

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

Teleconference: 866-299-3188/9195415544#

September 21, 2011; 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 September 21, 2011, 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. Judy Morgan, Chair of ELAB, and Ms. Lara Autry, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) of ELAB, welcomed participants to the teleconference. Ms. Morgan called an official roll of the Board members and guests.

2. APPROVAL OF AUGUST MINUTES

Ms. Morgan asked whether there were any changes to the August 2011 Board minutes. Mr. Dave Speis noted that his comments on page 9 regarding the composition of the Quality Community Information Exchange (QCIX) were correct as stated during the meeting, but he wanted to ensure that the information itself was accurate. Ms. Autry stated that QCIX is comprised of Agency quality assurance (QA) management staff; the correction can be made via an editorial footnote. Mr. Speis suggested that the Board's face-to-face meeting presentation be added to the final minutes. Ms. Patsy Root noted that "December 2010" on page 1 needed to be changed to "July 2011." Dr. Richard Burrows sent a suggested change via e-mail, which Ms. Kristen LeBaron read. Mr. Speis moved to accept the minutes with these changes, and Ms. Silky Labie seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the August minutes with the changes as discussed.

3. WORKGROUP ACTIVITY

Ms. Morgan explained that the Monitoring Workgroup has been working on the Recreational Water Quality Criteria development issue. Ms. Root reported that a stakeholder webinar on the topic had been held, and more than 220 participants attended. During its last meeting, the Workgroup decided to send an e-mail to Ms. Grace Rubio (EPA) that provided background information on ELAB and the Workgroup and requested a point of contact at EPA with whom the Workgroup could work regarding the implementation and auditing of rapid methods and other related issues. The day prior to the Board teleconference, EPA personnel indicated that they are beginning to consider these issues, so it is very timely for the Workgroup to contact the Agency. Ms. Morgan asked how the Agency would enforce the criteria as guidance. Ms. Root explained that current criteria are enforced under Clean Water Act Section 308 guidance, and states must adopt the criteria, appropriate methods, and data recording and reporting established

by EPA. She was unsure what mechanism EPA used in cases in which states did not adopt the guidance. Dr. Jeff Flowers commented that the State of Florida is focusing its efforts on its southern beaches and no longer monitoring northern beaches because funding for the program has been reduced by 50 percent. Ms. Root explained that an Information Collection Request had been published in the *Federal Register* soliciting comments for the following year's beach grant program; it may be helpful to comment that monitoring at high-impact beaches is dependent on funding. Ms. Labie added that southern Florida beaches are used more routinely than the northern beaches; therefore, the emphasis was being placed on the healthiness of the southern beaches. Dr. Flowers was unsure how local communities would react to the new guidance as it is difficult to maintain current methods without the additional burden of rapid methods. Ms. Root said that there had been a disproportionate amount of people participating who are advocating for this change compared to the personnel who will be required to implement it. By offering ELAB's opinion and knowledge of how new methods can be implemented successfully, the Board may be able to assist the Agency with this issue; EPA is just beginning to investigate how implementation and accreditation will progress. Dr. Flowers made a motion for the Board to discuss and approve the letter to Ms. Rubio via e-mail, which Ms. Root seconded. The Board members unanimously approved the motion. Dr. Michael Wichman will send his comments about the draft letter to the Workgroup via e-mail so that the Workgroup can create a "draft final" letter. Ms. Autry then will forward the "draft final" to the full board for approval prior to sending it to Ms. Rubio.

Ms. Autry noted that a new Measurement and Technology Workgroup Leader needed to be assigned so that the group could continue to move forward with its activities. In response to a question from Ms. Morgan, Ms. Autry explained that there was no formal process in place to appoint a leader; the Workgroups are considered informal. Ms. Morgan asked for a volunteer to lead the Workgroup. The Board members thought that Mr. Jack Farrell would be a good Workgroup lead. Dr. Burrows was unable to volunteer with his current workload. Mr. John Phillips explained that he is spearheading the Workgroup's current activity and might be able to lead if Mr. Farrell is unable to assume leadership. He asked how long the term was for Workgroup leaders, and Ms. Autry explained that there was no official term length. Mr. Phillips reported that the Workgroup had completed a search of government documents to determine where and how the following terms are used: data quality objectives (DQOs), measurement quality objectives and measurement quality indicators. He has placed the relevant documents on a data-sharing website so that the members can determine how the terms are being used and identify commonalities. The Workgroup also is developing a glossary related to this effort. The next step will be for the Workgroup members to speak to the EPA personnel about the use of the terms. Ms. Morgan asked about a target date for results. Mr. Phillips was unsure, but he hoped to set objective dates once the Workgroup begins meeting regularly again. Ms. Morgan asked whether the effort would be comprehensive. Mr. Phillips was unsure; there is a great deal of commonality and a number of efforts to harmonize the DQO process across the Agency. If this is the case, then there may be a limited amount of work that the Workgroup needs to perform, and the effort may be focused on information that the laboratory community needs to provide to assist in the development of the ultimate DQOs.

