

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

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

**December 19, 2012; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB or Board) teleconference was held on December 19, 2012, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. EST. 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. Patsy Root, Vice-Chair of ELAB, and Ms. Lara Phelps, 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 NOVEMBER MINUTES**

Ms. Roots asked whether the Board members had comments regarding the November 2012 minutes in addition to those that Ms. Patricia Carvajal had sent via email. Mr. Dave Speis moved to accept the most recent version of the minutes, and Dr. Michael Wichman seconded the motion. The Board approved the November minutes with no discussion to include Ms. Carvajal's changes.

**3. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING THE LETTER TO EPA ON THE STATE OF NATIONAL ACCREDITATION**

Ms. Phelps explained that EPA had received the Board's letter regarding its recommendations for a national environmental laboratory accreditation program. As a result, the Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM) sought clarification regarding the intent of Recommendation #3. Mr. Speis explained that the observation that had prompted the recommendation was that a great number of states do not have the resources or wherewithal to establish a program that incorporates The NELAC Institute's (TNI) National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) by reference, and a process to facilitate this needed to be instituted. ELAB's intent was that the Agency create a vehicle within its own operations to help such states move to the point that they employ NELAP as their laboratory accreditation standard. Ms. Phelps asked whether ELAB was recommending that the Agency provide training/guidance or monetary support. Mr. Speis said that the primary intent was for EPA to provide training or guidance rather than monetary support. A program could be devised in which states could participate, learn how to employ NELAP, and receive input from the Agency or other states that have successfully implemented NELAP.

Dr. Mahesh Pujari commented that Agency programs were not consistent in the time allowed for laboratories to perform testing; one program allows laboratories only 25 days to complete testing, and this is not a sufficient amount of time. Ms. Root said that this was a good point, but it was not germane to this discussion, and ELAB could address this issue separately.

Ms. Root agreed with Mr. Speis' summation that ELAB was not expecting a funding or grants program but rather an educational process that allows states to successfully incorporate NELAP as their accreditation program.

Ms. Phelps said that the FEM did not have any additional questions; the group wanted to ensure that it did not misunderstand or misinterpret any of ELAB's intentions before it drafted a response, which should lead to additional dialogue between the groups. The FEM expects to provide the Board with its response prior to ELAB's February 2013 teleconference, so this discussion could be placed on the agenda for that meeting. Dr. Wichman thought that the examples could go beyond drinking water to other Agency programs, and he asked whether program officers were involved with the response. Ms. Phelps explained that Mr. Eric Reynolds, who was present on the teleconference, represents the Contract Laboratory Program. Other program offices are participating, and because the FEM as a whole is addressing this issue on its agenda, all program and regional offices will have the opportunity to provide input.

Ms. Root asked about the next steps. Ms. Phelps said that the entire FEM membership was meeting on January 23, 2012, to discuss the response bullets, which will be circulated among the members approximately 1 week prior to that meeting. Following this meeting, the FEM will draft a response letter from the agreed-on bullets. Ideally, the response letter will be signed by Dr. Michael Shapiro (EPA) within the first week of February 2013, so ELAB should receive the letter prior to its February meeting. Ms. Phelps said that FEM members could attend the Board's February meeting in case the ELAB members have questions about the response. Ms. Root asked whether the FEM would like ELAB members to attend the FEM teleconference to answer questions. Ms. Phelps said that the only outstanding question had been clarified, as the Board's the letter had been very clear. Internal FEM discussion will be beneficial.

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

##### ***Monitoring Workgroup***

Ms. Root explained that the Monitoring Workgroup had met on December 17, 2012, and she had accepted the nomination to serve as Workgroup Chair. The plan is for the Workgroup to meet the second Thursday of each month at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time. The current goal is to prepare a letter of recommendation to ELAB that describes the Workgroup's recommendations for training laboratories and auditors on qPCR (EPA Method 1611). The letter also will encourage EPA to continue its dialogue with ELAB on this topic. Currently, the Workgroup members are contacting their colleagues to develop recommendations for the Board to approve eventually. The Workgroup will continue discussions about how best to train laboratories and auditors on the newly implemented methods.

Mr. Lemuel Walker (EPA) had requested previously that ELAB review EPA Methods 624 and 625, which was assigned to the Monitoring Workgroup. The Workgroup members will prepare and submit individual comments on the methods, Ms. Root will collate these, and then the

members will discuss the comments during the next Workgroup teleconference. Finally, the Workgroup will present its recommendations to the Board for discussion. The ultimate output will be a letter to Mr. Walker and the Agency detailing any proposed changes and their rationale.

