

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**Teleconference: 866-299-3188/9195415544#**

**March 20, 2013; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EDT**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB or Board) teleconference was held on March 20, 2013, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. EDT. The agenda for this meeting is provided as Attachment A, a list of the participants is provided as Attachment B, and action items from the teleconference are included as Attachment C. The official certification of the minutes by the Chair or Vice-Chair is included as Attachment D.

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**1. OPENING REMARKS**

Ms. Aurora Shields, Chair of ELAB, and Ms. Lara Phelps, Designated Federal Official (DFO) of ELAB, welcomed participants to the teleconference and called an official roll of the Board members and guests.

**2. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MINUTES**

None of the ELAB members offered comments about the February minutes. Dr. Mahesh Pujari moved to accept the minutes, and Mr. Dave Speis seconded the motion. The Board approved the February minutes unanimously with no discussion.

**3. CHANGES REQUIRED TO WORKGROUP STRUCTURE**

Ms. Phelps explained that she would not be able to attend the entire teleconference, but her student contractor, Mr. Martin Hyman, would remain until the end. This is acceptable in terms of Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) rules. If any issues arise after Ms. Phelps leaves the teleconference, Mr. Hyman will inform her, and she will act on them.

Ms. Phelps explained that as a FACA committee, ELAB is audited annually, and she will be archiving 5 years worth of ELAB materials. ELAB was complimented on how it manages its Workgroups; however, all FACA committees, including those outside of the Agency, now are required to disband standing workgroups immediately and establish future workgroups on an *ad hoc* basis only. This is a result of some FACA committees abusing their use of workgroups. All references to the ELAB Workgroups must be removed, which has affected the progress of the ELAB website revisions. Future ELAB teams can be established in a thematic manner, but fixed Workgroup memberships no longer are allowed. It will be necessary to distribute the Board's work in an equitable manner among the ELAB members.

Mr. Speis asked whether the Workgroups could establish *ad hoc* groups on the topics on which they are working so that they can complete these tasks. Ms. Phelps said that this was acceptable. If a Workgroup is working on several issues, a different group of team members should address each of the issues, and each will need to be separately named. For example, if the Monitoring

Workgroup is working on two topics, the Measurement and Technology Workgroup is working on four topics, and the Laboratory Management Workgroup is working on three topics, then nine teams, each with differing names and members, would need to be established. Ms. Shields and Mr. John Phillips asked clarifying questions about the system, and Ms. Phelps explained that a core group could be assigned to the different thematic areas, with the specific team membership varying depending on the topic. The Board will need to ensure that all members are engaged and active within the various topics. Ms. Shields said that the Board members could be assigned to work on current topics that the various Workgroups are addressing.

Mr. Speis said that “mixing and matching” members on various tasks actually could be beneficial. Ms. Phelps agreed and noted that Workgroup members could continue to work on any longstanding effort, whereas any recent topics should be assigned to new members.

Ms. Shields will distribute a spreadsheet to the ELAB members with the current topics on which the Board is working, and the members will choose the topics on which they would like to work. A lead will be identified for each topic. Mr. Phillips suggested that the members prioritize the topics on which they would like to work, and Dr. Pujari agreed.

Mr. Phillips was concerned about the number of teams that would need to be established to address the many topics on which the Board is working; it will make meeting more challenging. Ms. Phelps agreed that this would be a challenge, but ELAB must show that its teams are working only on an issue-by-issue basis. Mr. Phillips recommended that the smaller teams could address their issues via email. He noted that Ms. Kristen LeBaron (The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc. [SCG]) attends the Workgroup meetings as well as the Board meetings, and forming many small teams will increase the number of meetings that she will need to attend. Ms. Phelps agreed that Ms. LeBaron’s attendance would increase, and she will work with SCG to ensure that expanded coverage is available via the contract.

#### **4. GENERAL BOARD ACTIVITIES**

Ms. Phelps received the final draft of the ELAB website at approximately the same time that she received the news that the Workgroups would need to be dissolved. She will continue to work with website personnel to transition the website from a Workgroup focus to a focus on the issues that the Board addresses. The website should be available by the Board’s April teleconference. The Agency has been undertaking an effort to reduce the number of websites found at the main EPA site. As such, ELAB’s website, which currently is independent from the Office of Science Advisor (OSA) website, will be relocated within the OSA website, but it will maintain the current level of information. Ms. Phelps will keep the members apprised of the logistics.

Ms. Phelps thanked Ms. Shields for her work as Chair during the past year and praised her hard work and excellent organization and communication skills. Traditionally, the Vice-Chair assumes the Chair position, and Ms. Patsy Root, who was unable to attend the teleconference, is willing and able. Ms. Phelps is accepting nominations for a new Vice-Chair; ELAB members who would like to nominate a member must do so by the end of the day.

