

The Institute Review

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Third Quarter 2008

Summary of August 2008 Environmental Measurement Forum

By Judy Duncan, TNI Board Chair

The Environmental Measurement Symposium, a combined meeting of the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) and The NELAC Institute (TNI), was held August 10-16 in Washington, DC, just blocks from the nation's capitol. The setting for this meeting gave all an opportunity to view and enjoy the many museums in the area as well as the centers of US government. And the meeting itself was not too shabby — although navigating the hotel lobby, which was under renovation in preparation for next year's inauguration festivities, was sometimes a challenge. A total of 469 people attended the 2008 Forum, which was a 9% increase in attendance over 2007.

The meeting included:

- ◆ 19 technical breakout sessions with 100 presentations;
- ◆ a 2-day poster program with 23 posters;
- ◆ 4 keynote presentations;
- ◆ 3 EPA general sessions with 13 presentations;
- ◆ 13 TNI committee meetings;
- ◆ an assessment forum;
- ◆ a laboratory mentoring session;
- ◆ an accreditation body forum;
- ◆ a meeting of the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board;
- ◆ 5 training workshops; and
- ◆ a 3-day exhibit program with 43 exhibitors and sponsors.

Highlights of the week included the following keynote speakers:

- ◆ Dr. Jorg Feldman from the University of Aberdeen who spoke on elemental speciation in environmental monitoring;
- ◆ Dr. Heidelore Fielder from the UN Environmental Program who spoke on global monitoring of persistent organic pollutants;
- ◆ Dr. J. Clarence Davies from Resources for the Future who spoke on EPA and nanotechnology; and
- ◆ TNI's own Bob Wyeth who spoke on moving forward on national accreditation.

In addition, there were updates from EPA leaders in the Offices of Science Advisor, Water, Air & Radiation, Solid Waste & Emergency Response, and Prevention, Pesticides & Toxic Substances.

TNI reached a couple of important milestones at this meeting. We developed a draft schedule for implementation of the 2008 TNI Standards, which includes completion of review by the Laboratory Accreditation System Committee (LASC) by 2009, adoption of the Standards by the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) in 2009, and full implementation by 2010. Another important milestone was that at least seven states are actively exploring recognition by NELAP as Accreditation Bodies.

We missed you if you were not able to join us at the Forum. Presentations at the TNI meetings are on the TNI website and the NEMC conference proceedings will be published soon on the NEMC website. We hope that you are making plans to join TNI in January 2009 for the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation in Miami and the Environmental Measurement Symposium in San Antonio in August. Be sure to check the TNI website periodically for information about these meetings and other important happenings. We think that you will find, that for an organization that will be two years old in November, we are growing fast and improving daily, and the opportunities for participation are many and varied.



Editor-In-Chief
Michael D. Wichman
University of Iowa
Hygenic Laboratory

Special topics of interest:

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- *New States to Join TNI as Accreditation Bodies (page 6)*
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Proficiency Testing Frequency

By Kirstin McCracken and Dan Tholen

How many proficiency test (PT) samples should a laboratory analyze per year in order to demonstrate competency sufficient to obtain initial accreditation or maintain continued accreditation under the NELAC program? Currently, under the 2003 NELAC Standard, laboratories must analyze two PT samples per field of proficiency testing (FoPT) per year. FoPT's are established by the PT Board and are grouped by matrix, analyte group, and analyte. The PT frequency requirement from the 2003 NELAC Standard was carried forward into the 2008 TNI Standard prompting some TNI members to ask "Are two PT samples per FoPT per year too many or too few?" and "Should the frequency requirements for PT be changed?"

There is a great deal of variability in the required level of PT — some states require PT twice a year, others require one, and some states monitor both frequencies. There are different rules for different types of testing (for example, criteria for drinking water laboratories and for discharge monitoring). Some federal agencies, such as the Department of Energy (DOE), require PT twice a year, while others are debating the issue. In Canada, the Canada Association for Environmental Analytical Laboratories (CAEAL), now the Canada Association for Laboratory Accreditation Inc. (CALA), requires PT twice every year, but they include four full volume samples in each shipment. There is also widespread interest in this question outside TNI.

