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THE INSTITUTE REVIEW



FEATURED ARTICLE

2027 Forum on Environmental Accreditation

Long Beach, California | January 2027

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Editor in Chief: Steve Arms, Florida DOH Retired

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FEATURED STORY

It's Time to Reserve Your Spot at the Forum

Jerry Parr | TNI

We are pleased to invite you to the Forum on Environmental Accreditation, the principal conference for addressing policy and technical issues affecting the accreditation of environmental laboratories and other organizations involved in generating environmental data. The Forum will be held in Long Beach, CA from January 11-14, 2027.



The Forum will feature open public meetings of The NELAC Institute (TNI) committees to allow quality professionals, chemists, analysts, microbiologists, engineers, and managers from federal and state agencies; commercial, municipal, state and federal laboratories; and many others who are actively involved and interested in laboratory accreditation issues to review what has been done and to participate in the efforts to establish a national program for environmental accreditation.

The 2027 Forum will include:

- Meetings of TNI committees,
- A mentor session,
- An assessment forum, and
- A general session with updates about TNI programs, including an annual report and a special session on changes to the 2016 TNI accreditation standard,
- A special half-day session focused on California laboratories, and
- An examination to become a Certified Quality Management System Professional.

The Forum offers you an opportunity to participate in these sessions; to exchange ideas, findings, and recommendations; and to further TNI's efforts towards national accreditation.

All sessions and TNI meetings are open to all attendees in accordance with your registration. Attendees have the ability to attend any session the week of February 11 in person and to view recordings of any session missed from January 18 to March 30, 2027. For those who do not plan to come to Long Beach, you will have the ability to register for and, from January 18 to March 30, 2027, to view recordings of any session. Registration is by full conference, which includes all events, or daily for the in-person portion of the conference. For recordings-only registration, you may choose to register for the full conference or for selected days.

For more information, visit the conference website here.

We look forward to seeing you in Long Beach!

Visiting Long Beach

Haley Grey | Hyatt Regency Long Beach



Welcome to the Hyatt Regency Long Beach! Located on a premier waterfront spot in the heart of downtown, our property offers a combination of style, sophistication, comfort, and an ideal location, we will make your experience memorable and enjoyable.

Long Beach is a vibrant coastal city that offers visitors a perfect blend of beautiful beaches, cultural attractions, outdoor recreation, and waterfront dining. Located just south of Los Angeles, Long Beach is an ideal destination for travelers seeking both relaxation and adventure.

One of the city's most famous landmarks is the historic **Queen Mary**, a retired ocean liner that now serves as a hotel and museum. Visitors can explore the ship's fascinating history while enjoying stunning views of the harbor. Nearby, the **Aquarium of the Pacific** provides an unforgettable experience with thousands of marine animals, and interactive exhibits.

The city's waterfront is a major attraction. Shoreline Village, a short walk from from the Hyatt, features charming shops, restaurants, and entertainment options overlooking the marina. Visitors can stroll along the boardwalk, rent bicycles, or take a harbor cruise to enjoy spectacular views of the coastline. Long Beach is also known for its beautiful beaches, where people can swim, sunbathe, paddleboard, or simply relax while listening to the sound of the waves.

Long Beach boasts numerous galleries, museums, and public art installations. The East Village Arts District is particularly popular for its creative atmosphere, local boutiques, and lively events. Food lovers will appreciate the city's diverse culinary scene, which includes fresh seafood, international cuisine, and trendy waterfront restaurants.

Nature enthusiasts can explore the peaceful pathways of El Dorado Nature Center or enjoy kayaking through the scenic Naples canals. Long Beach has something for everyone. Its welcoming atmosphere, picturesque waterfront, and variety of activities make it one of Southern California's most enjoyable destinations. A visit to Long Beach is sure to leave you with lasting memories and a desire to return.

The Queen Mary, one of the city's most famous landmarks



Environmental Measurement Symposium 2026

"Reliable Data for Sound Decision Making"

Jerry Parr | TNI

The 2026 Environmental Measurement Symposium was held in Houston, TX from August 3-7 2026. For the twenty-second year, the Symposium consisted of a combined meeting of the 42nd annual National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) and The NELAC Institute's (TNI) Forum on Environmental Accreditation. A total of 562 individuals attended the 2026 Symposium.

NEMC Breakout Sessions

The 2026 Symposium featured twenty NEMC technical breakout sessions with 103 oral and 35 poster presentations as summarized in the *table at the end of the article*. These presentations will be available for download at the Symposium website after November 1st.

The 2024 Symposium also featured two (2) keynote presentations, one general session with four (4) presentations on the conference theme, and a general session with updates on methods and regulations as summarized below.

Keynote Presentations

The Dogs That Find the Invisible: Building Trust in Science Through Conservation Detection
Jaqueline Staab, Darwin's Bee Dogs

The Unintended Consequences of the Plastic Revolution
Adam Gushgari, Eurofins Environment Testing

Plenary Session: Method Development, Validation, Verification, and Acceptance to Strengthen Public Trust in Environmental Data

Background and Statement of the Problem
Judith (Judy) Morgan, Pace Analytical Services

Perspective of the Environmental Monitoring Coalition Task Group
David Friedman, Friedman Consulting Services

Perspective of Voluntary Consensus Standard Bodies
William Lipps, Shimadzu Scientific Corporation

Perspective of The NELAC Institute
Jerry Parr, The NELAC Institute

Updates on Regulations and Methods

SW-846 Updates in 2026 and Beyond
Troy Strock, EPA Office of Land and Emergency Management

Update on CWA and SDWA Activities
Jerry Parr, Catalyst Information Resources

A Preliminary Look at the Data from an ASTM D8421 Collaborative Study on PFAS in Biosolids
William Lipps, Shimadzu Scientific Instruments

Update on Activities of the Environmental Monitoring Coalition
Sharon Mertens, Retired

Other Events

The TNI portion of the Symposium consisted of an Assessment Forum, a Mentor Session and TNI committee meetings as summarized in another article of the issue of The Institute Review. As in previous years, the 2024 Symposium had an exhibit program with 60 exhibitors and an innovative environmental applications showcase with 12 organizations participating.

NEMC Technical Breakout Sessions

Oral and Poster Presentations | 2026 Symposium

Session Title	Oral	Poster
Advancing Quality and Standardization for Environmental Metals Analysis	3	1
AI to Increase Lab Productivity in Environmental Testing	5	
Air Monitoring, Methods, and Technology	5	
Analyzing Microplastics in the Environment	4	1
Best Management Practices for Environmental Laboratories	6	
Community Science/Research	4	
Crafting Consensus Methods	5	
Creating Public Trust in Water Testing through Collaboration and Innovation	2	
Drinking Water	6	4
Emerging Environmental Applications for High Resolution Mass Spectrometry	8	3
Ensuring Reliable Data	6	2
Environmental Forensics	3	
Ideas for a Sustainable Laboratory Program	2	2
Innovative Solutions for Reducing Methylene Chloride	3	1
Laboratory Design	4	
Laboratory Informatics & the Advancement of AI in Automated Quality Systems	5	3
New Organic Monitoring Techniques	10	4
Optimizing Data Quality While Navigating the Accreditation Landscape	2	
Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in the Environment	18	14
Realtime Monitoring	2	

Highlights from TNI's Summer Meeting

Paul Junio, Jerry Parr, Ilona Taunton, and Bob Wyeth | TNI

The 2026 Environmental Measurement Symposium was held August 3-7 in Houston, TX. As part of the Symposium, TNI had 14 sessions as summarized below. The presentations from these sessions will be available in early November on the TNI website.

Monday, August 3

The Assessment Forum focused on Validation and Regulatory Acceptance of Method Changes and featured presentations on Comparison of Existing Validation Requirements by Mitzi Miller, MQC, LLC and Method Validation/Verification Process by Stephanie Rippeon, A2LA (presented by Jerry Parr).

The Laboratory Accreditation Body (LAB) Expert Committee presented proposed revisions to their draft Volume 2 Module 1 (V2M1) which led to significant discussion on the following topics:

- assessor qualifications and competence
- conflict-of-interest and impartiality requirements
- outsourcing and subcontracting of assessment activities
- a proposed change to extend the assessment report timeframe from 30 to 45 days

A separate article in this issue of The Institute Review discusses these topics in more detail. The committee also presented a table that outlined changes to ISO/IEC 17011:2017 related language and requested that attendees review it on the conference portal and provide comment.

The Mentor Session focused on Modernizing without Compromise: Reducing Manual Burden while Focusing on What Matters Most. This session focused on leveraging current automation tools to reduce manual workload and improve efficiency. While Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a powerful tool, it is important to note that not all automation and efficiency solutions require AI. The speakers explored practical, non-AI-driven approaches that can deliver meaningful improvements while aligning with organizational policies and controls. Topics will include AI security, Basic AI use cases, potential risks and pitfalls in AI, Power Automate and other Microsoft tools, as well as automated equipment and robotics.

The Microbiology Committee presented the revised draft Module 5 Standard for comment. The draft includes numerous editorial revisions, reorganization, and terminology updates. The changes included:

- Elimination of Section 4 (Technical Specialist Requirements) since those qualifications now rely on Module 2
- Changes to acceptance criteria: The draft repeatedly adds language such as: "In the absence of applicable method or regulatory requirements, the laboratory must define acceptance criteria,"
- A Certificates of Analysis (CoA) may satisfy sterility verification when pre-sterilized materials are used with an accompanying method blank. Greater emphasis on demonstrating the absence of organism(s)/analytes of interest rather than simply performing sterility checks.
- Requirements reorganized by purchased versus laboratory-sterilized materials.
- Positive and negative media controls clarified
- Reagent water requirements reorganized
- Duplicate count requirements expanded
- Sterilization equipment clarified
- Sample receipt language updated

A separate article in this issue of The Institute Review details the proposed changes.