The Workgroup also is examining the technical aspects of using hydrogen in various methods as a replacement for helium, of which there is a shortage. The Workgroup decided to examine the overall picture rather than specific methods. Ms. Ruth Forman has volunteered to outline a document to share with the Workgroup that will be discussed via email. The expected output will be technical recommendations regarding whether it is feasible to replace helium with hydrogen for various detection methods. Dr. Pujari commented that the effort served two purposes. First, the methods are old, and sensitivity and other requirements have changed. Secondly, many compounds that are needed in wastewater monitoring are not listed in Method 624. It is necessary to consider adding these to allow laboratories to maintain that they are using Method 624 to meet permit requirements. Ms. Root responded that the Workgroup had just begun the effort and had not discussed this particular issue yet. Dr. Wichman said that it was necessary to recognize that the current methods are outdated, and there have been many improvements since they were implemented.

Dr. James Seiber asked whether there was a deadline to provide input regarding the Method 624 and 625 review documents. Ms. Root responded that no deadline had been set. The Workgroup members will review each of the methods individually, and then the Workgroup will discuss the findings as a whole. Feedback from non-Workgroup members is welcome.

Ms. Wade asked when the Workgroup would be discussing the helium issue, as the Laboratory Management Workgroup also is working on different aspects of the same issue. Ms. Root responded that the Monitoring Workgroup had planned to conduct most of its discussions via email. Other ELAB Workgroups and members are welcome to send any comments via email to Ms. Root, who will share them with the Monitoring Workgroup. Currently, no official timeline has been established to address the issue. Ms. Wade said that she would send the link to the ThermoFisher webinar regarding helium to the Board members via email.

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

In the absence of Mr. John Phillips, Ms. Silky Labie provided details about the Measurement and Technology Workgroup's current topics of interest, which include working with the Intergovernmental Data Quality Task Force (IDQTF) to improve laboratory involvement in the data quality objective (DQO) process, addressing the Office of Water's (OW) use of the DQO process, and establishing a stakeholder review group to review TNI's Chemistry Expert Committee's revisions of method detection limits (MDLs) and minimum limits (MLs). Ms. Labie had volunteered to follow-up with the Chair of the IDQTF as Mr. Phillips had not received a response from his initial inquiry.

Ms. Labie noted that Mr. Phillips had sent the Board members a draft letter from ELAB and TNI addressed to Ms. Jan Matuszko (EPA) regarding the makeup of the stakeholder review group. Dr. Richard Burrows explained that the Measurement and Technology Workgroup is seeking the Board's approval of the letter; once approved by ELAB, the letter will be sent to TNI for its input and approval. Dr. Wichman asked whether the ELAB members would be able to review

the letter after TNI review it, potentially making revisions. Dr. Burrows said that ELAB would be able to review any revisions made by TNI.

Ms. Root asked whether there was a precedent for the Workgroup to send a letter rather than ELAB. Ms. Phelps said that there was not. Dr. Burrows explained that the Workgroup did not intend to send the letter; it would be signed by the ELAB Chair on behalf of the Board.

Ms. Phelps noted that timing is an issue because several Board members would be absent and unable to vote until after the holidays. The vote needs to be held via email so that the members have an appropriate amount of time to review the letter. As the DFO, Ms. Phelps has been unable to determine the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) process for signing a letter with another organization, so she suggested that ELAB and TNI send two separate but strikingly similar letters. In response to a question from Dr. Pujari, Dr. Burrows explained that the effort is to update to the MDL process and will not deal with specific compounds. The effort began because there had been EPA concern that ELAB and TNI were not “on the same page” regarding this issue.

Ms. Root agreed with Ms. Phelps’ suggestion and thought that there would be greater impact if EPA received two similar letters from two organizations; this also would alleviate any concerns that the two groups are not in sync. Dr. Wichman agreed that the letters should be sent from ELAB and TNI separately. He asked whether ELAB could solicit advice from outside experts. Ms. Phelps said that this was allowed. Dr. Burrows said that the Measurement and Technology Workgroup would reword the letter so that it is essentially the same but from ELAB only. The Board decided to discuss the revised letter at its January meeting. Dr. Burrows asked the Board members whether the current letter could be provided to TNI to ensure consistency between the letters. Ms. Root was concerned with version control and asked whether TNI could be provided with bullet points rather than the entire letter. Dr. Dallas Wait and Ms. Carvajal thought that no letter should be sent until it was as close to final as possible, and Ms. Phelps agreed. Dr. Burrows agreed that only bullet points would be provided to TNI. Dr. Burrows moved that the Measurement and Technology Workgroup send a communication to the TNI Board, copying the ELAB members, suggesting that the TNI Board generate a letter to EPA using similar points that ELAB will use in its forthcoming formal letter to EPA. Mr. Speis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Dr. Burrows said another action item that the Workgroup is addressing is to develop a recommendation to the Agency regarding SW-846 methods. He asked the Board members which methods that they would suggest be included in SW-846. Mr. Speis did not think that it was necessary to mention specific methods. If it is left open, this provides the opportunity to choose an appropriate method from a broad variety. A compendium could be included in the recommendation. Dr. Burrows was concerned that OW might find this solution too complicated. Perhaps the effort could begin with one or two methods. Ms. Root agreed that starting with one or two methods would be easier, particularly if it was possible to determine the logistics and break down barriers for these example methods and then create a familiar pathway to address additional methods. Dr. Burrows said that in principle, all of the compendium methods should be included, but the Measurement and Technology Workgroup thought that it would be best to begin the process with one or two methods, and Ms. Labie agreed. Mr. Speis thought that OW could provide suggestions about incorporating SW-846 methodology in 40 CFR 136. Dr. Burrows said that he would report this approach to the Workgroup and prepare a letter to OW about including SW-846 methods in 40 CFR 136. Dr. Wait thought that OW was amenable