Recognizing that the answers to these questions needed to be based on objective evidence as well as stakeholder opinion, the PT Committee established the PT Frequency Subcommittee in April 2008. The subcommittee is tasked to gather and analyze information associated with frequency of proficiency testing, including existing information in the published literature, economic assessments of the impact of a change in frequency, stakeholder opinions, and objective data analysis studies. Information gathered by the subcommittee will be used by the expert committee to determine whether the current PT frequency scheme should be changed.

The subcommittee, chaired by PT Committee member Dan Tholen, quickly developed a plan for a statistical study using data from a state-mandated PT program in New Jersey that compared the performance between laboratories that analyzed two PT samples per year against those laboratories that analyzed one PT sample per year. Additionally, the subcommittee completed an opinion poll of state accreditation agencies, both for NELAC and non-NELAC states. The findings of the comparison study and survey were presented to the PT Committee during the PT Committee session at the Environmental Measurement Symposium in Washington, DC and have been posted to the TNI website at <http://www.nelac-institute.org/1223785758.php>.

The comparison study data showed that the failure rates were consistently lower for laboratories that analyze two PT samples per year relative to those that analyze one PT sample per year. This was the case for the large majority of analytes, in every class of chemicals, and in all three years of data. While both groups had similar average recoveries, the group that looked at two PTs per year had smaller measures for analytic error. The poll of state agencies showed that the majority of states (i.e., NELAC as well as non-NELAC) had the opinion that one PT sample per year was adequate to demonstrate laboratory competency for accreditation purposes, although many of the respondents emphasized other changes that could improve the system.

The subcommittee pointed out that the better performance of laboratories analyzing two PTs per year could be attributed to PT frequency, or it could be caused by other factors that exist in the NELAC requirements, such as a quality management system or routine internal assessments. Additionally, after seeing the results of the comparison study, some TNI members wondered if the state agencies might change their opinion about PT frequency.

The work of the subcommittee continues as they identify and plan additional data analysis studies to separate the effects of audits and quality systems on PT performance. The subcommittee also intends to gather additional survey information on the economic impact of PT programs through cooperation with the American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL) on their survey of environmental laboratories.



Future TNI Meetings

Forum on Laboratory Accreditation

January 11—16, 2009
Hyatt Regency Miami
Miami, FL

Environmental Measurements Symposium

Forum on Laboratory Accreditation and National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC)
August 10—14, 2009
Hyatt Regency San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

Forum on Laboratory Accreditation

January 25—29, 2010
Hyatt Regency Chicago
Chicago, IL

Environmental Measurements Symposium

Forum on Laboratory Accreditation and National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC)
August 9—13, 2010
Hyatt Regency on Capital Hill
Washington, DC



Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 2439
Weatherford, TX 76086

Jerry Parr
Executive Director
Phone: 817.598.1624

Email: jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org
URL: <http://www.nelac-institute.org>

Implementation of the New TNI Standards

By Carol Batterton

The TNI Board and key committees met jointly in Washington, DC to finalize plans for the implementation of the new TNI Standards. As required by the TNI Bylaws, the new Standards must be reviewed by the Laboratory Accreditation System Committee (LASC) for suitability to implement. Following their review, the LASC will make a recommendation to the NELAP Board to adopt the Standards. The NELAP Board must then review the Standards to make certain there are no statutory or regulatory barriers to implementation. Following the NELAP Board's adoption, the Standards can become effective as soon as accreditation bodies can incorporate the new Standards into state regulations.