Tuesday, August 4

The Chemistry Expert Committee discussed the draft V1M4 previously posted for public comment. Numerous comments were received, some of which have been deemed persuasive, which will require the committee to prepare a revised draft. The definition of "significant" was discussed at length and the committee decided

Highlights from TNI's Summary Meeting | continued

examples or further explanation should be provided in a guidance document or as an annex to the next draft. The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to the review of comments received. Review of the comments, the committee's response to comments, and the subsequent changes (or suggested changes) to the current language were presented. To date the committee has reviewed all comments prior to §7.0, Demonstration of Capabilities.

The **National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Accreditation Council** (NELAP AC) discussed current program updates, accreditation-body coordination, and shifted to a working meeting to provide comments on the proposed V1M2. A concern shared during the meeting led to a significant discussion addressed accreditation renewal delays that can occur when an accreditation body's renewal process extends beyond a laboratory's existing certificate or secondary accreditation. The Council agreed that laboratories should not be disadvantaged by administrative delays outside their control and identified early communication, timely updates in LAMS, and appropriate good-standing documentation as potential solutions. Renewal delays will become a standing agenda item on NELAP AC monthly agendas to promote consistent practices among accreditation bodies and identify whether additional policy guidance is needed.

The Council also discussed California's planned application to become a NELAP accreditation body. California will undergo the established evaluation process and plans to communicate with laboratories currently accredited through other NELAP accreditation bodies regarding the transition.

The **NELAP Executive Committee** continued its work on streamlining and clarifying the standards review process by updating the current SOP. The new SOP will clearly distinguish review of individual modules from final review of a consolidated standard and will incorporate the Committee's comment process to clarify what the review includes and how the outcome is communicated. The Committee also continued its detailed review of the new draft of V1M2, focusing on provisions where wording could create conflicting interpretations or unintended assessment requirements. Once this review is complete, the Committee will begin its review of the draft V1M5 – Microbiology.

The 2026 activities of the Proficiency Testing Expert Committee were reviewed as were the plans for the remainder of 2026 and 2027. While attending to its normal tasks (SIR responses, support of other committees, administrative matters), the major accomplishments of the committee were the completion and posting of a revised draft standard V4, General Requirements for Accreditors of Proficiency Test Providers. The committee also continued development of a draft V3, General Requirements for Proficiency Test Providers. It is anticipated that V3 will be completed and will be posted along with the justification summary in October 2026. The Houston meeting provided the opportunity for presentation of the revised V4 and the committee's response to comments as well as the presentation of the committee's efforts on V3. Public comments received in Houston were numerous and are currently under review by the committee. Upon completion of the processes required to complete V3 and V4, the committee will focus its efforts on V1M1 and V2M2.

The Proficiency Testing Program Executive Committee reviewed their activities and accomplishments during the past year. The primary activities of the past year focused on issues and requirements for Fields of "Proficiency Testing (FoPT) table review, updating, and/or correction, including development of FoPT for PFAS compounds in drinking water and updating the Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) FoPT tables.

The committee has continued with a 10-year review of the FoPT tables. To date they have completed review of the Non-Potable Water (NPW) and Solid and Chemical Materials (SCM). FoPT tables for all Drinking Water (DW) analytes should be completed prior to year's end. The Executive Committee is also in the process of a 5-year review of all PT Program SOPs, which should be completed shortly.v

A complaint was received by the committee regarding the use of a single analytical result for multiple methods and technologies. The conclusion was to have the committee request the establishment of a Task Force to address this broad and complex issue involving all TNI stakeholders.

Highlights from TNI's Summary Meeting | continued

A charter for the Task Force has been proposed and invitations to participants have been sent. Public participation will also be sought. It is anticipated that the Task Force will be active by December 2026.

The Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) Expert Committee first discussed the status of the draft Module 7. Work has focused on making the Module less narrative in style and written more with clearly stating requirements. The committee then sought the input of the attendees on some definitions that the committee has not been able to resolve, in part due to inconsistent use of the terms within the WET community. Good suggestions were made and returned to the committee as a whole. Finally, input was sought on some sections of the Module that, again, had been causing the committee some issues. The feedback was well received and will help to move the draft forward.

Wednesday, August 5

The Credentials Committee provided an update to the certified Quality Management System professional and progress towards developing Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) for a Technical Specialist (TS), beginning with chemistry. The KSAs for a Chemistry TS have been divided into 4 broad areas:

1. Fundamental Laboratory Skills including the importance of quality control; Quantitative Transfer; Data Handling, Reporting, and Basic Statistics; Use of Support Equipment; Use of Reagents & Standards; Environmental Health, Safety, and Stewardship.
2. TNI Standard Nodule 2, focusing on everything in Module 2 a TS should know.
3. TNI Standard Module 4, on Method validation, DOC, Calibration, LOD/LOQ, QC, etc.
4. Analytical Techniques divided into Inorganic Non-Metals, Metals, and Organics.

The committee indicated that the techniques will be divided into sample preparation and analysis and KSAs will not be developed for obsolete methods like hydride atomic absorption. KSAs have been developed for all chemistry methods except organics and the committee believes chemistry KSAs will be finalized by January 2027. Once the KSA effort is completed, the committee will begin working on exam questions and will work with the Training Committee to ensure any needed training courses are developed to assist with this effort. The goal is to implement this new credentialing effort in conjunction with the revised TNI laboratory accreditation standard.

The Professional Development Program (PDP) Executive Committee reported that the Jack Farrell Scholarship completed its first application cycle, with two recipients selected and recognized at the conference. Each recipient has been assigned an advisor to support their credentialing and training. The committee will refine scholarship procedures based on lessons learned, strengthen fundraising and outreach, expand the advisor pool, and evaluate whether future awards should be recognized at the winter TNI meeting. Please see the accompanying article on The Jack Farrell Scholarship in this edition of the Institute Review.

The committee also continued development of the Emerging Leaders Initiative, broadening its scope beyond new professionals to include individuals entering new leadership roles or becoming more involved with TNI. Potential activities include mentoring, networking, leadership and communication skills, knowledge transfer, and improved orientation for first-time conference attendees.

Looking ahead, the committee is exploring ways to make professional development more accessible, including a potential quarterly "Quality Time with TNI" series addressing industry hot topics, practical technical issues, member experiences, and opportunities for informal discussion. Additional areas under consideration include succession planning, and professional development topics extending beyond technical laboratory skills.

The Training Committee reviewed current and planned training activities. It has started to develop Technical Specialist credential training and has just recently issued a Request for Proposal to identify qualified instructors. Both commercial training providers and experienced technical professionals are being considered. The Committee also clarified that the Technical Specialist

Highlights from TNI's Summary Meeting | continued

credential is separate from the Quality Management System Professional credential and that both are voluntary programs.

Potential future training topics raised during the meeting include:

- working effectively with assessors,
- common assessment findings,
- Alternate Test Protocols (ATPs),
- non-standard methods,
- quality-management tools,
- workload management, and
- professional "soft skills."

The committee also reviewed the new training evaluation process implemented in April 2026, which provides more timely information on course effectiveness, instructor performance, participant learning, and future training needs. Initial instructor feedback has been strong, and the committee will continue using survey results to guide course improvements and identify materials requiring updating or retirement.

Thursday, August 6

The NEFAP Executive Committee and Field Activities Expert Committee had a combined meeting and reported substantial progress in the development and implementation of the FSMO Standard. Volume 1 has completed the standards development and approval process, with accredited FSMOs expected to transition to the new standard by December 1, 2028. Volume 2, addressing accreditation body requirements, is nearing completion and will proceed to final approval and public comment.

With major standards development work largely completed, the committees will shift their focus toward implementation, education, and practical support resources. Priorities include guidance documents, gap-analysis tools, checklists, sample plans, Demonstrations of Capability (DOC) guidance, readiness resources, and materials to help accreditation bodies and FSMOs prepare for implementation and assessments.

Recent hybrid and field-focused training received positive feedback, and the committees are developing additional workshops, webinars, and shorter "brown-bag" sessions addressing practical field activities, calibration, competency, safety, risk management, sampling plans, and other stakeholder-identified needs. A "Lessons Learned in the Field" workshop is planned for October 2026 and a more comprehensive training on the new Volume 1 Standard anticipated in 2027.

The Quality Management Systems (QMS) Expert Committee reviewed the proposed changes to Volume 1, Module 2. Key areas discussed included personnel competency, continuity of critical responsibilities, equipment verification and metrological traceability, technical records and data integrity, complaints, document control, risks and opportunities, internal audits, and management reviews.

A substantial portion of the meeting focused on equipment verification, particularly the use of certificates from qualified organizations. The committee's intent is to avoid duplicative verification when equipment performance is adequately demonstrated through the analytical process, while maintaining appropriate independent verification where needed. Additional clarification will be developed to help laboratories and assessors consistently evaluate acceptable verification documentation.

The committee supported strengthening clarity around data integrity training, prohibited actions, investigations, root-cause analysis, and corrective action while avoiding overly prescriptive requirements or checklist-based assessments.

The committee also continued review of comments received to identify editorial, persuasive, and non-persuasive comments and then to incorporate needed updates into a revised draft. The committee will continue to focus on avoiding unnecessary duplication or overly detailed requirements. Voting on final responses will occur after all remaining comments are reviewed and the Response to Comments table is completed.

Quality and Technical Specialist requirements were reviewed, including qualifications, responsibilities,

Highlights from TNI's Summary Meeting | continued

continuity, and flexibility for laboratories of varied sizes and structures. Annex C will provide supporting examples and clarification, and the committee plans to do more review of education, training, and experience requirements.

The Radiochemistry Expert Committee reviewed the draft Volume 1, Module 2 and found no substantive technical conflicts with Module 6. Module 6 thereforev does not need to be reopened; remaining work is limited primarily to administrative updates and terminology alignment. The committee discussed Technical Specialist requirements to allow laboratories to structure technical expertise according to their operations and implementation challenges associated with transitioning to new TNI standards when state regulations reference older editions.

The committee is developing a progressive training program covering key radiochemistry technologies and practical laboratory topics, including assessment preparation, measurement uncertainty, instrument troubleshooting, software validation, and interpretation of radiochemistry requirements. Overall, the committee is focused on supporting consistent application of the TNI requirements while providing practical, accessible technical training to the radiochemistry community.

