competency in field sampling and measurement? How is this accomplished?

The discussion of the NELAP Accreditation Council (AC) following the presentation is captured in the minutes accessible through this link: http://www.nelac-institute.org/committee/nelap. The NELAP AC members differ on the definition of a mobile laboratory and on whether each mobile laboratory requires separate accreditation as was stated in the NELAC 2003 accreditation standards 4.b and 4.c. There was consensus that proficiency testing requirements must be satisfied regardless of the location of the mobile laboratory or its deployment status.

An example of a secondary accreditation for a mobile laboratory granted primary accreditation through a fixed base was presented, but the rest of the discussion turned to primary accreditation requirements for mobile laboratories based on their location in a particular state. The primary accreditation process could possibly include a “static” review if the mobile laboratory was operating strictly for the purpose of the assessment, or an allowance for a mobile laboratory to enter a state strictly for an assessment. The NELAP AC identified at least a dozen mobile laboratories accredited by NELAP-recognized ABs. Accreditation requirements for state-operated mobile laboratories was briefly discussed, as was the difference between the Field Sampling and Measurement (FSMO) and Environmental Laboratory (EL) sector of the TNI Standard on verifying the calibration of instruments transferred in and out of mobile laboratories.

Upon conclusion of the presentation and discussion, the NELAP Program Administrator noted that NELAP and NEFAP should work towards harmonizing, or at least coordinating, the treatment of mobile laboratories. To this end, the Mobile Laboratory Subcommittee solicits any and all comments as it works to improve the requirements governing mobile laboratory assessment and accreditation.

NEFAP Strong

By Kim Watson, Stone Environmental, Inc.

The National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP) continues to grow stronger as we work through the pains of implementation since 2011. The NELAC Institute (TNI) offers an option to field sampling and measurement organizations (FSMO) who wish to go the extra mile to demonstrate competency that their field sampling and measurement operations can generate data of known and documented quality that meets the needs of their client. The NEFAP Executive Committee (EC) is committed to establishing and maintaining a program in support of the TNI FSMO standards that will assure continual improvement of the FSMO accreditation process in accordance with the FSMO standards.

The NEFAP EC has updated its 2015 Charter to include the Mobile Laboratory Subcommittee and the NEFAP EC Strategic Planning/Marketing Subcommittee. The NEFAP EC this year has new membership with the addition of three new FSMOs: Harry O'Neill (FSMO - Beacon Environmental Services, Inc.), Richard Rago (FSMO - Haley & Aldrich), and Janis Villarreal (H&P Mobile Geochemistry, Inc.). In addition to the four recognized accreditation bodies (ABs); ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board, American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA), Laboratory Accreditation Bureau (L-A-B), and Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation, Inc. (PJLA), we have the potential for two new accreditation bodies to seek applications. We have nine FSMOs accredited with the potential for six more in-hand applications seeking accreditation this year or next. These FSMOs are listed on the ABs websites.

We continue to get inquiries regarding air testing and industrial sampling from the private and commercial industrial communities. The NEFAP EC is working with TNI Field Activities Committee (FAC) to create a guidance document on "Scopes of Accreditation" for field sampling and measurement to provide guidance to the ABs and FSMOs in standardization of the accreditation scopes.

Upon the completion of the 2015-2020 TNI Strategic Plan it was established that there was a need for a NEFAP EC Strategic Planning/Marketing Subcommittee to brainstorm on advocacy and marketing of the NEFAP program with private industry and the regulatory community. The NEFAP EC Strategic Planning/Marketing Subcommittee had their first meeting in September 2015. We are still taking new members for this subcommittee so please contact Ilona Taunton or Kim Watson if you are interested in being a member of this committee to help implement our strategic planning goals. The established NEFAP EC Mobile Laboratory Subcommittee has been working hard on gathering data on mobile laboratory accreditations and the assessment of mobile labs (see associated article by Paul Bergeron). The NEFAP Program is growing strong, now is the time to apply and be the first in your community to show your commitment to quality and demonstration of competency as a TNI-NEFAP accredited FSMO!

LinkedIn to SLAG

By Elizabeth Turner, NTMWD

The Small Lab Advocacy Group (SLAG) is an unofficial group of individuals interested in the needs of the small environmental laboratory community and is chaired by the TNI Small Laboratory Advocate. In May 2009, TNI established the SLAG Bulletin Board on the TNI website. The goal of the bulletin board was to facilitate discussion on the NELAC Standard from the small lab community. Topics on the Bulletin Board ranged from method-related questions to demonstrations of capability. But the Bulletin is an active process. You need to actively check the Bulletin Board to post or read topics and usage began to drop. There had to be an avenue where individuals could passively participate in SLAG discussions – the discussion pushed out to members similar to an RSS feed service.

TNI has recently established a TNI Small Lab Advocacy Group on LinkedIn. The goal is to foster communication within the small laboratory community on items related to laboratory accreditation and other items of interests to small laboratories. Laboratories of any size are welcome to participate! One benefit of the group is that discussions are e-mailed to group members at a frequency designated by the member – each discussion, daily, or weekly. You do not need to be a member of TNI to join the group, but you do need to have a LinkedIn account.

To join the group, log into LinkedIn and search for “TNI Small Lab Group”. Click on JOIN to join the group. Recent discussions have ranged from pipette calibration to revisions to the TNI Standard. Come join the discussion!

Whole Effluent Toxicity Expert Committee

By Lynn Bradley, TNI

Have you heard? There is a new Expert Committee that has been meeting for six months now!

The Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) Expert Committee's charter was approved in late winter and this enthusiastic group is working out its priorities and goals for the coming months. The webpage for the committee can be found here: http://nelac-institute.org/committee/wett.

Rami Naddy, TRE Environmental Strategies, chairs this committee and the group will have a public session at the TNI Winter 2016 Meeting in Tulsa. So far, there are twelve members (limited now by the number of "other" category stakeholders) and seventeen associate members, and nearly everyone is actively participating. It's too late to contemplate revising V1M7, the WET Module, for this current update of the Standard, but the group has a future update in its sights for the next revision.

Upcoming Events of Interest to Members

By Jerry Parr, TNI

Florida Society of Environmental Analysts
2015 Fall Meeting and Technical Session
October 28—30, 2015
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316
http://bit.ly/1K3Gxqa

Environmental Methods… Past, Present & Future
November 6, 2015
Columbia, MD
http://conta.cc/1Ooww8p