The LASC anticipates completing their review and making a recommendation by the time of the Miami meeting in January 2009. The LASC will deliver their findings and recommendation at the opening plenary session on Monday, January 12, 2009. Assuming no major obstacles, the NELAP Board will move to accept the Standards later that week. NELAP Board Chair, Dan Hickman, is optimistic that state accreditation bodies can be ready to implement the new Standards, by July 2010. TNI's Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) is preparing to assist laboratories with implementation of the new Standards as well. A series of regional workshops is being planned, along with an in-depth mentoring session on the quality systems requirements of the new Standards, which is scheduled for the Miami meeting in January.

TNI Semiannual Meeting: Forum on Laboratory Accreditation

By Lara Autry

Welcome to Miami!!! There is really no excuse for you to not escape to sunny Miami, Florida from January 11 – 16, 2009 for the Forum on Laboratory Accreditation, which is the principal conference for addressing policy and technical issues affecting the accreditation of environmental laboratories. The primary focus of the January 2009 Forum will be on the implementation of the new The NELAC Institute (TNI) consensus standards that will replace the 2003 NELAC Standard in 2010.

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 laboratory accreditation issues to review what has been done and participate in the efforts to establish a national program for environmental laboratories. The Forum will also include:

- ◆ Several sessions focused on the implementation of the new TNI Laboratory Accreditation Standards;
- ◆ A special keynote session on implementation of the new TNI National Environmental Field Activities Accreditation Program;
- ◆ A preview of the new National Database of accredited laboratories;
- ◆ Presentations by several state agencies on their plans to implement the national program;
- ◆ An Assessment Forum where questions on interpretation of the NELAC Standard will be discussed;
- ◆ A special session on the new TNI Proficiency Testing requirements;
- ◆ A mentoring session that compares the quality systems requirements in the new TNI Standard to those in the 2003 NELAC Standard;
- ◆ A mentoring session designed to help state agencies in becoming Accreditation Bodies;
- ◆ Meetings of all TNI committees;
- ◆ Special training opportunities; and
- ◆ An exhibition with all the latest products and services in the industry.



Update on Miami

Kay and Jerry Parr just completed a site visit of the venue for the Florida meeting.

The fully renovated hotel is in a superb location with much to do nearby. The hotel is attached to an office building that has a free Metro stop that can take attendees to two major dining/shopping/strolling areas, one called Bayside Marketplace and the other Mary Brickell Village. Two blocks from the hotel is a downtown area with hundreds of shops and lunch spots. Most of these eating places shut down at night, but there are plenty of other places to go very near. You will not need a car unless you want to go to Miami Beach or other areas.

The hotel has alerted us it might be a little cool in January; it might drop down to 70 degrees!



Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 2439
Weatherford, TX 76086

Jerry Parr
Executive Director
Phone: 817.598.1624

Email: jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org
URL: <http://www.nelac-institute.org>

TNI Semiannual Meeting: Forum on Laboratory Accreditation (continued)

The Hyatt Regency Miami, with its striking white towers that overlook Biscayne Bay, will be the location for this perfectly timed meeting to get away from the cold winter temperatures for a few days. Lodging details, registration, and a more detailed agenda with specific training course opportunities can all be found on the TNI website (<http://www.nelac-institute.org>). Looking forward to seeing you there!!!

State Environmental Lab Directors Identify NELAP Concerns

By Louise Liao and Ann Marie Allen

State Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Subcommittee
Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)

Findings from a 2006-2007 survey of twenty-three state public health and environmental lab directors were presented during a breakout session of the Summer 2008 Forum on Laboratory Accreditation. In response to a question about barriers to state labs in seeking NELAP accreditation, more than one quarter of the respondents identified the following areas of concern:

- ◆ Lack of EPA participation (most responses);
- ◆ Benefits not obvious;
- ◆ Questioning NELAP's authority;
- ◆ Instability of NELAP; and
- ◆ Lack of resources.

A parallel question on the barriers to state environmental lab certification programs in becoming a NELAP accreditation body yielded the same top five responses. The notable difference was that "lack of resources to add staff" moved from fifth place to first place. For both questions, respondents indicated that they had no difficulty in understanding the NELAC Standard and that the cost to maintain the NELAP program would not be a substantial barrier.