Dr. Jeff Flowers provided an update for the Laboratory Management Workgroup. He asked the Board members whether they had obtained information from the various stakeholder groups regarding the state of national accreditation. Mr. Speis provided an overview of the discussion at the face-to-face meeting about this effort. Several Board members are consolidating the

information that they have received so that it can be presented to the Board. Mr. Speis asked for an update from each of the teams to determine when the Board could discuss the information and next steps. The teams reported the following:

- Commercial Environmental Laboratories: Ms. Morgan, Dr. Burrows and Mr. Speis met to consolidate their information and probably will be ready to provide a report during the October Board meeting.
- Quality Assurance Consultants and Accreditation Standard Developers and Assessors: Ms. Labie reported that she has been traveling and has not had a chance to consolidate the information that she had collected. She explained that Mr. Farrell has ideas, but the team has not had a chance to meet to discuss them.
- Research and Development Organizations: Drs. Skip Kingston and Reza Karimi were not present on the teleconference to report their progress.
- Users and Providers of Commercial Laboratory Products: Ms. Root reported that her group had not consolidated the information yet.
- Accreditation Bodies and Accredited Wastewater Laboratories: Ms. Michelle Wade reported that she and Ms. Aurora Shields had not met to discuss consolidation, but Ms. Wade has met with The NELAC Institute (TNI) and non-TNI entities. Ms. Shields reported that she had obtained information from accredited wastewater laboratories. The team members thought that they would be able to provide a report during the October meeting.
- Municipal Laboratories and Public Health Laboratories: Dr. Wichman would like to speak to committee members individually and enter their responses into the matrix prior to obtaining Dr. Jim Pletl's thoughts on the consolidated information. His goal is to be able to provide a report to the Board during the October meeting.
- Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers: Mr. Speis reported that the information that Mr. Phillips collected is ready to be presented to the Board.

Ms. Shields asked whether the Board should expand the search for comments as suggested at the face-to-face meeting. Mr. Speis said that the objective was to obtain information from constituencies that the Board members represent, and he was unsure whether it would be advantageous to open the discussion to interest groups, particularly as the process is slow. Ms. Shields did not think an expansion would allow the Board to obtain a significant amount of new information; her constituents have been uniform in their responses. Her only concern was that that it might be difficult to consolidate the responses that she and Ms. Wade had received. Mr. Speis explained that he planned to enter the information that his team had obtained into the matrix and then obtain Ms. Morgan's and Dr. Burrows' input. Mr. Phillips said that he could expand his research to other industries, although he thought that the information he already had obtained was representative.

Dr. Flowers noted his frustration with the lack of progress and also was unsure why he was placed on the team devoted to Users and Providers of Commercial Laboratory Products. He

thought that it was time for the Board members to use their expertise to act on the information that they had obtained. By definition, the Board is a balanced group, so not every constituent needs to be consulted. Ms. Shields thought that the quality of the effort was more important than the turnaround time; some ELAB projects will require more time than others. Ms. Morgan thought that it was important to consult the constituencies because she, Dr. Burrows and Mr. Speis obtained information from constituents that they would not have been able to derive on their own. Like Ms. Shields, she is more concerned with collecting quality information than with the timeline. Mr. Speis agreed and noted that other Board activities have been expanded to obtain broader input to ensure that the best recommendation was made to the Agency. Ms. Wade agreed that it was important to obtain as much constituent information as possible and said that she had interviewed four individuals and obtained very different input from each of them. Ms. Shields thought that the next step should be to present the information that already has been obtained at the next meeting. The Board then can determine whether there is enough information on which to make a recommendation or whether the members should continue to collect additional information.

4. FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

Ms. Morgan thought that the face-to-face meeting went very well. One of the issues discussed at the meeting was Method 524.4. Dr. Burrows said that the consensus at the face-to-face meeting appeared to be that the community did not want a new method instituted for the different purge gas and instead wanted a technical update. He thought that the next step was to draft a letter to EPA explaining this, and he volunteered to draft the letter.