Nominations for the 2027 Board of Directors

Sharon Mertons | MMSD

The election for new Directors will begin soon and nominations for individuals to serve a three-year term on the TNI Board of Directors will be open starting November 1, 2026. TNI members may self-nominate or nominate another individual. There are 5 open positions for 2027.

TNI is governed by an elected Board, including five officers. Directors are responsible for decisions regarding TNI's goals, objectives, and allocation of resources. By law, Directors are obligated to

1) act only in the best interests of TNI and to avoid conflicts of interest;

2) act honestly, in good faith, and on an informed basis when making decisions; and

3) pursue the objectives of TNI's mission. TNI holds in high regard Directors who accept these obligations to serve as stewards of the organization.

Having a strong Board of Directors is vital to the strength and future of our organization. Our Board is balanced and has representation from all recognized stakeholder groups.

TNI's Board culture is characterized by full and open participation by all Directors. We believe that this approach maximizes group energy to address major issues facing our profession and our organization. We rely upon diverse perspectives to reach well-informed decisions that further our mission. Our Board exercises strategic leadership through its focus on policy, direction, and strategy.

Qualifications for Directors

The Nominating Committee seeks candidates for the TNI Board of Directors who demonstrate strong leadership, commitment, and contributions to the field of environmental laboratory accreditation. We need candidates who have a broad knowledge and awareness of issues facing TNI and who are willing to uphold TNI's mission, goals, priorities, and Code of Ethical Conduct.

Directors must demonstrate a commitment to TNI's priority to be a highly functioning organization that is continually enriched by its commitment to balance

Nominations for the 2027 Board of Directors | continued

and inclusion, and must possess strong interpersonal skills with the ability to objectively consider various perspectives to guide major policy decisions.

In addition, Directors need to be able to make the necessary commitment of time and other resources to serve effectively as a Director and to serve as an effective ambassador for TNI and its principles.

Finally, a Director must be a current member of TNI.

These qualifications are designed to ensure that elected Directors are prepared to fulfill their designated responsibilities, including:

- exercising fiduciary responsibilities and stewardship with regard to TNI's goals, policies, and allocation of resources;
- contributing to a policy governance model that provides leadership for TNI with a focus on mission; and
- identifying and cultivating future leaders.

Time Commitments of Board Service

Directors are elected for a term of three years, which is renewable. The Board meets by teleconference monthly and in face-to-face meetings as necessary.

Directors receive detailed agenda materials for study prior to each meeting. From time to time Directors may also volunteer or be asked to serve on committees that may conduct business by email, conference call, or additional meetings.

If you are interested in serving on the Board, please complete the TNI Board Nomination form.

Special Note regarding Federal officials: Federal laws prohibit individuals that work for the Federal government from serving on a Board of a non-profit organization in a fiduciary capacity. This law has been interpreted differently by various Federal agencies, but for the sake of consistency, TNI has decided that any Federal official that wishes to serve on the TNI Board can only do so in an Ex-Officio role. Currently, there are no Ex-Officio Directors representing any of our Federal partners on the TNI Board. If you are a Federal official and would like to serve on the TNI Board, please contact Sharon Mertens, the chair of the Nominating Committee, at skmertens@icloud.com.

2027 Election Timeline

October 14 - December 14, 2006	Nominations accepted
December 14 - 18, 2026	Nominating Committee reviews the nominations and prepares a slate of candidates
January 8, 2027	Voting opens with the announcement of the slate of candidates on the TNI website
February 9, 2027	Voting closes
March 18, 2027	Newly elected Directors assume office

Finally, all TNI members have the opportunity and responsibility to vote to select the TNI Board of Directors. The process is conducted through our website and is easy and quick. Our membership is not large, so each and every member's vote can make a difference.



NEMC Call For Abstracts 2027

Earl Hansen | TNI

Organized by The NELAC Institute (TNI), the 2027 Environmental Measurement Symposium is a combined meeting of the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) and the Forum on Environmental Accreditation. It is the largest conference focused on environmental measurements in North America, and this year is planned as an in-person event for the week of August 2, 2027 in Chicago, IL. This year's Symposium theme is **Contaminants of Emerging Concern: Science, Standards, and Stewardship**.

Please provide your abstract by **February 1, 2027**.

Abstracts received after the deadline are not guaranteed to be reviewed due to the number of available time slots and the high number of quality and timely submissions received. More information and submission instructions are on the Environmental Measurement Symposium website at https://www.envirosymposium.group.

TOPIC AREAS FOR ABSTRACTS

- Advancing Quality and Standardization for Environmental Metals Analysis
- AI to Increase Lab Productivity in Environmental Testing
- Air Monitoring, Methods, and Technology
- Analyzing Microplastics in the Environment
- Best Management Practices for Environmental Laboratories
- Common Goals for Compliance between Laboratories and ABs
- Community Science/Research
- Crafting Consensus Methods
- Data Quality, Management, and Review
- Drinking Water
- Emerging Environmental Applications for High Resolution Mass Spectrometry
- Ensuring Reliable Data
- Entrepreneurial Workshop – How to be Creative and Affect Change
- Environmental Forensics
- Environmental Sensors
- Field Monitoring & Sample Collection
- Harmonized Method approval
- Innovations in Microbiology
- Innovative Solutions for Reducing Methylene Chloride
- Laboratory Design
- Laboratory Informatics & the Advancement of AI in Automated Quality Systems
- Mobile Laboratories and Monitoring Platforms
- New Organic Monitoring Techniques
- Non-Targeted Analyses
- Optimizing Laboratory Operations
- Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in the Environment
- Quality Culture and Cost of Quality: Drivers of Laboratory Performance
- Realtime Monitoring
- Step Out and Step In: Professional Volunteerism
- Sustainability in the Laboratory

The Jack Farrell Scholarship – 2026 Update

Joe Manzella | Orange County Water District

In March of 2025, the TNI Board of Directors established a scholarship in honor of Jack Farrell. Jack, who passed away in 2024, was a long-time TNI member who was passionate about training and education in environmental analysis and data quality. The goal of the scholarship is to provide funding for training and credentialing to TNI members with a demonstrated financial need who could not otherwise afford to access educational resources.

The scholarship was formally launched less than a year later, at the TNI Forum on Environmental Accreditation in Boston, MA in January 2026. The scholarship application period opened immediately following the conference. Ultimately, two scholarship recipients were selected to each receive $1,695 towards obtaining digital badges or a credential.

Our inaugural awardees are Dana Bowman and Gouthami Chandrappagari.

Dana works for the Louisiana DEQ and will be using her scholarship funds to pursue Quality Control Specialist (Radiochemistry) and Data Review and Reporting Specialist badges, immediately increasing her effectiveness as an assessor. Her course work will also allow her to continue pursuing other badges towards her TNI certified professional credential.

Gouthami works for ChemTex, a TCEQ-accredited laboratory in Corpus Christi. She will be using her award to pursue a wide range of TNI digital badges, culminating in achieving a TNI certified professional credential.

The scholarship is funded by donations from TNI members and vendors. We would like to recognize our 2026 vendor donors, International Accreditation Service (IAS), and LabWare. The scholarship is also supported by Jack's long-time partner, Patty Snyder, and by the Farrell family.

The next application period will open following the TNI Forum in January. Keep an eye out for an announcement on the TNI website, as well as an email. An online application will be available on TNI website under the Professional Development tab. Please encourage anyone you know who qualifies for the scholarship to apply. The scholarship application period will extend through 9/1/2027, and scholarship awards will be made in late 2027, with public recognition of awardees planned for the 2028 TNI Forum.



TNI's Credentialing Initiative

Kenneth Brown | City of Escondido

Background

TNI's 2020 Strategic Plan established a new goal to explore the feasibility of developing systems to document individual competency. This included the objective to develop recommendations regarding systems to document competencies for Quality Managers, Technical Managers, Laboratory Assessors, Samplers, and others as appropriate. TNI created the Credentials Committee in 2020 to address this goal.

After researching this topic, the committee quickly decided to focus on the well-established concept of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) as a way to document the competency of an individual.

>Knowledge – "know what" Knowledge focuses on the understanding of concepts. It is theoretical and not practical. An individual may have textbook knowledge of a topic but have no experience.

>Skills – "know how" Skills are the capabilities developed through training or hands-on experience that lead to practical application of theoretical knowledge.

>Abilities – "know why" Often confused with skills, yet there is a subtle but important difference. Abilities are the innate talents a person with extensive experience brings to a task.

Knowledge can be obtained by taking college courses on the subject, reading, and comprehending a document such as a test method or the TNI standard or taking a training course. Skills are typically learned by experience and abilities by combining knowledge with extensive experience.

The committee also decided this credential should be a "high-quality certification" based on a set of competency standards set through a defensible, profession-wide analysis process which is reviewed/revised regularly, time-limited, and revocable.

The committee decided to first develop a credential for a certified Environmental Laboratory Quality Management Systems Professional and developed over 200 KSAs for this individual. For example, one KSA is: "The individual understands the requirement to participate in PT studies for each Field of Proficiency Testing (FoPT) adopted by TNI for which the laboratory seeks to obtain or maintain accreditation." Click here for the complete list of KSAs.

After establishing the basic framework, the committee decided on two pathways to becoming certified, a digital badge pathway and an education and experience pathway. Both options would require the individual to use TNI's on-line credentialing system which requires creating a profile, document training courses, applying, etc.

Pathways to Certification

The **Education & Experience Option** requires the individual to demonstrate he or she meets established minimum requirements for education and experience and to pass a comprehensive remotely proctored exam. Training courses would be available to assist with the initial certification but are not required. This option is best suited for individuals with extensive experience in quality management systems.

The **Digital Badge Option** would require the individual to demonstrate he or she has taken prescribed training courses and pass an online exam for each digital badge. The individual would then earn additional badges for specific competencies, called specialties. Once the individual has earned a required number of digital badges he or she could apply to be a Certified Professional without taking the comprehensive exam. This option is best suited for those new to the environmental industry.

Under either pathway, once certified, a certificate for a "Certified Professional" would be issued and valid for three (3) years. Continuing Professional Development Hours (PDH) would be used to renew the certificate without additional examinations. TNI will provide a notice of recertification six (6) months before expiration to allow the individual to collect the information required to recertify. Certified individuals are listed in the TNI database of Certified Professionals if the individual chooses to do so.