These questions were part of a larger survey conducted by the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) in winter 2006-2007: An assessment of the Capability and Capacity to Analyze Environmental Samples for Chemical and Radiological Agents. The complete survey results were published in an issue brief, State Environmental Laboratories: Capability and Capacity, which is posted at <http://www.aphl.org>.

Participants at the breakout session agreed that the obstacles identified eighteen months ago are still relevant today. APHL welcomes input from state environmental lab directors to overcome these barriers. The APHL State Environmental Laboratory Accreditation subcommittee intends to work actively with TNI to address these concerns. To contribute your own ideas to this subcommittee, please contact Jennifer Beck at jennifer.beck@aphl.org.

TNI Note:

TNI is actively working with many organizations like APHL to address comments, concerns, and feedback they have identified within their organizations. We believe that much progress has been made in the two years since this original survey was conducted. We will continue working with APHL and other associations to measure our progress in addressing these issues and continue progressing forward together in a positive way.



TNI ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

Volume 1: Management and Technical Requirements for Laboratories Performing Environmental Analysis

- ◆ Module 1 — Proficiency Testing
- ◆ Module 2 — Quality Systems General Requirements
- ◆ Module 3 — Quality Systems for Asbestos Testing
- ◆ Module 4 — Quality Systems for Chemical Testing
- ◆ Module 5 — Quality Systems for Microbiological Testing
- ◆ Module 6 — Quality Systems for Radiochemical Testing
- ◆ Module 7 — Quality Systems for Toxicity Testing

Volume 2: General Requirements for Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Environmental Laboratories

- ◆ Module 1 — General Requirements
- ◆ Module 2 — Proficiency Testing
- ◆ Module 3 — On-Site Assessment

Volume 3: General Requirements for Environmental Proficiency Test Providers

Volume 4: General Requirements for an Accreditor of Environmental Proficiency Test Providers



Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 2439
Weatherford, TX 76086

Jerry Parr
Executive Director
Phone: 817.598.1624

Email: jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org
URL: <http://www.nelac-institute.org>

TNI's National Environmental Accreditation Program

By Marlene Moore

WHAT IS THE TNI NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD ACTIVITIES PROGRAM?

The National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP) is an emerging accreditation program for field sampling and measurement organizations (FSMOs). To date, The NELAC Institute (TNI) has developed and approved an accreditation standard, based on ISO 17025, for organizations that perform measurements in the field and collect samples and a companion standard for those organizations that would accredit the FSMOs. TNI has not as yet established any of the other policies and procedures to implement this program, but has begun initial efforts to get this program established.

The TNI Standard addresses the industry need for ensuring that field data and sample information must be of a known and documented quality. The data from environmental laboratories is only as good as the sample collected and presented for measurement. Many professionals in the environmental industry have often wondered why the sample collection and field testing do not require an independent review of these operations. Field test data used in making environmental decisions must be produced by organizations with a management system that is comparable to the fixed laboratory testing accreditation requirements.

The requirement for accreditation of field activities is extremely limited in regulatory programs or it does not exist in any government program. Therefore, this is a voluntary program that is managed through the oversight of TNI to ensure consistency of implementation. The implementation of this standard by Accreditation Bodies (ABs) and FSMOs will demonstrate that these organizations are interested in independent assessment of their organization to produce information and data that is appropriate for the intended use by their clients.

The TNI Standard for FSMOs is modeled after ISO/IEC 17025:2005 "General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories." TNI Standard Volume I is the FSMO Competency Standard, which is the same international standard for fixed laboratories. TNI Standard Volume II is the FSMO Accreditation Body (AB) Requirements to Accredite FSMOs. The AB Standard is based on ISO/IEC 17011:2004 "Conformity Assessment – General Requirements For Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Conformity Assessment Bodies."

