

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

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

**April 18, 2012; 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 April 18, 2012, 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 Autry, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) of ELAB, welcomed participants to the teleconference and called an official roll of the Board members and guests.

**2. APPROVAL OF MARCH MINUTES**

Ms. Shields noted that Mr. John Phillips had sent suggested comments regarding the March minutes and asked for any additional comments. Mr. Phillips added an additional comment that the phrase "precision of bias" in the section on the Measurement and Technology Workgroup should be "precision and bias." Mr. Dave Speis reported that his name was misspelled on page 5. Mr. Speis moved to accept the minutes with these changes, and Ms. Patsy Root seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the March minutes, with one abstention, with the discussed changes.

**3. GENERAL WORKGROUP ACTIVITY**

***Monitoring Workgroup***

Ms. Root reported that the letter from ELAB with the request to meet with the Office of Water (OW) regarding Recreational Water Quality Criteria development had been sent to the members via email. There was no additional discussion regarding the letter. Ms. Root moved to approve the letter, and Mr. Phillips seconded the motion, which the Board unanimously approved. Ms. Shields will send the letter to OW.

***Measurement and Technology Workgroup***

Mr. Phillips reported that the Workgroup had begun conducting business via email, and currently the members are voting to approve the minutes from the January and March 2012 Workgroup meetings. The Workgroup will continue its dialogue on data quality objectives (DQOs). He has been attempting to contact Dr. Michael Messner in the Office of Ground Water and Drinking

Water to pursue a dialogue with OW regarding the use and greater implementation of the DQO process in OW, but he has not been able to speak with him yet.

The Workgroup also is beginning its work on the Post Federal Advisory Committee on Detection and Quantitation (FACDQ) Pilot Study Report. The first action was to set up a conference call between appropriate OW staff and the workgroup to determine how ELAB can assist OW in gathering additional data to support the validation revised detection and quantitation procedures. He had spoken with Dr. Maria Gomez-Taylor (OW), who is in turn following up with Ms. Jan Matuszko (OW Branch Chief) and Mr. Robert Wood (OW), although Dr. Gomez-Taylor did not appear interested in additional data gathering. OW must determine whether there is adequate staff available to pursue this effort. The Workgroup will develop a set of questions for Dr. Gomez-Taylor regarding the data-gathering exercise (e.g., how many laboratories, what methods and procedures).

Ms. Shields asked at what stage in the process the EPA is at, and Mr. Phillips explained that the effort had begun in 2002 or so. The FACDQ finished its work approximately 3 to 4 years ago and proposed a procedure for determining detection and quantitation to replace the method detection limit (MDL) and minimum limit (ML). The FACDQ reached a majority rather than a full consensus on the procedure, which then underwent a post-FACDQ pilot study. In December 2011, the EPA issued a report on the post-FACDQ pilot study that examined the performance of Methods 200.7 and 6010. The study assigned three laboratories to each method and showed a substantial difference between the proposed FACDQ method and the MDL/ML procedures; the post-FACDQ method performed much better in meeting the DQOs established in the study. The conclusion of the EPA report was that there had not been enough data/laboratories participating to make a solid determination. The Workgroup is approaching OW to ask how ELAB can assist in gathering additional data or facilitating the process so that a determination can be made.

Mr. Jack Farrell asked whether the Workgroup had consulted with The NELAC Institute's (TNI) Calibration and Detection Expert Committee. Dr. Richard Burrows said that he is a member of the committee. Mr. Farrell said that the committee could provide a resource for the Workgroup's efforts because he understood that the committee's charge is to attempt to take the FACDQ recommendation and determine how it can be implemented. The committee could partner with the EPA to gather the data. Mr. Phillips explained that he also is a member of the committee, and he can introduce the effort in the future. Dr. Burrows thought that it was important to determine what level of data the EPA views as sufficient prior to determining potential partners. Mr. Phillips agreed that it would be unwise to invest a great deal of effort and funding if the data are not what the EPA needs. In response to a question from Ms. Shields, Dr. Burrows explained that the TNI committee is a standards development group that is working on improving the TNI standards in terms of detection, quantitation and calibration; it is not necessarily going to determine how the FACDQ findings can be implemented. Mr. Farrell said that the FACDQ implementation was included in the EPA proposal to obtain funding.

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

Dr. Jeff Flowers explained that the Laboratory Management Workgroup had not met since the previous ELAB meeting. He has been busy and thought that perhaps another Chair would have more time to devote to scheduling meetings. Ms. Shields thought that the group had not met because there are no current assignments.