Managing Your Training Courses and Credentials

In February 2025, TNI launched a completely revamped Educational Delivery System website to be one place where individuals could:

- Create a profile to manage their training courses and credentials,
- Sign up for a pre-recorded training course,
- Apply for a digital badge,
- Upload your education and experience,
- Apply to become a certified QMS professional,
- Download Certificates and Digital Badges, and
- Download key documents such as the KSAs for a QMS professional.

While there is no user guide, using all the features on the new EDS website is fairly intuitive. Attachment 1 provides more details on how to access all the features described above. TNI is working on a free webinar to further explain this effort which should be available this fall. Since rolling out the credentials effort in 2025, twenty (20) individuals have become certified Environmental Laboratory Quality Management Systems Professionals and four (4) individuals have earned digital badges.

The Future

The committee is now working on KSAs for Technical Specialists as described in the new draft Module 2 posted in May of this year. The committee hopes to have the KSAs for chemistry complete by January 2027 and then will begin developing exam questions as well as KSAs for the other technical modules with the goal of launching this new credential before the revised TNI standard becomes effective. The committee welcomes additional individuals to join the committee and assist with this effort.

Navigating the EDS Website

As shown in Figure 1 below, the EDS website has six major tabs on the toolbar. Each of these tabs has multiple dropdown option.

Figure 1. EDS Toolbar



The Home page contains a welcome as well as information about upcoming live training events and the latest recorded webinars. The first step in managing your training courses and credentials is to create a profile by clicking on the **Register as a new user** as shown above You will need to provide your name, email, and related information and create a password. Thereafter, you will use the **Login** dropdown under Login. TNI has archived all attendees to webcasts and webinars, and once you have created your profile, all of that data will be exported into your record. If there are courses missing, there is an option to request a missing course be added.

Once you log in, the log in tab becomes a **My Account** tab where you can update your profile and password and see all of the training courses and digital badges you have ordered. This page also allows you to select or deselect if you want your credentials to be public. When you click on **My Orders**, you will be able to export a table of all training courses you have taken. A new tab, **My Credentials**, will also appear once you log in. The revised web page toolbar looks as in Figure 2.

Figure 2. EDS Toolbar after Login



The **My Credentials** page allows you to export a table of all credentials you have earned (Certificate of Attendance, Certificate of Attendance, Digital Badge), the date it was awarded, and the ability to download a copy of the certificate or badge.

The **Training page** has two dropdowns, On-Demand Courses and My Courses. **On-Demand Courses** lists all TNI recorded webinars. Since there are over 100 of these, the page has a filer option where you can search by presenter, description, category, or title. The list contains the course title, presenter, category, and date presented. Clicking on any of the course titles will take you to a specific page for that course providing a summary, learning objectives, and the ability to order the course. The **My Courses** dropdown allows you to export a table of all courses you have taken showing the title of the course, when it was ordered, and whether you passed the exam for that course.

The **Digital Badges** tab also has two dropdowns, Digital Bages and My Badges. The **Digital Badges** dropdown has all twelve (12) digital badges currently available shown as an icon as in the Figure 3 below. Clicking on any one of these images will take you to a page that summarizes the KSAs for that badge, training courses applicable for that badge, instructions for applying, and the ability to apply. The **My Badges** page allows you to export a table of your badges, when it was ordered, and whether you passed the exam

Each badge is awarded separately at the time of passing the badge exam. The badge would include metadata showing the date of the award and the applicable standard(s). These data would be maintained in the TNI database. Individuals who are not seeking the full credential would not need to do anything more. If a new Standard significantly changes the KSAs for a given badge, the individual would need to take a refresher course and pass an exam for that course, to update the badge. The badge may be used on stationery, websites, business cards, social media accounts, and other promotional materials. If the KSAs for a given badge change, an individual may obtain a new badge by taking and passing a training course that covers the changes.

Figure 3. Example of a digital badge for a Data Integrity Specialist



The Certifications tab provides an overview of TNI's credentialing effort and the ability to download both the Certified professional Handbook as well as the KSAs for a WMS professional. The About EDS page contains frequently asked questions and information on how to become a TNI trainer.

Update on EPA Wastewater and Drinking Water Programs

Jerry Parr | TNI

As part of the 2026 Environmental Measurement Symposium, Jerry Parr provided a report on updates to the EPA wastewater and drinking water programs. The summaries below do not contain everything presented; the full presentations will be available for download on the Symposium website on November 1.

Wastewater

The 2025 Proposed Method Update Rule (MUR) was published January 21, 2025. This proposed rule would:

- Approve three new EPA Methods (1621, 1628, 1633)
- Remove Aroclors as analytes and replace them with PCB congeners
- Approve several new ASTM and Standard Methods
- Add hydrogen peroxide, peracetic acids, adsorbable organic fluorine, and PFAS as new analytes to 40 CFR 136
- Remove Method 1664 A and colorimetric methods for metals
- Change the sample preservation and holding times for acrolein and acrylonitrile
- Make other "Technical Corrections"

Update on EPA Wastewater and Drinking Water Programs | continued

While the rule has not gone final, several outcomes are likely:

- PFAS methods are mentioned several times as part of EPA's strategic efforts, so 1621 and 1633 will get approved.
- 1628 may get approved, but aroclors will be phased out over a lengthy period.
- Suggested small changes will likely get approved.
- All other minor corrections will get approved.

On September 3, 2025, EPA announced it has withdrawn the proposed rule "Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Meat and Poultry Products Point Source Category," published on January 23, 2024. After considering public comments on the proposed rule, the EPA has decided not to finalize revised technology-based effluent limitations guidelines (ELGs) or pretreatment standards for the industry. This decision was based on exercise of the agency's statutory discretion and judgment that such revisions would not be appropriate. The 2024 proposed rule would have required implementation of treatment technology and testing for ammonia, BOD, TN, TP, coliform, oil, and grease, and TSS.

On May 18, 2026, EPA proposed revisions to the NPDES regulations for coal-fired power plants. The proposed changes primarily would affect leachate collected from impoundments and would establish discharge limits for mercury and arsenic

On July 6, 2026, EPA published revised guidance on PFAS in biosolids indicating the previous guidance relied on assumptions disconnected from real-world conditions. There are risks at trace concentrations near the limit of detection, levels lower than those already found in everyday soil and household products. The assessment relied on a simplified, straight-line risk calculation. The new guidance provides recommendations for how to reduce risk by avoiding land application of biosolids near waterways and on lands where children play, and also by avoiding using biosolids as fertilizer of crops that have higher risk of human exposure.

Other planned actions in the wastewater program include:

- Effluent Limitations for PFAS Manufacturers (National Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) 1/26)
- PFAS Requirements in NPDES Permit Applications (NPRM 11/25)
- Effluent Guidelines and Standards for the Oil and Gas Extraction Category (NPRM 10/25)

Drinking Water

On April 26, 2024; EP finalized a National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) for PFAS that would have become effective June 25, 2024. The rule:

- Will apply to 6 specific PFAS.
- Will apply to all Groundwater and Surface Water Systems (49,000 CWS and 17,000 NTNCWS).
- Would require testing by EPA Methods 533 OR 537.1, Revision 2.
- Sampling and analytical costs estimated at $90 Million.

On May 18, 2026, EPA proposed to rescind its regulatory determinations to regulate perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid and its ammonium salt (HFPO-DA, commonly known as GenX chemicals), and mixtures of these three PFAS plus perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS). EPA also proposed to rescind the final Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) that would have required monitoring, and where necessary, treatment by public water systems (PWSs). Under the EPA's prior interpretation, the EPA proposed and finalized regulatory determinations and regulations for these PFAS simultaneously and in tandem. Under the best reading of the statute, EPA is not authorized to take such actions simultaneously and therefore, the Agency proposes to rescind those regulatory determinations, Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLGs), and associated portions of the 2024 regulation. On the same day, EPA proposed a federal exemption to extend the dates of compliance with the Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) from April 26, 2029, to April 26, 2031, for those systems that submit a request.

On July 1, EPA proposed the sixth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 6). UCMR 6 would require public water systems (PWSs) to collect national occurrence data for seven (7) ultrashort organofluorine compounds (including certain PFAS), three (3) pesticide metabolites, thirteen (13) semivolatile organic compounds, and seven (7) purgeable organic compounds. As part of this proposed rule, EPA mentions an "enhanced sensitivity" option for Method 524.3 and a guidance document in the docket provides more information (https://www.regulations.gov/document/EPA-HQ-OW-2023-0469-0133). The document contains both recommendations and prohibited actions with the primary change going to selected ion monitoring. The proposed rule also mentions a new LC/MSMS method for PFAS, Method 563. This method is also in the docket: https://www.regulations.gov/document/EPA-HQ-OW-2023-0469-0136. As compared to other drinking water PFAS methods, this method does not require solid-phase extraction and instead relies on direct injection. Monitoring is scheduled to occur from January 1, 2028 through December 31, 2030.

In 2020, EPA decided not to regulate perchlorate. On January 6, 2026, EPA proposed a National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) for perchlorate and a health-based MCLG at 20 µg/L. EPA also proposed an enforceable MCL for perchlorate at 20, 40, or 80 µg/L. The proposal includes requirements for water systems to conduct monitoring for perchlorate in drinking water, take mitigation actions if the level exceeds the MCL, provide information about perchlorate to their consumers through public notification and consumer confidence reports, and report to their respective primacy agency. In the proposed rule, EPA stated, "the Administrator has determined that the benefits of this regulation would not justify the costs; however, EPA is required to issue an NPDWR and MCLG for perchlorate in response to the D.C. Circuit's decision in NRDC v. Regan." The proposed EPA methods for perchlorate are Methods 314.0, 314.1, 314.2, 331.0, and 332.0.

