

**SUMMARY OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Teleconference
April 16, 2008; 1:00 – 3:00 PM EDT**

The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) meeting was held via regular teleconference on April 16, 2008 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM EDT. The original agenda for this meeting is provided as Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. Action items are included in Attachment C. The official signature of the Chair or Vice-Chair is included in Attachment D.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Pletl welcomed board members and guests and took a roll call of the Board.

The following guests participated in the call: Meghan Latshaw (APHL), Lynne Bradley (EPA/OEI), and Connie Koma (EPA/OEI).

AGENDA ITEMS

APPROVAL OF OR CHANGES TO PREVIOUS MEETING/CALL MINUTES

Minutes from the Board's last meeting on March 19, 2008, were approved by board members without comment.

PROFICIENCY TESTING DISCUSSIONS

Dr. Pletl introduced the topic of Proficiency Testing (PT) and refreshed board members on last call's discussion regarding PT. Mr. Lowry, who met with TNI recently, reported that the subcommittee would be getting under way very shortly, either this week or next. Dr. Flowers noted that he will also be participating with TNI on PT calls. Mr. Lowry added that Mr. Rock will be involved as well. Dr. Flowers explained that TNI wants a subcommittee of about 8 people and will not need all ELAB volunteers on the committee. Mr. Lowry added that Dr. Dan Tholen was chosen to chair the subcommittee. Ms. Morgan said that she would like to be involved with the subcommittee as well. Mr. Dechant and Ms. Autry went on to explain that the set up of the subcommittee will be similar to TNI, with a finite number of voting members but many associate members. To this, Mr. Lowry responded that he didn't get that impression, that only the PT Expert Committee would be restricted like that, but not the subcommittee. Mr. Dechant and Dr. Flowers reminded the Board that any opinions of ELAB individuals involved with TNI subcommittee will not be representative of ELAB itself, but of the individual.

NEMI MISSING GUIDANCE

Dr. Pletl reminded the Board that there was a discussion in February regarding some missing NEMI method guidance and asked whether Ms. Morgan would like to address that through the Monitoring Work Group or through ELAB. Ms. Morgan answered that there were some methods they still could not access that were unavailable through NEMI. They agreed to address this issue through the Monitoring Work Group and report back to ELAB at a later meeting date.

WEBSITE UPDATE/OTHER ISSUES

With no website updates, Ms. Autry introduced discussion (not on agenda) about a Bill (HR 5687IH), brought up by Mr. Waxman and Mr. Clay, introducing language changes to the Federal Advisory Committee Act which could affect ELAB members in the way they do business and hold meetings. She explained that they were given a very short time frame in which to respond to the new language, but, as far as she knows, the Agency's comments went unheeded. Ms. Autry further explained the Bill's possible effects of the committee. It would ask that any meeting (work group or committee) to be announced in advance in the Federal Register as well as call for substantial notes or recording from every meeting which would then be made public on the website, all in a very short time frame. Ms. Autry expressed her opinion that the Bill would make it very difficult to carry out business, bogging down the process and curtailing freedom in planning and organizing meetings. When Dr. Pletl asked what caused this Bill, Ms. Autry answered that it was completely motivated by transparency. Several board members agreed that while they have no issue with increasing transparency, if this Bill were to be passed by the House, it will make it harder to organize and get work done. Presently, the Bill has cleared the committee in which it was brought up and has passed on to the House. Ms. Autry was unsure of whether or not it was currently on the schedule, but it has been cleared to go to the House. Mr. Wyeth noted that, if the Bill is scheduled to go to the floor, now would be the opportune time to make comments to their Representatives regarding any possible changes. Dr. Flowers suggested that the wording itself does not seem as limiting as Ms. Autry proposed; meetings could just be announced on an Agency website it seems. Ms. Autry answered that since this Bill proposes a change to the Federal Advisory Act, which already dictates that meetings have to be posted on the Federal Register, it could have the effect she spoke of earlier.