WHAT IS AN FSMO?

Organizations engaged in environmental sampling for laboratory analysis and/or field measurement (analysis) using field based analytical technologies performed in the field outside of a fixed laboratory or outside of an enclosed structure that meets the requirements of a mobile laboratory.

WHO CAN BECOME A NEFAP ACCREDITATION BODY?

Any government authority or non-government organization engaged in specifically assessing conformity to the TNI FSMO Standard can be a NEFAP Accreditation Body. A governmental authority should have the authority, rights and responsibilities necessary to carry out an FSMO accreditation program.

If you are an accreditation body, and would like to become part of this program, please contact Jerry Parr, TNI Executive Director (jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org) or Marlene Moore, TNI Field Activities Committee Chair (mmoore@advancedsys.com) to discuss this new opportunity. Government and third party ABs are needed today! If you perform sample collection for any program, or perform field measurements (not within a mobile lab), and would like to become part of this program, please contact Jerry Parr, TNI Executive Director (jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org) or Marlene Moore, TNI Field Activities Committee Chair (mmoore@advancedsys.com) in order to learn how to become an accredited FSMO. This accreditation will demonstrate to your clients your commitment to quality!

To learn more about this program and get your copy of the Standards, please go to the TNI website at <http://www.nelac-institute.org>.



TNI FIELD ACTIVITIES ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

*Volume 1: General Requirements for
Field Sampling and Measurement
Organizations*

*Volume 2: General Requirements for
Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Field
Sampling and Measurement
Organizations*



Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 2439
Weatherford, TX 76086

Jerry Parr
Executive Director
Phone: 817.598.1624

Email: jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org
URL: <http://www.nelac-institute.org>

Requests for Standards Interpretation

By Ilona Taunton

TNI has a process to help you get answers to questions you have about the 2003 NELAC Standard. Your questions can be submitted on the TNI website (<http://www.nelac-institute.org> - choose *Standards and Request for Interpretation*). Just complete the entry form and your question(s) will automatically be logged in and sent for review to the NELAP Board Chair, Laboratory Accreditation Systems Committee (LASC) Chair, and the LASC TNI Program Administrator.

The next step in the process is a consensus decision by these three individuals to determine who will oversee the final response to your question. In many cases, questions are forwarded to the appropriate Program or Expert Committee. All responses are then reviewed by the NELAP Board, who must agree that the interpretation has been finalized. Publication of the consensus resolution is then made to you via email and posted, without your identity, on the TNI web site. This process can take up to sixty days for a final resolution, although every effort is made to provide a timely response. The initial questions have taken longer due to normal start-up procedures, but the process is now working.

The final step is implementation of the interpretation. It must be implemented by the NELAP assessors, the recognized Accreditation Bodies (ABs), and the NELAP-accredited laboratories. The interpretation is in effect until such a time as the Standard is changed or another interpretation has been issued. This process is described in detail in the TNI Standards Interpretation SOP 5-101 (http://www.nelac-institute.org/docslcomm/lasc/LAS_SOP-5-101.pdf).

Please remember that any disputes between a laboratory and their AB regarding accreditation are to be handled through the appropriate appeals process established by applicable state laws and regulations. We strongly encourage people to always contact their AB first when questions arise. The standards interpretation process is not meant to replace this vital communication.

Update on the National Database of Accredited Laboratories

By Jerry Parr

The National Database Committee has been working for three years to create a national central repository for information regarding the accreditation status of environmental laboratories in the United States. This database will be available to all accreditation and enforcement agencies, as well as the general public. The database is now entering its final phase of testing and verification. The goal is to have a live demonstration of the database at the Miami Forum on Laboratory Accreditation and launch the database early next year.

New States to Join TNI as Accreditation Bodies

By Susan Wyatt

In August, the TNI leadership announced that seven state agencies expressed interest in applying to become the next NELAP Accreditation Bodies (ABs). Some states may apply as soon as July 2009. After acceptance of the new applications, the total number of NELAP Accreditation Bodies will be twenty.