Ms. Wade asked whether there was any difference in either recovery or performance between the two gases. Dr. Burrows responded that there was no difference in terms of quality control (QC) criteria. Mr. Speis thought that the only reason that the change was being put into place was because of an anticipated shortage of helium. Dr. Burrows agreed that it was not a bad idea to add nitrogen as an alternative, but it was a bad idea to introduce the change as a new method. Dr. Flowers asked whether EPA had provided reasons for creating a new method. Ms. Wade could not understand why a new method was being introduced if there were no QC differences between the two gases. Ms. Morgan stated that she had received an e-mail that explained some of the reasoning, and she would forward it to the Board members. This issue differs from the SW846 issue because promulgation is involved. Laboratories must perform the steps for proficiency testing and be recognized by their accreditation bodies. Even if the current method had been revised, the method still must be promulgated, and the date of approval is important.

Dr. Flowers wondered whether laboratories would make the effort to recertify to be able to include nitrogen. Mr. Speis thought that this effort was similar to the Board's efforts with the Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery (ORCR), and it would be beneficial to work with the Office of Water (OW) to develop a better plan for future method updates. Dr. Flowers agreed and reiterated that he did not think that laboratories would undertake the expensive recertification process when a QC change is not involved. Mr. Speis noted that it is within ELAB's purview to make a recommendation to the Agency and work toward a policy change.

Ms. Labie asked whether the method update was meant to be a mandatory change. Mr. Speis was unsure and explained that one problem is that many laboratories are mandated to use the most

recent version of a method. Dr. Burrows explained that the new method is an alternative method, but laboratories are not always able to choose which method they will use. It will cause a good deal of confusion about which method should be used and when, despite the fact that there is no difference.

Dr. Flowers thought that the Board could recommend that OW adopt a similar update method as it had recommended to ORCR. If QC is not involved, then a method change should not be instituted. He asked about the timeframe available for the Board to affect change. Dr. Burrows was unsure about the Agency's timeline; he thought that peer-review comments already had been submitted to EPA, but he was unsure when the OW would publish the new method. Ms. Morgan wondered whether the Board still could affect change. Dr. Burrows thought that it was possible because the new method had not been published yet. He would like to send a letter to OW stating the reasons why a new method should not be created and indicate that ELAB is available for consultation. Mr. Speis moved that the Board adopt this issue and followup with a recommendation to the Agency; Ms. Labie seconded the motion. Dr. Flowers asked how quickly the Board needed to act on the issue. Ms. Morgan asked whether it was time sensitive enough to handle via e-mail prior to the October meeting. Dr. Burrows stated that the letter should be sent prior to the next meeting. Dr. Flowers amended the motion to deal with the issue via e-mail. The amended motion passed unanimously; Dr. Burrows will draft the letter for ELAB approval via e-mail.

Ms. Wade asked about the status of the website update. Ms. Morgan responded that the Website Task Force needed to reconvene to develop a plan, submit the plan to the entire Board for approval and forward the plans to Ms. Autry for implementation. Ms. Autry noted that there had been platform changes to the EPA website that would be helpful when the ELAB website is updated.

Ms. Morgan reported that the marketing letter must be revised as a result of the discussion with Mr. Greg Carroll (EPA) so that the Board can ensure that it sends the letter to the most advantageous people within the Agency. Ms. Root made a motion to reconsider the letter for Board approval, which Mr. Speis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Speis stated that the action item from the August face-to-face meeting was to develop a Task Force to investigate broader Agency adoption of TNI quality system standards. Dr. Flowers thought that Mr. Farrell had volunteered to lead the Task Force, although this was not implicitly stated in the August face-to-face meeting minutes. Ms. Morgan noted that this effort would target similar Agency personnel as the marketing letter. She suggested providing additional information about this issue in the marketing letter to relevant individuals. Dr. Flowers asked who had been involved with the development of the marketing letter. Ms. Morgan responded that she, Mr. Speis, Ms. Labie, Dr. Wichman and Ms. Root had been involved with the effort. The updated marketing letter will be approved via e-mail, and the addition into certain letters regarding implementation of TNI quality system standards will be discussed during the October meeting.

5. UPDATES FROM THE DFO

Ms. Autry reported that she had received positive feedback following the Board's recent face-to-face meeting. Her greatest concern is that the Board prioritize its varied efforts so that it is able to address short-turnaround items while focusing on long-term issues. She will help ELAB in the most efficient manner possible. Ms. Morgan responded that she plans on creating a list of items on which the Board is working to ensure that all of them are addressed efficiently and effectively.