Ms. Ruth Forman asked whether there were members unable to be nominated because their terms were ending prior to the term of the Vice-Chair. Ms. Phelps explained that this is an issue every other year, and she provides the names of those members in that situation. Currently, no

one is in that situation. Dr. Michael Wichman pointed out that although such a member might be able to serve his or her term as Vice-Chair, anyone currently on his or her third term would not be able to serve as Chair. Ms. Phelps agreed and stated that she would send a list of those members serving their third term to the Board members and extend the nominations through the end of the week (Sunday, March 24, 2003). Voting via secret e-ballot—to be sent to Ms. Phelps only—will begin on Monday, March 25, 2013. Without consulting the list, she said that Mr. Speis, Dr. Wichman, Mr. Jack Farrell and Dr. Richard Burrows are serving their third terms, but she will consult her materials and promptly provide a definitive list to the ELAB members.

Ms. Shields thanked Ms. Phelps for all of her assistance as she served her term as Chair. Ending the term is bittersweet, but she looks forward to Ms. Root's capable leadership.

## **5. GENERAL WORKGROUP ASSIGNMENTS/ACTIVITIES**

### ***Monitoring Workgroup***

Ms. Forman provided an update in Ms. Root's absence. The Workgroup has been addressing EPA's revisions to Methods 624 and 625. A letter with the Board's comments was sent to the Agency on February 21, 2013. EPA has not responded to the letter. Ms. Shields said that she had not been in contact with Mr. Lemuel Walker (EPA), but she thought that the Office of Water (OW) would review the comments and then potentially revise the methods based on these comments. She was unsure whether OW would respond directly to the letter.

The second topic the Workgroup is addressing is the Recreational Water Quality Criteria (EPA Method 1611, qPCR). The Workgroup has developed an outline regarding Method 1611 training recommendations for auditors and proficiency testing providers. The goal is to complete a letter based on the outline prior to the next Board meeting. The Workgroup members agreed that this is a topic that must move forward with an *ad hoc* team. Dr. Wichman said that members who had not served on the Monitoring Workgroup were welcome to join the team as well. Ms. Forman said that currently she, Ms. Root and Dr. Wichman are addressing this issue.

The Workgroup members have gathered and consolidated relevant information about the helium shortage and potential hydrogen substitution and would like to review it and present the results to the ELAB members during the April Board meeting. Dr. Wichman said that Monitoring Workgroup would need to meet with the Laboratory Management Workgroup, which is working on different facets of the issue. Ms. Shields said that this issue could be identified as a single topic and members of both Workgroups could form one *ad hoc* team. Ms. Forman agreed that those with the most technical knowledge should form a team addressing this issue.

In response to a question from Dr. Pujari, Dr. Wichman explained that helium was allowed if the method quality control criteria could be met; several laboratories are exploring this issue in terms of food-related analysis as well, but he currently did not have comparative data between the two methods. Dr. Pujari was concerned that a transition from helium to hydrogen would not be possible for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System testing, and he wondered whether Methods 608, 624 and/or 625 had been examined. Dr. Wichman said that there were issues with retention times and flow, but he was unaware of any other available data. Ms. Shields agreed that the topic group did not have substantial data about the carrier gas transition and gathering this information would be difficult. A Board member said that a recommendation could be for EPA

to identify a source that validates that hydrogen can be interchanged with helium as a carrier gas. The Board members agreed, and Ms. Shields added that successful exchange would depend on a variety of factors.

Dr. James Seiber said that *Chemical & Engineering News* was sponsoring a webinar on helium/hydrogen and Methods 524 and 525; he will send the information to all of the ELAB members. If it is too late for the members to register, then Dr. Seiber will attend and provide the information to the Board.

Ms. Shields said that her Workgroup was determining the final product of the helium effort (e.g., letter of recommendation to EPA, formal report), which will determine how to combine the information from the two Workgroups. Ms. Forman said that her understanding was that ELAB is exploring the technical feasibility of replacing helium with hydrogen and providing recommendations to the Agency about how to implement such a transition; she did not think that the effort involved providing a historical background of the issue. Ms. Shields said that, in that case, then the information from the two groups could be merged, and the Board members agreed.