On April 6, 2026, EPA published for public review and comment a draft list of contaminants that are currently not subject to any proposed or promulgated national primary drinking water regulations. These contaminants are known or anticipated to occur in public water systems and may require regulation in the future. The draft list provided in this document is the sixth Contaminant Candidate List (CCL) published by the Agency since the SDWA amendments of 1996. The draft CCL six includes seventy-five (75) chemicals, four (4) chemical groups (disinfection byproducts (DBPs), microplastics, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and pharmaceuticals) and nine (9) microbes.

EPA is working on a drinking water Method Update Rule. The goals of this rule are to:

- transfer approved methods from part 141, appendix A to subpart C;
- remove methods that are obsolete or that do not meet the technological or quality standards of more recent methodology; because newer methods use better technology and are more rugged due to the inclusion of quality control criteria; and
- clarify language and tables to have a clearer understanding of the compliance monitoring analytical requirements.

Pre-proposal stakeholder engagement would occur at national conferences such as the Environmental Measurement Symposium (EMS).

On March 19, 2026, PA announced final regulatory determinations for nine contaminants listed on the fifth Unregulated Contaminant Candidate List. Specifically, the Agency determined not to regulate 2-aminotoluene, cylindrospermopsin, ethoprop, microcystins, molybdenum, permethrin, profenofos, tebuconazole, and tribufos in drinking water.

TNI Method Code Process Update

Paul Junio | TNI

In the past, TNI has created separate TNI Method Codes for Standard Methods on the basis of how they are listed in the CFR. Because the EPA Drinking Water and Clean Water programs refer to these methods in different formats, this has resulted in the duplication of method codes. Below is how TNI intends to handle this process in the future.

1 – There will be no attempt to fix existing duplicate method codes. For example, Method Code 20046451 is for Hardness by 2340 B from the 24th Edition, revised 2021. Method Code 20046440 is for Hardness by 2340 B-2021, which is the same method. Neither of these two method codes will be targeted for deletion, retirement, or any such change. They both already exist, and removing one or the other will only cause problems.

2 – In the future, a Method Code will not be created with the year of the approved method in the Method Title. There is already a field included in the TNI LAMS (Laboratory Accreditation Management System) for the Revision Date, and that should suffice for that date. In the example above, the Method Code 20046440 wouldn't have been created.

3 – As Standard Methods publishes new methods compendiums, method codes will be created when the new Edition appears in the Code of Federal Regulations, or when someone requests that a new Method Code be added. If a method is unchanged from a previous Edition (for example, if the 29th Edition of Hardness by 2340 B were still from a revision date of 2021), a new Method Code would only get created with 29th ED in the Revision field and 2021 in the Revision Date field if this method were referenced in the CFR or if a state required and requested it. Nothing would change with already-existing method codes. If Standard Methods becomes exclusively an on-line product, the Revision Field would no longer be needed for Standard Methods (this would be addressed should it occur).

4 – Related to the previous points, existing Method Codes will not be revised to include additional Editions or Revision Dates for fear of breaking existing links to accreditation. We are aware that this may have happened with the release of Standard Methods 24th Edition. We are still reviewing those method codes.

Upcoming Changes to Volume 2, Module 1

Ilona Taunton | TNI

Volume 2, Module 1 of TNI's environmental laboratory standards, General Requirements for Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Environmental Laboratories is undergoing a significant revision and a new draft standard is expected to be posted by the Laboratory Accreditation Body Expert Committee for public comment later this year. The most significant change is the move from the 2004 version of ISO/IEC 1701 to the 2017 version. However, as discussed below, other changes are planned.

A major change will be assessor qualifications and competence. The committee considered how education, laboratory experience, quality assurance experience, and assessment experience should be evaluated, recognizing that formal education alone does not necessarily demonstrate practical assessor competence. Several attendees to TNI's meeting in Houston preferred to see greater emphasis on observed performance, mentoring, and objective evaluation of assessors, including their technical knowledge and interpersonal skills. The committee is also considering laboratory feedback on assessor performance and the potential role of testing or credentialing.

Upcoming Changes to Volume 2, Module 1 | continued

The committee is working to revise the conflicts-or-interest language to ensure they are disclosed and evaluated rather than requiring an absolute prohibition on any historical or professional relationship. The committee is looking at assessment team size and duration, with support for considering the complexity and scope of each assessment rather than establishing rigid formulas.

The proposed language for outsourcing and subcontracting of assessment activities is intended to ensure that an Accreditation Body (AB) retains responsibility for its accreditation decisions even when portions of the assessment process are performed by subcontracted assessors or third-party organizations. The committee sees the need to clearly distinguish between subcontracted assessors, third-party organizations conducting assessments, organizations preparing assessment reports, primary accreditation bodies, and secondary accreditation bodies. Current practices may allow third-party assessors to prepare and issue assessment reports that are subsequently reviewed and approved by the AB. The proposed language could unintentionally prohibit this approach by requiring the AB itself to formally issue the report. The committee agreed that the standard should clearly distinguish between preparing an assessment report and making or approving the accreditation decision, while ensuring that the AB retains appropriate oversight and final authority.

The committee is reconsidering its original thoughts to extend the assessment report timeframe from 30 to 45 days.

TNI Consensus Standards Development

Paul Junio | TNI

All of the TNI Environmental Laboratory Standards are in some state of revision. Any TNI member or member of the public may comment on the proposed changes. In addition to any comments submitted, Standard Interpretation Requests (SIRs) are reviewed to see if they should result in changes being made to the Standard. Comments that are submitted are ruled persuasive or non-persuasive, and those decisions are published. If a comment is ruled persuasive, it requires a modification to the proposed Standard, which is followed by another Draft Standard and comment period. The process of revise – committee approval – public comment continues until there are no persuasive comments received.

Below is a brief summary of where each of the Volumes and Modules stands:

Volume 1: Management and Testing Requirements for Laboratories Performing Environmental Analysis

[NOTE: In conjunction with a consistent naming convention for the Technical Modules, the name of Volume 1 is being changed. Rather than being called 'Management and Technical Requirements,' it is being renamed 'Management and Testing Requirements.']

Module 1 Proficiency Testing Requirements is under development within the Proficiency Testing Expert Committee. This is one of 4 Modules that the committee has in revision, and is expected to be the last or next to last of the four to be completed. Each of the 4 Modules under revision will have changes made to ensure alignment and consistency with the others.

Module 2 Quality Management System Requirements was published as a Draft Standard on May 26, 2026. The Expert Committee has taken all language of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 and included any text in TNI Module 2 2016 that is deemed worth keeping. Review has included removing duplicative requirements from TNI Module 2 2016 that are now addressed in ISO/IEC 17025:2017. As a result, certain changes are made in the body of the Module without changing requirements in the Standard (the requirement still exists, only stated differently). The Committee has reviewed the entirety of

TNI Consensus Standards Development | continued

this potential draft and also taken previous suggestions into consideration. A Technical Specialist is required for every Field of Accreditation. There need not be a single person who handles this role throughout the laboratory. The laboratory must clearly define how the Technical Specialist responsibilities align with the laboratory's scope of accreditation. Helpful information (not requirements) on this is found in Annex C of Module 2. The closing date for comments on the draft was September 26, 2026. The committee will now begin the process of reviewing and ruling on any comments submitted.

Module 3 Asbestos Testing Requirements has a finalized Module 3 effective July, 2023. This revision was re-written from a technology standpoint, and will still be reviewed as additional modules are completed to assure that no issues of implementation arise. However, the committee has begun work on a revision to address an issue of availability of an SRM referenced in the Module, as well as to clarify a requirement regarding blanks.

Module 4 Chemistry Testing Requirements Draft was posted for comment on the TNI website August 15, 2025, and the comment period closed November 13, 2025. It underwent work on multiple topics, including Method Validation and Verification, LOD/LOQ, Demonstration of Capability, Calibration, Quality Control, Data Acceptance, and Sample Handling. There was an extensive re-write with little change in intent. EPA's MDL Procedure is now the preferred procedure, and LOQ is unchanged. Over 500 comments were received. The Committee will continue its review of these comments, having currently addressed about one-third of the approximately 500 comments received. Another draft Standard will be published at some point, as some comments have already been ruled persuasive. This draft is targeted for publication at some point during 2027.

Module 5 Microbiology Testing Requirements draft Standard was published as a draft Standard on June 1, 2026. The committee spent a long time reviewing some contentious items that have been at issue throughout the time that this committee existed (and before when it fell under the auspices of the then-Quality Systems Committee). Requirements that already exist in Module 2 were removed in most cases, since Module 2 is the over-arching standard which must be followed in addition to the appropriate technical module(s). The closing date for comments on the draft was September 26, 2026. The committee will now begin the process of reviewing and ruling on any comments submitted.

Module 6 Radiochemistry Testing Requirements has a finalized Module effective January, 2023. It also will be subject to a review to ensure that there are no issues with implementation.

Module 7 Whole Effluent Toxicity Testing Requirements was posted for review by TNI membership on February 26, 2025. There were 74 comments received, many of which dealt with definitions. The committee is continuing to work to make sure that the Standard reads as a collection of requirements, and not as a narrative of suggestions. The expectation is that the draft Module 7 will be posted in time for the Forum on Environmental Accreditation in Long Beach, CA in January, 2027.

Volume 2: General Requirements for Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Environmental Laboratories

Modules 1 & 3 will be combined into a new Module 1. The Laboratory Accreditation Body Expert Committee is discussing the last few comments on their Draft Standard that were received during the comment period in June, 2023. A great deal of work has gone into requirements for Assessors. A draft Standard is anticipated by the Forum on Environmental Accreditation.

Module 2 Proficiency Testing Requirements for Accreditation Bodies is among the 4 modules previously mentioned under the purview of the Proficiency Testing Expert Committee. No substantive changes are anticipated in this Module, but, like Volume 1 Module 1, it is of a lower priority for the Committee.

Volume 3 General Requirements for Environmental Proficiency Test Providers was discussed at the Environmental Measurement Symposium in August, 2026. Changes to this volume need to be reflective of any made in Volumes 4, 1 & 2.

Volume 4 General Requirements for an Accreditor of Environmental Proficiency Test Providers was posted for comment July 21, 2026. The Draft Standard was written to address comments from the previous draft. The comment period closed on September 29, 2026. The committee will now begin the process of reviewing and ruling on any comments submitted.