Ms. Autry explained that at the end of each fiscal year, she is required to submit data regarding ELAB's activities; the Board accomplished all of its action items for the current fiscal year. Ms. Autry planned to submit the Board's report the following day; the report will highlight ELAB's very active year. Ms. Morgan thanked the members for their hard work and noted that she is proud to be a part of ELAB. She appreciated the participation of all of the Board members who have made this a productive year. She thanked Ms. Autry for her efforts as DFO. Ms. Autry added that the process to accept new members takes approximately 6 months and will begin in 6 months; if the Board members have colleagues interested in joining ELAB, the interested individuals should send a letter of interest and resume to Ms. Autry via e-mail.

6. OTHER ITEMS

The Board members did not identify any additional items for discussion.

7. WRAP-UP/REVIEW ACTION ITEMS

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

8. CLOSING REMARKS/ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Morgan thanked everyone for their attendance and participation. Mr. Speis introduced a motion to adjourn the meeting, which Dr. Flowers seconded. Following a unanimous vote, Ms. Morgan adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

Attachment A

AGENDA ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD

Monthly Teleconference: 866-299-3188/9195415544#

September 21, 2011; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (EDT)

Opening Remarks	Autry/Morgan
Approval of August Minutes	Morgan
Workgroup Activity	
Monitoring Workgroup	Morgan
- Recreational Water Quality Criteria Development	
- Laboratory Greening Recommendation	
Measurement/Technology Workgroup	TBD
Laboratory Management Workgroup	Flowers
- State of National Accreditation	
Face-to-Face Meeting	
- Method 524.4 Next Steps	Burrows
- New Topics	All
Updates From the DFO	Autry
Other Items	All
Wrap-Up/Review Action Items	Morgan
Closing Remarks/Adjournment	Autry/Morgan

Attachment B**MEMBERSHIP LISTING AND GUESTS****ELAB TELECONFERENCE****September 21, 2011; 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT**

Attendance (Y/N)	Name	Affiliation
Y	Ms. Judith (Judy) R. Morgan (Chair)	Environmental Science Corp. Representing: Commercial Environmental Laboratories
Y	Ms. Aurora Shields (Vice- Chair)	City of Lawrence, Kansas Representing: Wastewater Laboratories
Y	Ms. Lara P. Autry, DFO	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Representing: EPA
Y	Dr. Richard Burrows	Test America Inc. Representing: Commercial Laboratory Industry
N	Mr. Eddie Clemons, II	Practical Quality Consulting Services Representing: Clients of QS Services
N	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
N	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
N	Mr. Jeffrey (Jeff) C. Lowry	Environmental Resource Associates Representing: Proficiency Testing Providers
Y	Mr. John H. Phillips	Ford Motor Company Representing: Alliance of Auto Manufacturers
Y	Dr. James (Jim) Pletl	Hampton Roads Sanitation District Representing: Municipal Environmental Laboratories
Y	Ms. Patsy Root	IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. Representing: Laboratory Product Developers
Y	Mr. David (Dave) N. Speis	Accutest Laboratories Representing: American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL)
Y	Ms. Michelle L. Wade	Kansas Department of Health and the Environment Representing: Laboratory Accreditation Bodies
Y	Dr. Michael D. Wichman	University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory Representing: Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)

Attendance (Y/N)	Name	Affiliation
Y	Ms. Kristen LeBaron (Contractor)	The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc. (SCG)
Y	Ms. Paula Hogg (Guest)	Hampton Roads Sanitation District
Y	Mr. Jim Raab (Guest)	OakTree Consulting

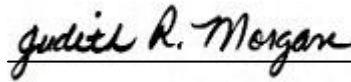
Attachment C

ACTION ITEMS

1. Ms. Kristen LeBaron will finalize the August 2011 meeting minutes with the suggested changes and send them to Ms. Autry via e-mail.
2. Ms. Root will finalize the current draft of the letter to Ms. Rubio following receipt of Dr. Wichman's comments and forward it to Ms. Autry, who will send the "draft final" to the Board members for their comments and approval.
3. Mr. Phillips will contact Mr. Farrell about leading the Measurement and Technology Workgroup.
4. All Board members will meet with their teams to consolidate the information that they have received about the state of national accreditation and be prepared to present the information at the October meeting.
5. Dr. Burrows will draft a letter to EPA regarding the Method 524.4 issue, and Ms. Morgan will forward information about the reasoning behind the method development to the Board members via e-mail.
6. The Board members will re-examine the marketing letter to determine to whom it should be sent to within the Agency. Appropriate EPA individuals also will receive information about Agency-wide adoption of The NELAC Institute's quality systems standards.

Attachment D

I hereby certify that this is the final version of the minutes for the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board Meeting held on September 21, 2011.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Judith R. Morgan", written over a horizontal line.

Signature Chair

Ms. Judith R. Morgan

Print Name Chair