An application form, two flowcharts, and related SOPs are now on the TNI website to assist ABs (<http://www.nelac-institute.org/howto-ab.php>). In addition, the TNI Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) is planning a special web-based training session on October 23 (<http://www.nelac-institute.org/1223784247.php>) to mentor states through the application and initial implementation process. The current ABs have offered their assistance as well.



Meetings Featuring TNI Speakers this Fall

Florida Society of Environmental Analysts

October 15—17, 2008
Palm Beach Gardens, FL
www.fsea.net

WEFTEC 08

October 18—22, 2008
Chicago, IL
www.weftec.org

EPA Region 6 Quality Conference

October 20—24, 2008
Dallas, TX
www.epa.gov/earth/r6/6pd/qal/index.htm

Midwest Environmental Laboratory Stakeholders Summit

December 4—5, 2008
Chicago, IL
www.iaetl.org



Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 2439
Weatherford, TX 76086

Jerry Parr
Executive Director
Phone: 817.598.1624

Email: jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org
URL: <http://www.nelac-institute.org>

TNI Website Progress

By Jerry Parr

The new TNI website was launched in late July. The site has been completely redesigned, has retained all of the critical information, and functionality from the previous site, but has many new features. Look for continued improvements this fall.

Small Laboratory Advocate

By Jerry Parr

In the last issue of The Institute Review, TNI announced the creation of the Small Laboratory Advocate to serve as the focal point for small laboratory concerns within TNI. We are pleased to announce that Leonard Schantz, from the City of Rochester, New York, was selected for this position. Len is the Laboratory Director of a two-person drinking water laboratory that tests for total coliform and basic wet chemistry parameters. Len can be reached at 585-428-7378 or lgs@cityofrochester.gov.

Update on Accreditation Body Renewals

By Carol Batterton

During the NELAP Board meeting in Washington, DC, NELAP Board Chair, Dan Hickman, reported that the state and EPA evaluation teams have made significant progress towards completing recognition renewals of state accreditation programs. Onsite evaluations of all nine programs in this round have been completed. The NELAP Board has approved accreditation body program renewals for New Hampshire, Kansas, and Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. The remainder are expected by the end of October. State and EPA evaluators have worked together to meet an aggressive schedule for completing the renewal of state accreditation programs. The teams have been assisted by Lynn Bradley of the EPA Quality Staff, who has served as the Evaluation Coordinator, and Paul Ellingson of AQS, who has served as the Quality Assurance Officer. States included in this round of renewals include: California, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana DHH, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Utah.

Renewal notices to the remaining four accreditation bodies will be sent out in early October. States in the next round include: Texas, Oregon, Louisiana DEQ, and Illinois. State and EPA evaluators will work together again on these renewals and expect to have them completed by July 2009.

Update on the Strategic Plan

By Jerry Parr

In November 2007, TNI finalized a strategic plan with four primary strategies and sixteen specific goals (<http://www.nelac-institute.org/archives.php>). Significant progress has been achieved on many of these goals and strategies, and as a way to provide an update on the status of each goal, the TNI Board of Directors has created a table that lists each goal from the plan, provides information about the specific actions that have occurred or are occurring, indicates which TNI committee has responsibility for that action, and provides an estimated completion date. This table can be viewed at <http://www.nelac-institute.org/docs/news/TNI%20Activities%20List.pdf>.



Annual PT Caucus to be Held in Miami in January

At the TNI face-to-face meeting in Miami next January, the PT Board is pleased to announce the Annual PT Caucus that will be held as part of the PT Board's agenda. The purpose of this Caucus is to provide a forum for PT Providers, Accreditation Bodies, laboratories, federal agencies, and other interested parties to exchange information regarding the PT study results of the previous year. The Caucus occur on Wednesday, January 14 and will include technical presentations and open discussions on means to improve the proficiency testing aspect of TNI, with a continuing goal of improving the quality of environmental data generated by NELAP-accredited laboratories.