to flexibility because of the 1996 *Guide to Method Flexibility and Approval of EPA Water Methods* and wondered whether this amenability had changed. Dr. Burrows explained that use of SW-846 methods only is not something EPA would consider compliant. Dr. Wait said that the *Guide to Method Flexibility and Approval of EPA Water Methods* provides the pathway for approval of non-drinking water methods for water. Perhaps the guide could be used to determine a feasible pathway to move forward.

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

Ms. Wade explained that the Laboratory Management Workgroup members had nominated her as the new Chair. Members are exploring different aspects of the helium issue and will summarize what they have found in January 2013 and then provide a summary document to the ELAB members.

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

Ms. Wade asked for clarification that the January 2013 face-to-face meeting would be 2 hours long. Ms. Phelps said that although the schedulers attempt to allot as much time as possible during the main conference, only 2 hours had been available this time; more time will be available during the August 2013 face-to-face meeting. Because of the short amount of time available, Ms. Root agreed that each Workgroup's report only should include a few bullet points about current and recently completed actions. Ms. Phelps appreciated the time that the ELAB members spend providing details to participants during the face-to-face meeting and reminded them that interested parties could attend the monthly teleconferences and/or read the monthly minutes. The Board members do not need to feel as though they must provide updates during ELAB business meetings; other FACA committees do not provide updates during their business meetings. If participants would like additional details, they can be referred to the ELAB website and the Board's prior meeting minutes. Ms. Root asked when the Workgroup Chairs needed to provide their bullet points to Ms. Aurora Shields. Ms. Phelps said that the goal should be to send them by January 4, 2013; January 7, 2013 is the absolute deadline.

## **6. UPDATES FROM THE DFO**

Ms. Phelps reported that the announcement of ELAB's 2013 meetings had been signed that week and forwarded to the *Federal Register*. Therefore, the schedule will be published soon. Ms. Kristen LeBaron (SCG) and Ms. Phelps are finalizing the minutes and PowerPoint presentation from the recent ELAB administrative meeting. No feedback from the Board members is needed; the minutes can be used for future Board member orientation.

## **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. Wade moved to adjourn the meeting, which Ms. Carvajal seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

## **Attachment A**

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

Monthly Teleconference: 866-299-3188/9195415544#

December 19, 2012; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (EST)

Opening Remarks	Phelps/Root
Approval of November Minutes	Root
Question and Answers Regarding the Letter to EPA on the State of National Accreditation	Phelps
General Workgroup Assignments/Activities	Root
Monitoring Workgroup	Root
Measurement and Technology Workgroup	Phillips
Laboratory Management Workgroup	Wade
New Topics/Issues for Consideration	Root
Updates From the DFO	Phelps
Wrap-Up/Review Action Items	Root
Closing Remarks/Adjourn	Phelps/Root

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

ELAB TELECONFERENCE  
**December 19, 2012; 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EST**

<b>Attendance (Y/N)</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
N	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. Phelps, DFO	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Representing: EPA
Y	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
Y	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
N	Dr. Robert O. Miller	Colorado State University Representing: Soil and Agronomy Community
N	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
Y	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. Eric Reynolds (Guest)	EPA

## Attachment C

### ACTION ITEMS

1. Ms. LeBaron will finalize the November 2012 meeting minutes and send them to Ms. Phelps via email.
2. Ms. Wade will send the link for the ThermoFisher webinar regarding helium to the Board members via email.
3. Dr. Burrows will contact the TNI Board via email, copying the ELAB members, regarding the establishment of a stakeholder review group to review the TNI Chemistry Expert Committee's revisions of MDLs and MLs. The email from Dr. Burrows will suggest that TNI generate a letter to EPA using similar points that ELAB will use in its own formal letter to EPA.
4. The Measurement and Technology Workgroup will prepare a letter to OW regarding adoption of SW-846 methods into 40 CFR 136.
5. Dr. Wait will review the *Guide to Method Flexibility and Approval of EPA Water Methods* to determine whether there is a feasible pathway to move forward; he will report his findings at the next Measurement and Technology Workgroup meeting.
6. Workgroup Chairs will provide Ms. Shields with their brief update bullets no later than January 7, 2013, with the goal of providing them by January 4, 2013.

## Attachment D

I hereby certify that this is the final version of the minutes for the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board Meeting held on December 19, 2012.



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Signature Chair

Ms. Aurora Shields

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Print Name Chair