

Summary of Advocacy Committee Meeting
March 5, 2026 1PM Eastern

1. Welcome and Introductions

Steve Arms, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Attendance is recorded in Attachment A – Seven voting members (quorum met) and three Associate members.

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

The February meeting minutes were distributed for review. A motion was made by Mike to approve the February 5, 2026, minutes. The motion was seconded by Devon and unanimously approved.

It was noted that the inclusion of the Agenda in the Attachment to minutes is no longer necessary.

2. NEMC Plenary Presentation – Jerry

Jerry Parr shared recent developments within the Environmental Monitoring Coalition (EMC) over the past four to five months. These developments stem from regulatory changes related to methylene chloride usage in extraction methods. EMC has been exploring the need for a shift in how the EPA approves analytical methods, but there are different views on how this should be done.

Jerry, along with Judy Morgan and William Lipps, proposed a new approach to modernizing method approval. Their proposal/abstract suggests allowing laboratories greater flexibility to modify methods or adopt new technologies, provided they are accredited under the TNI standard. This accreditation would serve as a safeguard against misuse while enabling innovation. Jerry shared the abstract by email.

Committee members generally supported the abstract. Marlene noted that it was well written but noted that proficiency testing is already required in drinking water regulations, though not in wastewater. She also pointed out inconsistencies in EPA regulations, including reliance on outdated methods, which creates challenges for laboratories.

EPA's method development process is slow (typically 3–5 years), often lagging behind technological advancements. One example: Laboratories are required to reduce methylene chloride usage but are simultaneously restricted from modifying methods to achieve this. This creates compliance conflicts between agencies. Concern was expressed that EPA's current approach may be hindering innovation. Robin provided an example of this related to a new lamp issue in a Microbiology method.

There was discussion about the possibility of escalating concerns to higher levels within the EPA hierarchy, particularly within the Office of Water.

Jerry, Judy and William's proposal would require significant regulatory revisions, specifically to 40 CFR Parts 136 and 141. There was general agreement among

Committee members that initiating the conversation is necessary and that a more flexible approach should apply across all laboratory disciplines, given the pace of technological advancement.

3. NEMC – Houston Update

- Registration will open early April.
- There are 125 presentations – all slots are full.
- The conference is in great shape.
- DW, Wastewater and RCRA Updates - EPA is planning to attend and present. They may be able to present remotely if needed – and if not ... Jerry will take care of it.

4. California Meeting – Application

Jerry and Ilona reported on discussions with California representatives regarding their plan to apply to become a TNI Accreditation Body (AB). Key points included:

- California will have a two-tier program, with about 10% of their labs seeking NELAP accreditation.
- Encouragement to submit the application earlier rather than waiting until October.
- Anticipated challenges include alignment of fields of accreditation and database readiness. They need to begin work with Paul Junio (LAMS Administrator) very soon to prevent delays.
- The group discussed the use of interim recognition for new accreditation bodies. This approach may be appropriate when most all requirements are met but certain elements (e.g., assessments or shadowing) cannot be completed until after they start their program.
- It would be great to announce accreditation in Long Beach next year, but there is no intent to apply any undue pressure to complete it by this date.

5. Ambassador Meeting

Updates included:

- **Ohio (Sheela):** No new updates.
- **New England (Mike):** Outreach conducted; no responses received.
- **Kentucky (Zoneta):** Stable program but facing staffing shortages. Zoneta suggested that Advocacy consider providing Ambassador's with information that they can share. Do Ambassador's have enough tools to effectively reach out? The following were suggested:
 - Newsletter topics
 - New TNI Reorganization
- **Wisconsin (Paul):** Staffing shortages causing delays; lacks authority and funding for third-party assessors.
- **California (Lily):** See CA discussion above. Some small labs in California expressed that they cannot implement the TNI Standard. Committee members provided examples of how it could be done and Robin (Small Lab Advocate) noted that Lily can share her contact information.

- **Nevada (Devon):** He will be visiting next month and will have an update next time. Ambassador's need to know what the needs are for their states – that helps determine what to share. Ask “What resources do you need from us?”
- **Alabama (Heather Morgan):** Early-stage outreach underway.

6. Newsletter

Editor: Devon

Timing: June 4th publication

Articles due: May 15, 2026 (Friday)

Topic	Author/Contacts
Summary of Annual Report in Boston – include link	Jerry
Technical Specialist	Paul Junio – summarize Monday morning session.
LAB - Expert Committee status – one article – include standards development process.	Paul Junio
FSMO - Volume 1 and Volume 2 Standard Update – transition timelines?	Tracy/Katie
PDP – AEX Scholarship and Emerging Professionals update	Joe Manzella
Benefits of Credentials	Written by Advocacy Explaining what the process is, etc ...
Field Conclave	Tracy
Summary of Boston – conference re-cap	Jerry has asked for summaries from the Program Administrators.
Announcement of summer EMS – Houston visit	Jerry
Reason's for using NGABs	Duncan
Alfredo	Alfredo
Member Spotlight	Kim Watson Ask Zoneta if she can do it.
New webcasts, webinars, future training	ention new ones – 2 from advocacy Ilona
Feedback/Complaint Survey	Ilona
Organizational Name Changes	Jerry
Board Election Results	Sharon Mertens
Things to do in Houston	Harold
Topic	Author/Contacts
Summary of Annual Report in Boston – include link	Jerry
Technical Specialist	Paul Junio – summarize Monday morning session.