### ***Ad Hoc Website Workgroup***

Ms. Judy Morgan reported that four ELAB logos had been developed. Ms. Root noted that the Board members must vote on a logo. The logos were sent via email to the Board members on Monday, April 16, 2012. The Workgroup preferred logo #4. Mr. Phillips agreed that #4 was his favorite. Ms. Root provided an overview of the pages that had been developed for the new ELAB website, which is easy to navigate, with very few clicks needed to obtain pertinent information. The pieces at the top and bottom of each webpage are consistent with the EPA website. There are two boxes on each page, one of which includes site navigation. The top box allows the user to learn more about ELAB, including the charter and contact information. The bottom box is devoted to the Workgroups and their activities. The Board-approved outputs are included on the individual Workgroup webpages. The website does not go deeper than three clicks. It is necessary to understand the structure of the website before the members can determine its specific content. Ms. Shields said that the Workgroup must focus on the content as its next step. The goal is to provide more content for the Board to review during the next meeting. Mr. Phillips made a motion to accept logo #4 as the official ELAB logo, which Ms. Root seconded. The motion was approved unanimously, and logo #4 will become the official ELAB logo.

### **4. CURRENT ACTIONS NEEDING UPDATE/REVIEW**

Ms. Shields reported that she had sent the 12-page summary document on national accreditation to the Board members via email on Tuesday, April 17, 2012. Mr. Speis reiterated that the goal is to determine the current state of national environmental laboratory accreditation from a health perspective. ELAB decided to interview the constituents represented by the Board members regarding general concerns that had been expressed. The reported concerns were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet, and these concerns were divided into operational and economic categories. Interviewees were invited to express their concerns, state whether they thought that a particular issue was of serious concern, and provide a suggested solution for any serious concerns. The compiled, “raw” comments are included in the 28-page document. The Board reviewed the raw input and condensed the information into a 12-page document that reflects the opinions of the constituents; the Board currently is reviewing this document for accuracy. Value judgments should not be applied at this stage; the only goal is to determine whether the condensed input is reflective of the constituent interviews. The ultimate goal is to distill this information and determine whether the Board can make a recommendation to the agency regarding national accreditation; this goal has remained the same throughout the effort. The Board members have discussed the operational issues and must continue reviewing the economic issues for accuracy only.

Ms. Shields asked whether the Board had agreed that the summary document would be published. Ms. Morgan said that the ELAB members had discussed publishing the summary on the website. The PowerPoint presentation, which includes information about the Board’s efforts on national accreditation, from the most recent face-to-face meeting has had the disclaimer added and should have been published on the website by now. The 28-page document contains raw information, and the Board voted not to publish this document because it identifies the stakeholders, who were not notified that their comments might be published. Ms. Autry explained that the PowerPoint presentation has not been published to the website because the January minutes cannot be finalized until ELAB receives feedback from Ms. Aaren Alger.

Ms. Morgan said that Ms. Alger has been difficult to reach, but she will try to have the issue resolved within the next week.

Mr. Farrell asked whether past ELAB minutes state that ELAB planned to publish the 12-page summary. He did not think that it should be published before its accuracy was determined. Ms. Shields said that the summary would not be published until it is accurate and finalized. Mr. Speis said that the only approved motion regarding the summary was to add an introduction that explains from which groups the information was obtained to clarify the intent of the document.

The Board members examined each section of the economic category of the summary document to ensure that the document was accurate. There were no specific comments provided on any of the sections.

Dr. Skip Kingston suggested that page numbers be added to the document. Ms. Root observed that many people think that the EPA should be more involved than it is in terms of finances, training, sponsorship and so forth, but her perception is that the agency is attempting to disengage itself. Several Board members agreed, and Mr. Speis explained that ELAB could make the recommendation, and the EPA could determine which activities, if any, that it was able and/or wanted to implement. Ms. Shields said that the Board should consider whether the EPA can provide feedback regarding what it would like to do in terms of laboratory and data issues. Dr. Flowers thought that the summary document contained a “hodge podge” of issues; the summary still is a compendium of different approaches that the EPA could take, and the Board must develop a cohesive message for the agency. Mr. Speis explained that he had outlined that this would be the next step during his introduction of the discussion.

With no comments on the specific sections, Mr. Speis stated that the next step should be for the Board to identify key issues on which ELAB can make recommendations. Now that ELAB has concluded its discussion of the document, Ms. Morgan will develop the introduction. In response to a question from Ms. Root about the focus of the introduction, Ms. Morgan explained that it would include information regarding why ELAB chose to focus on the effort and how the Board went about gathering the information. Ms. Shields suggested that the Board review the introduction via email and vote on it during a meeting.