All TNI conferees are cordially invited to attend and to contribute to the proceedings. Formal presentations should be submitted to Carl Kircher, Chair, by December 1, 2008, to ensure inclusion in the Caucus. E-Mail address is carl_kircher@doh.state.fl.us; phone 904-791-1574.



Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 2439
Weatherford, TX 76086

Jerry Parr
Executive Director
Phone: 817.598.1624

Email: jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org
URL: <http://www.nelac-institute.org>

Member Spotlight: *Margo Hunt*

By *Kirstin McCracken*

Introducing... TNI Member, Margo Hunt. Margo has been an active participant in TNI (formerly NELAC) for as long as she can remember. She helped develop the NELAC Standards through active participation as a member of the On-Site Assessment Committee, and Quality System Microbiology Subcommittee. Most recently, she served on the TNI PT Board Subcommittee that was responsible for the review and recent update of the drinking and non-potable FoPT Tables for microbiology. (By the way, the new FoPT for microbiology goes into effect January 1, 2009 — be prepared!).



Margo retired from a long and distinguished career with the EPA at the end of summer. I managed to track her down in Omaha, Nebraska where she and her husband are enjoying a month long visit with her son's family and the newest addition to the clan, their three and a half month old grandson! We managed to fit in a phone interview, while her grandson enjoyed a nap. Let me tell you more about her.

Margo was born in New York, but grew up in South Orange, New Jersey. She holds a B.A. in Botany with a minor in Zoology from Drew University and earned her Master's degree in Microbiology from Penn State. She began her professional career as a Research Soil Biologist for Merck, Sharpe & Dohme, a pharmaceutical company. While working at Merck, she earned her Ph.D. in Ecology at Rutgers University. Wow — a true Renaissance Woman! After seven years and with a Ph.D. in hand, Margo left the pharmaceutical industry and began a ten year teaching career as an adjunct professor for several colleges in the area. She taught courses in biology, botany, anatomy and physiology, microbiology, ecology, and biology before she embarked upon a twenty-one year career with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

Margo first landed a job with the USEPA in Region 2 as a Quality Assurance (QA) Officer. A what? This job title was unknown to her, but Margo says she learned the ropes on the job and even though the concept of quality assurance was relatively new in the industry, she thought the underlying principles made a lot of sense — quality assurance has been her guiding work principle ever since.

USEPA Region 2 covers New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Margo's responsibilities included review of project quality assurance plans, laboratory and field audits, bioassay audits in assistance to a branch of the Department of Defense, and hurricane and disaster duty. She set up a cryptosporidium lab and even had a stint analyzing micro samples in the U.S. Virgin Islands! Margo told me her work at Region 2 was satisfying. In her post, she experienced all aspects of the management of environmental data and decision making and she especially enjoyed field audits because she was able to finally visit the sites described in the project quality assurance plans. With hurricane and disaster duty, she saw first-hand how agency programs for water purification systems drastically improved water quality and she said it was exciting to see that the initiatives of the agency were truly making a positive impact on the environment.

In 1998, Margo accepted a position with the USEPA's QA staff in Washington, DC (then with the Office of Research and Development, but now with the Office of Environmental Information). During her tenure with the QA Group, Margo became actively involved in TNI/NELAC, the Forum for Environmental Measurements, and training in quality assurance and legislative development. She also served, and continues to serve, as the Part 9000 Coordinator, Microbiology, for Standard Methods for the Examination of Water and Waste Water.

When I asked Margo how she thought TNI has influenced the work she did, she responded that TNI and its predecessors brought to the forefront the importance and necessity for quality assurance and



New Templates to Help Laboratories Available

The TNI Technical Assistance Committee has developed two template models to aid laboratories in implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for analytical methods used in their laboratory, and for implementing Administrative SOPs (such as data integrity, corrective actions, or handling customer complaints). This document addresses the laboratory method SOPs. The requirements for these SOPs are included in NELAC (2003) 5.5.4.1.2, Laboratory Method Manual(s).