The table and assignments were reviewed and updated as presented. Devon will follow up via email if additional clarification is needed.

7. Action Items/Current Topics:

Ilona noted that she is planning to use a table she used with other Committees to track these items in the future. The table will be an attachment to the minutes.

- State of Accreditation Report 2026 - The last report was 2023, so an update is needed.
 - This is not due until the end of the year, but it will be a significant update. Need to know when the Standard can be updated. Decide in July how to approach it. Asked each PA to write what they have been up to. Need a written procedure on how to do this report so we know how to do it next time. Prepare a procedure – Jerry will try to write an SOP to ensure consistency in future updates of this report.
- Promote use of NGABs
 - Start with the presentation Duncan did in Boston – it will be a newsletter article. This will be a good starting point.
 - Work with the DW office and our NELAP ABs.
 - Next step would be reciprocity. Now is the time to talk about this because regulations will be getting opened. Ilona will talk to Kristin to get current status on reciprocity.
- Credentialing needs stronger promotion.
 - Roll something out mid-year – how do we promote it?
- Webcasts – Welcome and History of TNI
 - Jerry will work on this. The Welcome would not be specific. Marlene and Jerry did a presentation he will look at for the History of TNI.
- NELAP Vision and Outreach Plan
 - Continue discussion of how TNI might assist EPA's drinking water lab certification efforts if Agency staffing/funding gets drastically reduced.
 - Will hold discussion until August. Jerry will look at who will be attending from EPA and possibly plan a conversation.
- CANNRA Update
 - Still in progress.
- Update/Continuation of Single PT Discussion
 - No update. Jerry is concerned that working on this may delay the Standard. Ilona recommended that he talk to Carol Gebhart before deciding to drop the concept.

8. Update on New Business, if any

Jerry noted that he was interviewed by an investigative reporter. The interview focused mainly on data quality issues and lab fraud. He works for a tabloid for environmental issues.

9. Next Meeting

The next scheduled teleconference will be April 2, 2026, at 1pm Eastern. An agenda and any needed documents will be provided prior to the meeting. The next Ambassador meeting will be in June.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:32pm Eastern.

Attachment A – Advocacy Roster

	Name	Stakeholder Group	Attendance
1.	Steve Arms, Chair	Other	Present
2.	Mike Delaney	Other/ TNI Ambassador	Present
3.	Zonetta English	Lab/TNI Ambassador	Present
4.	Marlene Moore	Other and NEFAP	Present
5.	Janice Willey	Federal	Absent
6.	Robin Cook	Lab	Present
7.	Sharon Mertens, Vice Chair	Lab	Absent
8.	William Lipps	Other	Present
9.	Devon Morgan	Lab/TNI Ambassador	Present
	Associate Members		
	Sheela Agrawal	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Celeste Crowley	Other	Absent
	Paul Junio	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Silky Labie	Other	Absent
	Heather Morgan	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Judy Morgan	TNI Ambassador	Absent
	Lily Sanchez	TNI Ambassador	Present
	Aurora Shields	Other	Absent
	Elizabeth Turner	Lab	Absent
	Staff		
	Jerry Parr	TNI ED	Present
	Ilona Taunton	PA	Present

Attachment B: Advocacy Action Item Summary 2026

	Task Description	Doc Number	TNI Contact	Committee Contact	Date Action Item Added	Start Date	Complete Date	Communication	Notes
1	Ambassador Meetings – March, June, September, December					Ongoing			The Ambassador meeting will be added to the regular Committee agenda on a quarterly basis.
2	NELAP Vision and Outreach Plan								Continue discussion of how TNI might assist EPA's drinking water lab certification efforts if Agency staffing/funding gets drastically reduced. 3/5: Possibly plan discussion in Houston.
3	CANNRA		Jerry						Jerry will provide TNI documents.
4	Single PT Discussion		Jerry						3/5: Jerry will reach out to Carol Gebhart. Can this be considered in Module 1 update?
5	State of Accreditation Report		Jerry		2/5/26	Plan to start in July.			2/5: Not due until end of year – Begin work in July.
6	Promote use of NGABs			Steve	Boston	2/5/26			2/5: Article planned for Newsletter - Duncan
7	Free Webcast: New Members Welcome and History and		Jerry			TBD			

[illegible]