Ms. Autry informed the Board that the Office of the Science Advisor has a new Chief Scientist, Peggy Wong, who will be working in a permanent capacity. She will be working directly with Dr. Gray. Ms. Autry went on to say that Dr. Wong has an interest in climate change and is most recently of another Federal Agency, the USDA. Ms. Koma added that Dr. Wong has also worked previously with NOAA and has experience with ecosystem restoration.

Ms. Autry shared with the Board that they have started two new work groups. One is looking at whether calibration is really a problem, and yes, it is. Tackling that solution will be their next order of business. Ms. Autry went on to say that they have officially

kicked off their Method Detection and Quantitation Limit Action Team. The action team was said to be representative of every program within the Agency.

Dr. Karimi addressed the Board, asking if anyone has heard anything regarding the issue of pharmaceuticals in the water supply. Ms. Autry answered that she was unsure, but there will be a discussion of it at the NEMC meeting in August. She knew that some individuals from the Office of Research and Development and the Office of Water were involved. Dr. Karimi signed off at 1:52 p.m.

WORK GROUP REPORTS

Dr. Pletl opened the discussion up to work groups for updates.

Dr. Flowers brought up the issue of a possible future ban on mercury thermometers in the U.S. Ms. Autry informed the Board that there is a work group being formed in OPPT to pursue whether or not another type of measurement can replace the mercury thermometer in the lab. Ms. Morgan commented that Jerry Parr has been in contact with individuals involved in this matter and it might be a good idea to get in touch with him for further information regarding the issue. Dr. Flowers then expressed concern over laboratory certifications, which require lab thermometers to be calibrated using a mercury thermometer. He added that the certifications most likely just call for a traceable thermometer, not specifically a mercury thermometer, but he is unsure of whether any non mercury thermometers would be approved. Ms. Morgan commented that there are traceable non mercury thermometers called spirit thermometers, but was unsure of how widely accepted they are. To this Mr. Wyeth added that, while there are many non mercury temperature measuring devices, the issue lies in the lab's certification; it is a matter of straightening out the language. Dr. Flowers asked the board members whether ELAB should interject here since it seems they are seeking input from the laboratory community. Ms. Autry and Ms. Morgan explained that the time frame for this issue is not likely to be quick as it is still in the early stages of information gathering. Dr. Flowers, Mr. Dechant, and Ms. Autry agree that ELAB should at least let them know they are here to provide insight or help on addressing this issue.

Dr. Pletl informed the Board that, although he and Ms. Thomey were members on the Federal Advisory Committee on Detection and Quantitation, they have been cut out of the information loop regarding any of the products provided by the FAC. As far as he and Ms. Thomey are concerned, they are not up to date on the progress on where the FAC's products are going. Ms. Thomey added that FACA members were excluded from the review of a new pilot study. Ms. Autry explained that part of that reason was due to the issue with being clear that the FACA has been dissolved as per their charter requirements. Ms. Thomey and Dr. Pletl agreed that it is a good thing to get new people involved, but they will no longer be the best source of updated information on this topic.

NEMC ELAB MEETING

Dr. Pletl initiated discussion about the upcoming NEMC face-to-face meeting currently scheduled for Monday, August 11, 2008. He reported that most are saying they will be able to make it and that they will have a quorum. Mr. Wyeth asked whether or not changing the date of the ELAB meeting would hinder anyone's availability since there is a conflict with the meeting date of the Organics Section, which he chairs. Board members discussed the issue, and since it seemed that the ELAB meeting had more of a set date than the Organics Section, Mr. Wyeth decided to try to reschedule the Organics Section meeting instead. Dr. Flowers asked the Board if it would be a good idea to email invitees with a special invitation from ELAB challenging them to bring a question or issue to the Board at the meeting. Mr. Wyeth agreed that this would be a great idea and should be sent out early. It was agreed upon that Dr. Flowers would work on getting an announcement made while Mr. Wyeth would talk to Jerry Parr about it.