Field Sampling and Measurement Organizations Standards Volume 1: General Requirements for Field Sampling and Measurement Organizations has finalized its Standard. The Standard was reviewed by CSDP EC and no implementation issues were found in it. It was posted to the TNI website on March 19, 2026, with an implementation scheduled for 2028.

The Field Activities Committee has completed its overview of **Volume 2: General Requirements for Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Field Sampling and Measurement Organizations**. They are in the process of final formatting/cleanup prior to posting a Draft for review by TNI membership.

As always, check for updates on these Modules by keeping an eye on the News section on the TNI website. You can also subscribe to any announcements of Standards development activity at this link here.

Methylene Chloride and Regulations, Exposure, and Use: A Path Forward

Judy Morgan | Pace Analytical Services

In 2019, EPA issued a TSCA rule prohibiting methylene chloride for consumer paint and coating removal after a series of serious exposure incidents. EPA then continued its broader evaluation of methylene chloride and, in 2022, issued a revised risk determination concluding that the chemical presented an unreasonable risk to human health across most conditions of use.

EPA's broader final rule, published in May 2024, prohibited most remaining commercial and industrial uses of methylene chloride. It allowed certain uses, including laboratory use, to continue only under a Workplace Chemical Protection Program (WCPP). The program imposed far more stringent workplace requirements than OSHA's existing methylene chloride standard, including an 8-hour exposure limit of 2 ppm (from OSHA's 25), a 15-minute short-term limit of 16 ppm (from OSHA's 125), exposure monitoring, respiratory protection, dermal protection, and related recordkeeping.

Because environmental laboratories rely on methylene chloride for required regulatory testing, ACIL responded to the rule with concerns and further engaged with EPA to explain the operational and scientific impacts. The concerns did not curtail the final approval of the rule. Therefore, in a requested meeting with EPA, ACIL asked for a practical implementation extension (which was granted) and later sought a targeted, time-limited TSCA §6(g) exemption for accredited environmental laboratories while methods could be updated or alternatives developed. EPA subsequently extended the WCPP compliance dates for non-federal laboratories by 18 months. The extension was under consideration at the time of this recent status change.

As part of this advocacy, ACIL gathered historical exposure data from commercial and municipal laboratories and submitted it to EPA. The information demonstrated that environmental laboratories were operating well within the current OSHA methylene chloride requirements in 29 CFR 1910.1052. It also reinforced the industry's substantial experience in managing methylene chloride through engineering controls, work practices, exposure monitoring, and appropriate personal protective equipment.

At the same time, laboratories demonstrated that reduced-volume methods can significantly reduce both methylene chloride use and worker exposure. These efforts can move exposures closer to the stringent TSCA limits, but broad implementation requires direct collaboration between EPA program offices and the laboratory community.

Methylene Chloride and Regulations... | continued

Existing compliance methods must be modified where appropriate, and new methods or technologies must be developed and approved more efficiently. The long-term lesson is clear: method approval needs greater flexibility, coordination across EPA programs, and meaningful input from the commercial laboratories that carry out the testing. A potential solution would be centralized development and approval in a neutral environment, with input and agreement from designated representatives in the stakeholder community, both public and private.

On September 15, 2026, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit vacated EPA's 2024 methylene chloride rule and the associated 2022 risk determination, remanding the matter to EPA. The court found legal errors and insufficient evidentiary support for central elements of EPA's approach. As a result, the 2024 WCPP requirements and related phaseouts are no longer in effect while EPA considers its next actions. The separate 2019 consumer paint-and-coating-remover prohibition was not before the court and remains in place.

The vacatur provides an important opportunity for EPA, ACIL, and the laboratory community to work toward a more technically sound and durable approach to reducing methylene chloride use and more targeted risk management. ACIL and its members will continue an open dialogue with EPA, share knowledge on laboratory exposure and method-performance data, and seek meaningful involvement should EPA choose to reconsider or reissue the rule using more acceptable and scientifically defensible criteria. The shared goal remains clear: maintain protection of laboratory workers, reduce methylene chloride use where feasible, and preserve the ability of accredited laboratories to generate the reliable environmental data on which regulatory programs depend.

Fifth Circuit decision - https://www.ca5.uscourts.gov/opinions/pub/24/24-60256-CV0.pdf

Original EPA rule: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/05/08/2024-09606/methylene-chloride-regulation-under-the-toxic-substances-control-act-tsca

Updated rule: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/05/27/2025-09421/methylene-chloride-regulation-under-the-toxic-substances-control-act-tsca-compliance-date-extensions

Training News: New Classes and RFP

Ilona Taunton | TNI

TNI continues to expand learning opportunities through live webinars and recorded webcasts designed to support professional growth and expand knowledge. Most live webinars are converted into on-demand webcasts, allowing participants to complete training at times that work best for their schedules.

Many courses may also be used to fulfill requirements toward obtaining specialist badges and professional credentials. Learn more in the TNI Credentials Handbook.

If you have an idea for a course — or are interested in teaching one yourself — we encourage you to complete the Application to Provide Training on the TNI website or contact Ilona Taunton (ilona.taunton@nelac-institute.org) to discuss your ideas.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was sent to the TNI membership to identify qualified contractors, including training organizations, vendors, and subject matter experts (including, but not limited to current/former environmental laboratory Technical Directors/Specialists), to develop and deliver technical skills training that supports the Certified Environmental Laboratory Technical Specialist Professional Credential. This RFP focused on Inorganic and Metals. A future RFP will focus on Organics. The due date for proposals is November 1, 2026.

Training News: New Classes and RFP | continued

Registration is Open Now - Webinars

How to Implement an Effective and Compliant Procedure for Determining Detection and Quantitation Limits – October 27, 2026 – 11am Eastern - Jerry Parr

This course is a replacement for the current MDL course. This two-hour class reviews materials and techniques that laboratories, data users and assessors can use to successfully address the challenges of complying with the 2016 TNI Standard, and the 2017 EPA Method Detection Limit (MDL) procedure while implementing effective and scientifically sound practices for measuring sensitivity in environmental analysis.

Practical Applications of Artificial Intelligence for the Environmental Laboratory – December 1 and 3, 2026 – 11am Eastern – Mary Johnson

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming a useful productivity tool for environmental laboratories. While AI cannot replace technical expertise, professional judgment, or regulatory responsibility, it can assist laboratory personnel with documentation, calculations, data review, quality systems, and other routine laboratory tasks that will be discussed in this four-hour course split between two days.

On Demand Learning

The following courses are now available as recorded webcasts:

Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD): From Sample to Report;
Instructor: Mary Johnson

Building Excellence: Integrating Initial and Ongoing Training into Laboratory Operations
Instructor: Mary Johnson

How to Write Non-Conformances
Instructor: Marlene Moore

Field Sampling and Measurement Organization (FSMO) Internal Audit Training
Instructors: Megan Beaman and Katie Strothman

Radiate Knowledge - A Dive into Radiochemistry
Instructors: Radiochemistry Expert Committee (Amanda Fehr, Mary Beth Gustafson, Abigail Africa)

This is a new course that was offered live in Houston during the 2026 Environmental Measurement Symposium. This training provides a general introduction to anyone interested in radiochemistry. At course completion, students have a generalized understanding of radiochemical principles and workflows, providing context for laboratory practices for all levels of experience throughout the environmental testing field.

Courses in Development

Additional training opportunities are currently in development for Winter and Spring:

- Field Sampling & Measurements: Ensuring Reliable Results – This course was offered during the 2026 Accreditation Forum in Boston, MA. The recording is being converted to a Webcast and will be available for purchase on the TNI website in the next two weeks. – Katie Srothman
- Discipline-specific technical training series related to TNI Standard requirements, including: Microbiology, Radiochemistry, Chemistry, Asbestos and Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET). The first course will be Microbiology and is anticipated to be ready in November – Matt Sica and Stacie Crandall
- Validation of User-Developed Computer Software – Jeanne Mensingh
- FSMO update to "Scared Straight" course – Marlene Moore

Expand your knowledge and skills by exploring current offerings and upcoming opportunities through TNI Training Courses.

Expanding State Assessment Capacity: The Case for TNI-Recognized NGABs

Duncan Millar | International Accreditation Service

Author disclosure: The author is employed by International Accreditation Service (IAS), one of the non-governmental accreditation bodies discussed in this article. That affiliation should be considered when evaluating the analysis.

Executive Summary

In light of assessor shortages, specialized-competency gaps, or service delays, National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) accreditation bodies may consider using TNI (The NELAC Institute)-recognized non-governmental accreditation bodies (NGABs) as an additional assessment resource. Any such service model should preserve the state's nondelegable authority to interpret program requirements and to grant, deny, limit, suspend, or revoke accreditation. Before implementation, the state should confirm its statutory and regulatory authority, define the activities eligible for external assignment, and establish transparent provider-qualification criteria.

NGABs may expand technical capacity and provide assessor-management, quality-control, and administrative infrastructure, but these benefits should be demonstrated rather than presumed. Regulatory safeguards should include state-specific training, conflict-of-interest requirements, separation of assessment and decision functions, state access to records, complaint and appeal procedures, witness assessments, periodic file review, corrective-action authority, and removal provisions. A limited pilot with defined measures for timeliness, report quality, cost, complaints, and assessor availability can help the state determine whether broader use improves program performance without weakening accountability or internal expertise.

After years of trying to recruit laboratory assessors for the Florida Department of Health, Steve Arms, Florida Environmental Laboratory Certification Program Administrator (retired), described a problem familiar to many public programs: "Because of the state's low starting salaries it was getting to the point where it was really difficult for me to hire assessors," he said. "Even without the statutory change that required the use of third-party assessors, this shift was inevitable."

Florida's experience reflects a broader capacity challenge. Laboratory assessment demands expertise in analytical methods, instrumentation, matrices, and quality systems. Assessors must travel, maintain technical competence, and keep pace with evolving standards. State programs operating with fixed salaries, limited staff, and growing workloads may struggle to sustain sufficient capacity across every technical area.