### ***Measurement and Technology Workgroup***

Mr. John Phillips identified the topics his Workgroup is addressing. Two involve data quality objectives (DQO), including addressing OW's use of the DQO process. OW has indicated that it will not discuss this topic any further, so the Workgroup discussed how to proceed. Chapter 2 of the Federal Advisory Committee on Detection and Quantitation (FACDQ) report discusses use of the DQO process, which focused on detection and quantitation in the Clean Water Act program. The FACDQ recommended that OW use EPA's *Guidance on Systematic Planning Using the Data Quality Objectives Process* in all Clean Water Act programs. The FACDQ also approved a recommendation for a 1 percent false negative error rate for detection. Because of OW resistance, the FACDQ did not make additional progress on DQO use. The Board must determine whether to pursue this as a topic or abandon it. Mr. Phillips did not think any further progress could be made on the topic, but perhaps it could be revisited in the future if the opportunity arises. Dr. Wichman agreed that it is an issue that should be addressed, but as no further progress can be made, the Board should abandon it for now. He agreed that the Board could continue to provide comment in the future on related topics. In response to a question from Ms. Shields, Mr. Phillips explained that he did not think that OW understood the issue as the Board understood it. The Board can continue to comment about the DQO process as new methods are introduced.

Mr. Phillips said that to determine consensus about whether to continue to the topic, Board members could respond "Yay" to continue or "Nay" to abandon the effort. Ms. Shields said that the issue could be tabled as a topic that the Board actively is addressing, but it always will be a topic of concern as it is part of ELAB's charter. Ms. Forman agreed that it could be tabled as current priority topic but remain in the topics spreadsheet as a topic of concern. Ms. Patricia Carvajal agreed that it should remain as a topic of concern so that ELAB is ready when OW is able to meet the Board halfway in regard to the issue. Dr. Wichman liked the idea but said that the Board was not limited to advising OW. Mr. Phillips said that OW was the focus because most other EPA offices have satisfactorily implemented the DQO process. Mr. Phillips moved to table the effort and consider it inactive. Ms. Forman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Phillips said that the Workgroup also is working to engage the Intergovernmental Data Quality Task Force (IDQTF) to explore revisions of the Uniform Federal Policy (UFP) and associated Quality Assurance Project Plans to better interact with laboratories when they establish their DQO processes. The goal is to establish a more interactive process to ensure that the established DQOs can be achieved. Ms. Silky Labie will be contacting the IDQTF Chair to initiate the dialogue. This topic, “Engaging the IDQTF to Revise the UFP,” will be assigned to an *ad hoc* team.

The Workgroup also is developing a stakeholder review group to review the upcoming revisions to the method detection limits/minimum limits (MDLs/MLs) by The NELAC Institute. The Workgroup has been developing objectives for the stakeholder review group and is waiting for feedback from OW regarding the composition of the group. This topic, “Stakeholder Review Group to Review the MDLs/MLs,” will be assigned to an *ad hoc* team.

Another topic is harmonizing analytical methods across the various program offices. The goal is to work with the Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM) on this topic; the first step will be to schedule a teleconference with the FEM to discuss how to move forward. This topic, “Method Harmonization Across EPA Program Offices,” will be assigned to an *ad hoc* team.

Dr. Dallas Wait introduced a topic during the last meeting based on his concerns about inconsistencies among liquid chromatography with tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) methods. He currently is compiling information on the issue. The Board can determine whether it is within its purview to address this issue, and he can continue to gather information and report to ELAB. Ms. Shields thought that it was within the Board’s purview, and ELAB can vote whether to address it. If so, then members will be assigned to work on the issue. Dr. Wait moved that the Board examine the performance criteria of LC-MS/MS methods. Mr. Phillips seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### ***Laboratory Management Workgroup***

Ms. Shields said that the only topic the Workgroup was addressing was the helium issue, which had been discussed earlier. The Board had sent a letter to EPA with its recommendations on the Workgroup’s prior topic, the state of national environmental laboratory accreditation, and the Agency had responded with its own letter. Ms. Shields asked for the Board member’s opinions about the letter. Mr. Phillips said that it did not appear as though the Agency could pursue the issue because of budget constraints and would do so when it had the resources. Ms. Shields agreed.

## **6. NEW TOPICS/ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Mr. Phillips wondered whether the Board needed to discuss the *Notice of Availability and Request for Comment on Waste Analysis Plan (WAP) Guidance* that Ms. Phelps had forwarded to the members via email on March 18, 2013. Ms. Shields did not have any additional information and recommended that it be placed on the agenda for the April Board meeting. Ms. Carvajal noted that the comment period ends on April 30, 2013. Ms. Shields said that if the item was placed on the April agenda, the Board would need to develop its comments quickly. She will add the topic to the spreadsheet so that the Board can finalize its comments prior to the

deadline. Mr. Phillips did not think the comments would be that extensive nor take a great deal of time to develop.

Mr. Phillips moved that the Board provide comments in response to the *Notice of Availability and Request for Comment on Waste Analysis Plan (WAP) Guidances*. Ms. Carvajal seconded the motion, which the Board approved unanimously.