EPA ATP MEMO

Dr. Pletl initiated discussion about the EPA ATP memo (Citing Clean Water Act Limited-Use ATP Methods as Modifications) and opened it up for general discussion. Dr. Pletl explained that it seems like more of a clarification than a new policy and that it might actually help his laboratory to use a technology not formally adopted in 40 CFR. Dr. Flowers agreed that it looked positive.

COMMENTS AND/OR ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Mr. Lowry suggested that the work group with TNI not meet monthly since many of its members are also on the TNI subcommittee. Dr. Pletl did not see an issue with this as chair, but suggested that Mr. Lowry discuss it with the work group. Mr. Wyeth agreed that it seems reasonable, and Dr. Pletl okayed the suggestion.

Mr. Dechant then asked Ms. Autry whether she knows if the Office of Solid Waste has published on holding times. Ms. Autry was unsure but said she will look into it.

ADJOURN/CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Pletl adjourned the Board meeting at 2:30 p.m. EST.

DRAFT

Attachment A

**AGENDA
for
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

April 16, 2008; 1:00 – 3:00 PM EDT

Conference Call

Call in number: 1-866-299-3188; code 9195415544#

	Topic	Individual Responsible
1	Opening Remarks	DFO
2	Roll Call for ELAB Members Introduction of Guests	Chair
3	Review and approval of meeting minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• March 19, 2008	All
4	Proficiency Testing Discussions	All
5	NEMI missing guidance	Morgan
6	Website Update	DFO
7	Work Group Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring Work Group• Laboratory Management Work Group• Measurement and Technology Work Group	Chair Morgan Flowers Lowry
8	NEMC ELAB meeting	Chair
9	EPA ATP memo	All
10	Comments and/or Additional Issues	All
11	Open Discussion and Comments from Guests	All
12	Review Action Items and Assignments	Chair
13	Adjourn/Closing Remarks	Chair/DFO

MEMBERSHIP LISTING AND GUESTS**ELAB MEETING****April 16, 2008; 1:00 – 3:00 PM EDT**

Attendance (Y/N)	Name	Affiliation
Y	Dr. Jim Pletl (Chair)	Hampton Roads Sanitation District Representing: Municipal Env. Lab.
Y	Mr. Robert (Bob) K. Wyeth	Columbia Analytical Services, Inc. Representing: ACIL
Y	Ms. Lara P. Autry, DFO	US Environmental Protection Agency Representing: EPA
Y	Mr. Paul Banfer	EISC (Environnemental Info. Sys. Corp.) Representing: Information Systems
N	Mr. Rock Vitale	Environmental Standards, Inc. Representing: Third Party Assessors
N	Mr. Scot Cocanour	Promium Representing: Lab. Customers of Information Technology
Y	Mr. Gerald (Gary) Dechant	Analytical Quality Associates, Inc. Representing: DOE Analy. Mgmt. Pgm.
Y	Dr. Jeff Flowers	Flowers Chemical Laboratories, Inc. Representing: Elected Officials for Local Gvt
Y	Dr. Reza Karimi	Southwest Research Institute Representing: Non-profit Research and Development Organizations with Academia
Y	Mr. Jeff Lowry	Environmental Resource Associates Representing: Proficiency Testing Providers
Y	Ms. Judy Morgan	Environmental Science Corp. Representing: Commercial Env. Lab.
Y	Mr. Joe Pardue	Parallax, Inc. Representing: Clients of QS Services
Y	Ms. Nan Thomey	Environmental Chemistry, Inc. Representing: Small Laboratories

DRAFT

Attachment C

ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Pletl will sign and publish minutes from last month's ELAB call and pass them off to Ms. Autry so that they may be posted on the web site.

DRAFT

Attachment D

I hereby certify that these are the final version of minutes for the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board Meeting held on April 16, 2008.

Signature Chairman

Jim Pletl

Print Name Chairman