This article examines why NELAP accreditation bodies facing constraints in capacity, timeliness, or specialized expertise should consider adding TNI-recognized NGABs to their approved assessment resources. Potential providers include IAS, the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA), the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB), and Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation, Inc. (PJLA).

The governing principle is straightforward: states may delegate assessment activities without delegating accreditation authority. Under a well-designed arrangement, the state retains the power to grant, deny, limit, suspend, or revoke accreditation while gaining access to additional technical capacity and administrative infrastructure.

How States Use Outside Assessors

Several states already use outside assessors, but their models differ. The most useful comparison is not simply whether a state uses third parties, but how it qualifies providers, assigns work, oversees performance, and preserves decision authority.

Florida. Florida has used contracted assessors for routine on-site work since 2013, drawing on NGABs and smaller firms. The department approves assessors for specific

Expanding State Assessment Capacity... | continued

technologies before assignment. Arms described the providers as "an extension of our program" and explained the resulting shift in the department's role: "We became more of a reviewer and decision maker than we were a doer."

Minnesota. Minnesota approves both individuals and organizations to perform assessments. Laboratories contract directly with an approved assessor, but the assessor does not answer accreditation questions. Program interpretation and accreditation decisions remain with the state.

New Hampshire. New Hampshire uses a formal framework under Env-C 310. When the state lacks the resources, time, or expertise to perform an assessment, it may require use of a third-party assessor organization. The program also allows interim accreditation for up to 12 months when no assessor is available.

Louisiana. Louisiana has used contracted assessment providers for years with its unique structure, illustrating another procurement-based approach to supplementing state capacity.

California as an analogous model. California is not currently a NELAP accreditation body, but its Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) offers a useful comparison. Laboratories using "sophisticated" technologies (instruments and/or methods) must be assessed by an approved third-party agency, while other laboratories may choose either a third party or ELAP staff. ELAP reviews assessment reports and corrective-action plans and retains the accreditation decision.

Across these models, the common design principle is separation of functions: outside providers perform defined assessment work, while the state retains program interpretation, oversight, and the accreditation decision. The policy question is therefore not whether a state gives up authority, but which assessment resources it approves and what controls it applies.

Where NGABs May Add Value

Capacity and technical depth

A state may approve individual assessors, and some states do. An individual provider, however, has finite availability and a defined range of expertise. An NGAB, in contrast, can offer a broader bench, including multidisciplinary teams, substitutes when an assessor is unavailable, and coordination across technical specialties. This capacity may be particularly useful when a state cannot locate an assessor within the required time or technical field.

Quality management and consistency

NGABs organize their work around accreditation. IAS, for example, has operated since 1975, and its staff and peer assessors follow standards, assessment practices, and regulatory developments as a core business function. An organizational quality system can support assessor qualification and monitoring, standardized procedures, report review, records management, and corrective-action follow-up. These controls may promote more consistent execution than a model built around separately managed individuals.

Administrative infrastructure and scalability

An NGAB can provide not only assessors but also the infrastructure around them: team selection, scheduling, coordination, report preparation, quality control, and records administration. A state may thereby manage one accountable organizational relationship rather than multiple individual arrangements. That model does not automatically produce better service, but it can make capacity easier to scale and performance easier to monitor.

Alignment, training, and continuous improvement

TNI recognition and routine work with related accreditation frameworks can indicate familiarity with applicable assessment requirements. Recognition should not replace state due diligence, state-specific training, or continuing oversight. It can, however, provide a starting point for evaluating organizational competence. NGAB webinars, training programs, technical events,

and feedback channels may also help laboratories and assessors understand requirements and respond to emerging issues.

These are potential operational advantages, not guaranteed outcomes. States should test them through written requirements and measurable performance indicators rather than assume that organizational status alone ensures quality, timeliness, or lower cost.

Authority and Oversight the State Retains

An NGAB arrangement need not transfer governmental authority. The state can retain the power to interpret its requirements and to grant, deny, limit, suspend, or revoke accreditation. State staff can focus on reviewing assessment reports, evaluating corrective actions, addressing complaints, and making decisions.

A sound arrangement should be governed by a written agreement that defines the scope of external work, assessor qualifications, state-specific training, reporting and corrective-action procedures, confidentiality, records access, complaint and appeal processes, audit rights, and termination provisions. Impartiality controls should include conflict declarations, separation of assessment and accreditation-decision functions, restrictions on consulting for assessed laboratories, reassignment or rotation provisions, and state authority to reject a report or remove a provider from the approved roster.

Oversight should continue after approval. States can use witnessed assessments, periodic file reviews, complaint analysis, assessor-performance monitoring, and corrective action when a provider falls short. California's framework, for example, requires an agreement with each participating agency and impartiality from those agencies. New Hampshire requires use of state checklists and observes assessments annually.

Key Objections and Policy Responses

Cost to laboratories

Cost is the strongest objection, and Arms acknowledged it based on Florida's experience. Although the state's direct costs fell and it reduced its fees, those savings offset only a portion of the increase, so laboratories still paid more. In his view, the additional expense reflected the actual cost of qualified assessors; laboratories would have paid about the same if the state could have afforded to hire them directly.

Advocates should acknowledge the possibility of higher direct fees. The relevant comparison, however, is total program cost and service performance—not simply the third-party invoice. States should consider assessment fees, staffing and travel, procurement and oversight, delays, duplicate assessments, access to specialized expertise, and the effects on small or rural laboratories. Minnesota has presented its approach as a means to reduce overall accreditation costs, limit duplicate assessments, and use provider competition to create pricing leverage. Those potential benefits should be evaluated in each state rather than treated as universal outcomes.

Conflict of interest and impartiality

NGABs may also act as accreditors, may be paid by laboratories, and compete for business, so the concern is legitimate. Retaining the state's final decision is necessary but not sufficient. The state should also require conflict disclosures, separation of decision functions, restrictions on consulting, complaint and appeal procedures, access to working papers, witness assessments, performance monitoring, and authority to suspend or remove a provider. California's framework includes several of these controls. Properly applied, such controls create a documented accountability structure for identifying and addressing impartiality risks.

Knowledge of state-specific requirements

Training and oversight can address this concern. States can require their own checklists and forms, approve assessors by technology as Florida does, observe assessments as New Hampshire does, and verify competence as California does. An NGAB may be able to train and standardize a team across multiple technical areas, but the state should verify that outcome through performance review.

Legal authority

Some states may need to confirm whether existing law authorizes third-party assessment. California uses statutory authority for contracts with approved third parties, and New Hampshire addresses the matter by rule. A state without clear authority may need legislative or regulatory action before proceeding.

Role of small firms and individual assessors

Small firms and individual assessors can perform effective work, and Florida and Minnesota use them. The case for NGABs is not a case for excluding other qualified providers. It is a case for adding organizational depth, integrated systems, and scalable capacity where those features meet an identified state need.

Preserving state expertise

A state could lose internal expertise if it stops engaging deeply with assessment work. The appropriate response is to preserve a strong reviewer role. State staff should evaluate reports, corrective actions, provider trends, complaints, and policy questions rather than become passive recipients of third-party conclusions.

A Practical Implementation Roadmap

1. Confirm authority. Determine whether statutes, regulations, procurement rules, and program policies permit third-party assessment.

2. Define the need. Identify capacity gaps, technical specialties, service delays, and activities that should remain exclusively with state staff.

3. Set qualification criteria. Establish organizational and assessor competence requirements, including the relevance and limits of TNI recognition.

4. Define the delegated scope. Specify which assessment activities, reports, and corrective-action reviews may be performed externally.

5. Execute written agreements. Address impartiality, confidentiality, state access to records, complaints, audit rights, performance requirements, and termination.

6. Train providers. Require state-specific instruction on rules, interpretations, forms, technologies, and reporting expectations.

7. Pilot the model. Begin with selected technical areas or a limited group of laboratories before broader implementation.

8. Measure performance. Monitor time to assessment, report completion, corrective-action closure, assessor availability, report revision rates, complaints, witness-assessment findings, laboratory feedback, and total cost.

9. Adjust based on evidence. Expand, revise, suspend, or discontinue arrangements according to documented results.

States already using individual assessors can apply the same framework when considering whether to add NGABs to an approved roster.

Conclusion

NELAP states may face the challenge Arms described: limited assessor availability, specialized technical demands, and workloads that outpace staffing resources. The experiences of Florida, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Louisiana—and the analogous California model—show that third-party assessment can be structured without transferring accreditation authority.

TNI-recognized NGABs may offer technical depth, administrative infrastructure, standardized quality controls, and scalable capacity. Those advantages should not be assumed, and they do not eliminate concerns about cost, impartiality, legal authority, or oversight. States should evaluate providers through transparent qualification criteria, enforceable agreements, state-specific training, continuing oversight, and measurable results.

Third-party assessment is most likely to add value when states preserve accreditation decision-making authority, maintain strong internal review expertise, monitor provider performance, and evaluate both cost and timeliness. Under those conditions, NGABs can expand assessment capacity while preserving regulatory accountability.

New Microbiology Standard Pending

Cody Danielson | TNI Microbiology Committee Chair

On June 1, the TNI Microbiology Expert Committee published the revised Draft of TNI Module 5, Microbiological Testing Requirements, which has been modified consistent with the Committee's Notice of Intent to Modify (NOI) this Standard. Several extensions to the comment period have been requested, so no closing date has been determined. To date, approximately ninety (90) comments have been received and the Committee has just begun review. As shown in the table appended to this article, the comments that have been reviewed thus far are editorial or non-persuasive. The Committee plans to report progress to membership at the Long Beach meeting in January 2027.

If persuasive comments are received, updates will be made to language in the Draft Standard and it will go back out for comment. If no persuasive comments are received, the Draft Standard will become the Final Standard once a Response to Comments document is published. However, the standard will not become effective until the NELAP Accreditation Council sets an implementation date.

Once the Draft Standard becomes final, the Microbiology Expert Committee will shift its focus on implementation tools for the new Standard such as training courses, guidance documents, and Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) for Technical Specialists. Ideally these tools could be ready by the next summer conference.

Ice-Breaker in Houston

Paul Junio | TNI and Joe Manzella | Orange County Water District

The Professional Development Program created an event to welcome first-time attendees to the 2026 Environmental Measurement Symposium.