In response to a question from Mr. Phillips about the *Ad Hoc* Website Workgroup, Ms. Shields said that she would add it to the topics spreadsheet until the website is finalized, which should be soon. Updating of the ELAB website will be a recurring topic on the agenda to remind the entire Board that the members must review the website frequently, ensuring that it is up to date.

## **7. WRAP-UP/REVIEW ACTION ITEMS**

Ms. LeBaron reviewed the action items identified the meeting, which are included in Attachment C.

## **8. CLOSING REMARKS/ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Shields thanked the members for their support during her term as Chair. The Board members expressed their thanks for Ms. Shields leadership as Chair.

Dr. Wichman moved to adjourn the meeting, which Ms. Forman seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

## **Attachment A**

### **AGENDA ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD**

Monthly Teleconference: 866-299-3188/9195415544#

March 20, 2013; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (EDT)

Opening Remarks	Phelps/Shields
Approval of February Minutes	Shields
Changes Required to Workgroup Structure	Phelps
General Board Activities - ELAB website	Shields
General Workgroup Assignments/Activities	
Monitoring Workgroup	Root
Measurement/Technology Workgroup	Phillips
Laboratory Management Workgroup	Wade
New Topics/Issues for Consideration	Shields
Wrap-Up/Review Action Items	Shields/LeBaron
Closing Remarks/Adjourn	Phelps/Shields

**Attachment B****MEMBERSHIP LISTING AND GUESTS**

ELAB TELECONFERENCE  
March 20, 2013; 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT

<b>Attendance (Y/N)</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Y	Ms. Aurora Shields (Chair)	City of Lawrence, Kansas Representing: Wastewater Laboratories
N	Ms. Patsy Root (Vice-Chair)	IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. Representing: Laboratory Product Developers
Y	Ms. Lara P. Phelps, DFO	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Representing: EPA
N	Dr. Richard Burrows	TestAmerica Laboratories, Inc. Representing: Commercial Laboratory Industry
Y	Ms. Patricia M. Carvajal	San Antonio River Authority Representing: Watershed/Restoration
N	Mr. John (Jack) E. Farrell, III	Analytical Excellence, Inc. Representing: The NELAC Institute (TNI)
Y	Ms. Ruth L. Forman	Environmental Standards, Inc. Representing: Large Third-Party Assessors
N	Ms. Sylvia (Silky) S. Labie	Environmental Laboratory Consulting & Technology, LLC Representing: Third Party Assessors
Y	Ms. Susan L. Mazur	Florida Power and Light Representing: Utility Water Act Group
Y	Mr. John H. Phillips	Ford Motor Company Representing: Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers
Y	Dr. Mahesh P. Pujari	City of Los Angeles Representing: National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA)
Y	Dr. James N. Seiber	University of California, Davis Representing: Academic and Research Communities
Y	Mr. David (Dave) N. Speis	QC Laboratories Representing: American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL)
Y	Dr. A. Dallas Wait	Gradient Representing: Consumer Products Industry
N	Ms. Michelle L. Wade	Kansas Department of Health and the Environment Representing: Laboratory Accreditation Bodies
Y	Dr. Michael D. Wichman	State Hygienic Laboratory at the University of Iowa Representing: Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)



<b>Attendance (Y/N)</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Y	Ms. Kristen LeBaron (Contractor)	The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc. (SCG)
Y	Mr. Martin Hyman (Student Contractor)	EPA
Y	Ms. Lynn Bradley (Guest)	TNI
Y	Mr. Stuart Magoon (Guest)	City of Takoma Environmental Services Laboratory
Y	Akeem	

## Attachment C

### ACTION ITEMS

1. Ms. LeBaron will finalize the February 2013 meeting minutes and send them to Ms. Phelps via email.
2. Ms. Shields will distribute a spreadsheet to the ELAB members with the current topics on which the Board is working, and the members will prioritize and choose those topics on which they will work. A lead will be identified for each topic.
3. Those ELAB members who would like to nominate a Vice-Chair must contact Ms. Phelps by the end of the week, as voting by secret ballot will commence on Monday, March 25, 2013.
4. Ms. Phelps will send a list of those members serving their third term (i.e., not eligible to be nominated as Vice-Chair) to the Board members via email.
5. Dr. Seiber will forward the information about the *Chemical & Engineering News* webinar to the Board members via email.
6. The Board will table its efforts regarding OW's use of the DQO process, potentially addressing it in the future if the opportunity arises.
7. The Board will address the issue of consistency of LC-MS/MS methods.

## Attachment D

I hereby certify that this is the final version of the minutes for the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board Meeting held on March 20, 2013.



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Signature Chair

Ms. Aurora Shields

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Print Name Chair