The templates are available as Microsoft Word documents for \$5 each for members or \$10 for non-members, and are free to anyone who purchases the Quality Manual template. To see sample pages from the templates and purchase these valuable tools, go to: http://www.nelac-institute.org/howto.php?pub=1_1#pab1_2.



Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 2439
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Jerry Parr
Executive Director
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Member Spotlight: *Margo Hunt* (continued)

quality control activities in environmental laboratories. The development of a national accreditation program helped standardize laboratory assessments and raised the quality of the assessment by setting minimum objectives for laboratory assessors. She says she is disappointed that more states are not NELAC accreditation bodies, but is encouraged by the recognition of the NELAC/TNI program by several federal agencies, including the Department of Defense.

Even though she's now officially retired, Margo continues to remain actively involved in the review and update of legislation and requirements for microbiology. She also would like to remain involved with the activities of TNI and hopes that she'll be able to continue to attend the biennial meetings. Margo says attending the TNI meeting is an excellent opportunity to network — to see who is working on various initiatives and to meet fellow colleagues. The TNI meeting experience affords a greater comfort level for industry dialogue, problem solving, and brings together in one location an extensive breadth of technical resource and expertise. I completely agree.

I have only touched briefly on the accolades that Margo shared with me. During her life-long career, she pursued higher learning in many different subjects and shared her knowledge by teaching others. Her longevity of employment with the USEPA allowed her to follow the history of environmental policy and the inception and growth of the national accreditation program. Her experience teaching and conducting laboratory and field audits helped shape the current requirements and procedures for on-site laboratory assessments and assessor training.

Margo and her husband reside in Maryland. They have four children, three boys and one girl. Two of their children followed their mother's lead and pursued environmental careers and now work as environmental engineers. The other two work in information technology. In retirement, Margo says she finally will have the time to read the entire collection of Harry Potter and keep up with her knitting — and anyone who knows Margo knows that she loves to knit!

Thank you, Margo, for sharing with us and I wish you the best in future endeavors.

CALL FOR PAPERS

25th Annual National Environmental Monitoring Conference

The NEMC Board of Trustees invites you to submit an abstract for consideration for presentation at the 25th Annual National Environmental Monitoring Conference to be held at the Hyatt Regency San Antonio from August 10-14, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas.

In keeping with the theme, *New Frontiers in Environmental Monitoring*, for the 2009 conference, the NEMC Board is particularly interested in abstracts related to the global topics of **climate change**, **clean energy**, and **nanomaterials**.

Organized jointly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), The NELAC Institute (TNI), and the Independent Laboratories Institute (ILI), NEMC provides the principal forum for addressing policy and technical issues affecting monitoring in all environmental media (i.e., water, air, soil, and wastes) and across all environmental programs.

NEMC brings together scientists and managers from federal and state agencies, the regulated community, and laboratory and engineering support communities. It includes a policy session, technical sessions, training courses, exhibits, and networking opportunities. As in the past two years, NEMC will be combined with TNI's Forum on Laboratory Accreditation as the *Environmental Measurement Symposium*.

Please provide your abstract by March 1, 2009: <http://www.nemc.us>



TNI MISSION

The NELAC Institute is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization whose mission is 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.



VISION

All entities generating environmental data in the United States will be accredited to consensus national standards.



Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
P.O. Box 2439
Weatherford, TX 76086

Jerry Parr
Executive Director
Phone: 817.598.1624

Email: jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org
URL: <http://www.nelac-institute.org>

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Contact TNI

The NELAC Institute
 P.O. Box 2439
 Weatherford, TX 76086
 Jerry Parr, Executive Director
 Phone: 817.598.1624
 Email: jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org
 URL: <http://www.nelac-institute.org>

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