The Board discussed the best manner to move to the next step of determining what recommendations could be made to the EPA. Mr. Speis thought that because there are a number of Board members interested in working on the project, he did not recommend assigning it to a specific Workgroup. Ultimately, the Board agreed that it should continue to be handled by the Laboratory Management Workgroup, which could accept up to three additional volunteers, ensuring that any meeting did not violate the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) quorum rules. Mr. Farrell said that the Workgroup could request information from other Board members or even individuals external to the Board. Dr. Flowers said that he could announce the Laboratory Management Workgroup meeting to the full Board; those interested in attending could contact him via email, and he would determine who could attend based on quorum. Ms. Morgan asked whether she and Mr. Speis still would be included based on the amount of work that they had already put in on this project. Dr. Flowers noted that Mr. Speis is a member of the Laboratory Management Workgroup, and Ms. Shields said that Ms. Morgan could volunteer to continue to be included.

Because the introduction is a critical portion of the document, Ms. Shields did not want to vote on the summary document before the introduction has been completed. Mr. Speis suggested that the Board members be allowed to suggest language for the introduction so that it can be voted on during the next meeting.

Ms. Michelle Wade commented that in Section IIG, the first solution listed (“States tend to go with whoever is cheapest or easiest to pass.”) is not a solution, and the statement should be moved up to the summary. Ms. Morgan will make this change, which Ms. Wade also sent her via email.

## **5. UPDATES FROM THE DFO**

Ms. Autry explained that she had gotten married, and when her name change is finalized, her email address will be changed to [phelps.lara@epa.gov](mailto:phelps.lara@epa.gov). She reported that the Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM) had several exciting initiatives underway and is moving forward in improving agency methods; a former ELAB group also had been involved in a similar effort. The FEM is working on the creation of an EPA methods survey to create another database for all of the agency’s methods that are not catalogued elsewhere. Many methods are created that are not included in published rules or regulations because of a lack of validation or because they simply were not chosen to be included. The FEM is seeking approval on the survey so that it can be included in the database as a modification of a similar database created for modeling. Adding appropriate disclaimers is an extremely important task that must be completed before the database is released because of the inclusion of unvalidated methods.

The FEM also is ensuring that the website that it created that links methods, tools, sites and so forth across the agency is up to date; additional links that have been discovered will be added following an internal agency survey to determine whether there are other links that also should be added. A policy for demonstration of laboratory competency for those in cooperative and/or interagency agreements with the EPA may be approved before the end of the calendar year. FEM also has created a series of guideline documents and policy statements for method validation techniques for various methods. Two are ready to be approved this summer: (1) environmental sampling techniques for the detection recovery and of microorganisms in the environment and (2) laboratory toxicity testing of methods of analysis. The FEM’s monitoring assessment work continues, including the creation of a massive internal website that will be vetted across the agency. The ultimate goal is to release an external version on a platform.

A new task for the FEM is to examine analytical data format commonalities and determine whether there are better methods to manage data in more consistent formats. This effort includes the EPA Council for Regulatory Environmental Monitoring. When appropriate, Ms. Autry will ask the ELAB members whether they are interested in this effort; the Board’s charter is lenient in terms of the topic of measurement, and modeling is considered measurement. The goal is to begin meeting in late May.

Ms. Autry reported that the *Federal Register* announcement regarding ELAB membership had created a great deal of interest. ELAB members have until April 30, 2012, to declare their membership interest for another term. In response to a question from Ms. Shields about limits, Ms. Autry explained that ELAB has no limits on the number of members it may have. The Board

could examine whether to include a modeling expert at some point in the future. Ms. Autry said that currently this is not a topic the Board needs to address, but if the agency becomes more adamant about including modeling, it will be included in the next iteration of the charter when it is renewed in 1.5 years. Any time that there is a significant charter change that could impact the knowledge base of the membership, then the DFO is allowed a unique opportunity to add members outside of the prescribed membership drive. Those Board members interested in including a modeling expert can let her know in the future. The agency will be asking itself during the next year whether the charter needs to be expanded to focus on modeling. The only previous instance that an EPA FACA committee has addressed a modeling issue was through the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology, which formed two subject-specific committees to deal with specific modeling topics.

## **6. OTHER ITEMS**

Mr. Speis explained that there had been an offline discussion about the history of the Workgroups, and it may be necessary for the Board to discuss how Workgroups are handled (e.g., standing and/or *ad hoc*) during a future meeting. Ms. Shields explained that this discussion had occurred because when the *ad hoc* Workgroup began working on the website, no one in the group remembered the history of the Workgroups and how they had been established. Ms. Autry explained that a prior ELAB Chair proposed the creation of the Workgroups in an effort to ensure that the members had an equal chance to be engaged and involved in the issues and to help manage the workload. The number of Workgroups created were based on: (1) the topics covered under the charter and (2) the number of Board members and FACA quorum rules for *ad hoc* workgroups. Recently, the Board has increased the number of issue-specific *ad hoc* groups. The Board can determine how it would like to continue to use *ad hoc* groups and/or the established Workgroups. Ms. Shields asked the ELAB members to consider whether they wanted to make changes to the Workgroups; if so, this could be added as an agenda item for a future meeting.

Ms. Root reported that in terms of LT2 testing for *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*, the EPA is not managing proficiency testing or laboratory accreditation anymore. The proposal is that TNI accreditation bodies now will handle these. Dr. Carrie Miller and others spoke about changing EPA Method 1623, adding an additional step. Ms. Root was unsure whether the change meant that laboratories would need to be re-assessed and/or re-accredited. The agency also is proposing an addition to surface water testing, proposing open water storage testing of *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*. There is a meeting about this on April 24, 2012. Ms. Shields asked whether Ms. Root was providing this as information or if she wanted ELAB to address this issue. Ms. Root responded that she was unsure until she hears from Dr. Miller about whether the change to the method is permanent. ELAB may not need to act but should monitor the situation.

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

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

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

Determining that there were no more issues to discuss, Ms. Shields asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Speis made the motion, which Dr. Flowers seconded. The members voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 2:35 p.m.

## Attachment A

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

Monthly Teleconference: 866-299-3188/9195415544#

April 18, 2012; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (EDT)

Opening Remarks	Autry/Shields
Approval of March Minutes	Shields
General Workgroup Activity	
Monitoring Workgroup	Root
Measurement and Technology Workgroup	Phillips
Laboratory Management Workgroup	Flowers
<i>Ad Hoc</i> Website Workgroup	Morgan/Root
Current Actions Needing Update/Review	
- State of National Accreditation	Morgan/Speis
Updates From the DFO	Autry
- Membership Interest	
Other Items	All
Wrap-Up/Review Action Items	Shields
Closing Remarks/Adjournment	Autry/Shields



**Attachment B****MEMBERSHIP LISTING AND GUESTS****ELAB TELECONFERENCE****April 18, 2012; 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
Y	Ms. Patsy Root (Vice-Chair)	IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. Representing: Laboratory Product Developers
Y	Ms. Lara P. Autry, DFO	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Representing: EPA
Y	Dr. Richard Burrows	TestAmerica Laboratories, Inc. Representing: Commercial Laboratory Industry
N	Mr. Eddie Clemons, II	Practical Quality Consulting Services Representing: Clients of QS Services
Y	Mr. John (Jack) E. Farrell, III	Analytical Excellence, Inc. Representing: The NELAC Institute (TNI)
Y	Dr. Jeff Flowers	City of Maitland, Florida Representing: Elected Officials of Local Government
N	Dr. Reza Karimi	Battelle Memorial Institute Representing: Nonprofit Research and Development Organizations
Y	Dr. H. M. (Skip) Kingston	Duquesne University Representing: Government Consortiums, Native Americans and Academia
Y	Ms. Sylvia (Silky) S. Labie	Environmental Laboratory Consulting & Technology, LLC Representing: Third Party Assessors
Y	Ms. Judith (Judy) R. Morgan	Environmental Science Corp. Representing: Commercial Environmental Laboratories
Y	Mr. John H. Phillips	Ford Motor Company Representing: Alliance of Auto Manufacturers
N	Dr. James (Jim) Pletl	Hampton Roads Sanitation District Representing: Municipal Environmental Laboratories
Y	Mr. David (Dave) N. Speis	QC Laboratories Representing: American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL)
Y	Ms. Michelle L. Wade	Kansas Department of Health and the Environment Representing: Laboratory Accreditation Bodies
N	Dr. Michael D. Wichman	University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory 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	Ms. Lynn Bradley (Guest)	TNI


## **Attachment C**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

1. Ms. Kristen LeBaron will finalize the March 2012 meeting minutes with the discussed changes and send them to Ms. Autry via email.
2. Ms. Shields will send the approved letter to OW requesting further discussion about the Recreational Water Quality Criteria development.
3. Ms. Morgan will write the introduction to the 12-page summary document on the state of national accreditation and forward it to the Board members via email for their input.
4. Ms. Morgan will incorporate the change to the 12-page summary document that Ms. Michelle Wade sent to her via email.
5. Ms. Morgan will follow up with Ms. Aaren Alger to clarify her comments so that the January face-to-face meeting minutes can be finalized.
6. Board members interested in serving another term on ELAB will send a letter of interest, resume and letter of support from their represented constituency to Ms. Autry no later than April 30, 2012.
7. Board members will consider possible changes to the Workgroup structure and inform Ms. Shields whether she should add this topic as an agenda item for a future meeting.

## Attachment D

I hereby certify that this is the final version of the minutes for the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board Meeting held on April 18, 2012.



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Signature Chair

Ms. Aurora Shields

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Print Name Chair