Some of us have been attending these meetings for many years, and have developed great friendships over that time. In response to feedback that people who are new to this conference don't always know how to fit in to seemingly existing groups of friends, we created an ice-breaker event. A group of attendees made plans to attend the baseball game between the Houston Astros and Toronto Blue Jays Tuesday night. The ballpark was just over a mile away, so we enjoyed the lovely Houston humidity and walked to the park. All first-time attendees were contacted prior to the conference asking if they were interested in attending the game. If interested, they would be entered into a drawing to receive a complimentary ticket.

The game was a fun evening, with lots of personal and professional chatter among the group. We'll see if we are able to plan something like this again. Thanks to Joe Manzella for the idea and the bulk of the planning!



California's Road Back to TNI

Christine Sotelo | California ELAP

By late 2013, California's Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP) was in disrepair. A TNI evaluation found significant deficiencies across the program, prompting California to announce its withdrawal from The NELAC Institute. Laboratories faced inconsistent assessments, delayed accreditation decisions, unresolved complaints, and backlogs that stretched for years. The agencies relying on laboratory results had reason to question whether the accreditation system could consistently safeguard the quality of data used for environmental and public health decisions.

A Program in Disrepair

The transfer of ELAP to the State Water Resources Control Board in 2014 created an opportunity to change course. The Board rejected piecemeal repair in favor of comprehensive reform. An expert review panel identified the essential work: building an internal quality management system, strengthening, and training the workforce, modernizing accreditation practices, improving communication, adopting new laboratory standards, and restoring accountability. The panel also pointed to an ambitious destination—California's eventual return to TNI and the national network of state accreditation bodies known as the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation program (NELAP).

Targeted Improvements

ELAP translated the panel's recommendations into targeted changes. The program established an internal management system to make decisions more consistent and accountable, reorganized into a more complete accreditation program, trained a changing workforce to operate under the new system, and included the use of third-party assessment agencies that are TNI-accredited Non-Governmental Accreditation Bodies. It also created dedicated capacity to monitor and review roughly 50,000 proficiency-testing results each year, turning a previously neglected stream of information into an ongoing check on laboratory performance.

ELAP also established an enforcement unit with a clear purpose: respond consistently to violations, deter recurring problems, and promote lasting compliance. Enforcement became part of a broader quality system rather than a substitute for one.

At the same time, the program rebuilt relationships damaged by years of delay and inconsistency. ELAP began meeting regularly with the agencies that depend on accredited laboratory data, improved communication with laboratories, and revitalized the Environmental Laboratory Technical Advisory Committee through clearer bylaws and defined channels for recommendations and responses. These changes made stakeholder input a repeatable part of program governance instead of an occasional reaction to crisis.

The central reform was the modern, laboratory accreditation standard. After a multi-year stakeholder process, the State Water Board adopted comprehensive regulations on May 5, 2020, replacing outdated state-created requirements with the 2016 TNI Standard, subject to two California-specific exceptions involving proficiency testing and technical-manager qualifications. The regulations took effect January 1, 2021. ELAP then paired the mandate with three years of workshops, tools, and training so laboratories could build compliant quality systems rather than simply meet a deadline. By 2023, California's accredited laboratory population was operating under this modified standard, known as TNI-2 (TNI minus two).

Sustainable, Measurable Success

The results are visible in the systems now embedded in everyday operations: a modern, statewide accreditation standard, routine review of proficiency-testing results, dedicated enforcement capacity, structured stakeholder engagement, trained staff, and repeatable quality controls. Together, these measures replaced a crisis-driven program with one designed to detect problems, document performance, and improve continuously.

One strategic gap remained. Laboratories needing accreditation to the full TNI Standard still had to seek

California's Road Back to TNI | continued

it from another state because California was not yet a recognized NELAP accreditation body. In 2026, ELAP advanced a voluntary, two-tier approach that would preserve California's existing requirements while offering full TNI accreditation to laboratories that need it. On October 7, 2026, ELAP applied to TNI for recognition as a NELAP accreditation body, the next step in reconnecting California laboratories to the national system.

Recognition is not automatic. ELAP must demonstrate compliance with TNI requirements for accreditation bodies through an external review of its policies, procedures and records and an on-site evaluation by peers. That scrutiny is part of the value: national recognition would not merely mark a return. It would place California within a cycle of external review, shared expertise, and continuous improvement that helps sustain reform over time.

California's comeback is therefore larger than a single application or designation. ELAP moved from backlogs, inconsistency, and lost confidence to a program with clear standards, accountable processes, measurable oversight, and mechanisms for learning. NELAP recognition would complete the road back to the national community, but the durable success is already evident: California has built an accreditation program capable of producing trustworthy results year after year for laboratories, regulatory agencies, and the communities that depend on sound environmental data.

Environmental Measurement Symposium Dr. Charlie W. Carter Award

Ilona Taunton | TNI



Dr. Charles (Charlie) William Carter dedicated over 30 years to the environmental laboratory business and community. Considered a highly respected environmental testing genius by everyone fortunate enough to know him, he was brilliant and had relentless energy, work ethic, and passion for advancing the environmental testing industry by providing critical scientific expertise and support. Charlie was deeply involved in many environmental organizations and a frequent speaker at conferences, forums, and meetings. He was a leader in the industry and one you could count on always pushing the envelope to help the environmental measurement, monitoring, and laboratory community excel in meeting the highest levels of integrity and quality.

This award has been established to recognize a technically competent individual and leader in theenvironmental measurement, monitoring, or laboratory industry, embodying Charlie's strengths in scientific expertise, communication, and mentoring. One recipient will be selected annually and recognized at the Environmental Measurement Symposium (Symposium).

Nominations will open on the first day of each year's Symposium and close on January 31st of the following year. Submissions must be made through the Environmental Measurement Symposium website (envirosymposium.group) and not exceed three (3) 8.5 x 11 inch pages of single-spaced, standard twelve (12)-point type with one (1)-inch margins.

All nominations must include the nominee's name, affiliation, address, phone number, and email address, in addition to a written submission considering the following criteria:

Dr. Charlie W. Carter Award | continued

1. What technically innovative and impactful contribution(s) has this individual made to the environmental measurement, monitoring, and/or laboratory industry?

2. How does this individual demonstrate their understanding of the technology and policy implications this (these) innovative and impactful contribution(s) have on the industry?

3. How does this individual communicate, mentor, and/or outreach throughout the community to share this (these) contribution(s)?

4. In what ways does this individual demonstrate their leadership by giving of themselves?

5. What professional organizational and/or community membership(s) does this individual hold in addition to leadership service within them?

Each nomination must also be accompanied by the name, affiliation, address, phone number, and email address of two nominators to complete the submission. Self-nomination is not permissible.

The Symposium Steering Committee, which is comprised of representatives managing the conference in addition to representatives from federal government, state government, laboratory community, and industry, will serve as the independent review panel for award selection. The selected recipient and their nominators will be notified by March 15th of the award year.

Previous Awardees

- 2016 Richard Burrows
- 2017 Andy Eaton
- 2018 Marlene Moore
- 2019 Judy Morgan
- 2022 Ray Frederici
- 2024 David Friedman
- 2025 Robert Wyeth
- **2026 Mitzi Miller**

Member Spotlight: Mitzy Miller – A Career of Science, Service, and Leadership 2026 Recipient of the Dr. Charlie W. Carter Award

Judy Morgan | Pace Analytical Services



Dr. Charles "Charlie" William Carter left a lasting mark on the environmental measurement community. Throughout his career, Charlie combined scientific expertise with energy, integrity, leadership, and a willingness to share what he knew with others. He was not only a respected technical professional, but also a teacher, mentor, and advocate for better environmental measurement.

The Dr. Charlie W. Carter Award honors that legacy. Presented in conjunction with the Environmental Measurement Symposium, the award recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to environmental measurement, monitoring, or laboratory science while demonstrating the qualities Charlie exemplified so well: technical excellence, communication, leadership, and mentorship.

Member Spotlight: Mitzy Miller | continued

Those qualities make Mitzi Miller, the 2026 recipient of the Charlie Carter Award, an especially fitting choice.

More Than Four Decades of Impact

Mitzi's career spans more than 40 years in environmental chemistry, laboratory quality, accreditation, assessment, data validation, and regulatory compliance. Throughout that career, she has worked with commercial and government laboratories, accreditation bodies, regulators, attorneys, and laboratory professionals at every level.

Her technical expertise is broad, extending beyond environmental testing into food, cannabis, pharmaceutical, microbiological, proficiency-testing, and reference-material programs. Yet one theme has remained consistent throughout her career: ensuring that laboratory data are scientifically sound, defensible, and worthy of the decisions that depend upon them.

Mitzi has also been deeply involved in laboratory accreditation for decades. She has served as an assessor for A2LA since 1993 and has performed assessments involving ISO/IEC 17025 and other specialized accreditation programs. In 2023, A2LA recognized her as its first assessor to achieve a 30-year assessor anniversary.

But Mitzi has never viewed an assessment simply as an exercise in finding deficiencies. Those who have worked with her know that she uses assessments as opportunities to teach. She asks questions, explains why requirements matter, and helps laboratory personnel understand the connection between quality systems, analytical processes, and reliable data.

That ability to turn technical oversight into professional development is one of the qualities that most clearly reflects the spirit of the Charlie Carter Award.

A Career Marked by Significant Contributions

Mitzi's technical contributions have often occurred when the stakes were particularly high.

In 1994, she worked with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop and publish the Technical Assistance Document for complying with the Toxicity Characteristic Rule and implementing the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP), which became an important reference for laboratories performing this testing.

Years later, Mitzi served as Technical Director of the Gulf Project during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response. She managed more than 100 technical resources supporting sampling and analysis across approximately 1,600 miles of coastline and offshore operations. The effort involved more than one million samples.The challenge was not simply producing analytical results. The data had to meet demanding holding times and quality requirements while remaining technically and legally defensible. Mitzi helped develop a Natural Resource Damage Assessment process that supported those goals and became a model for future NOAA oil-spill and natural disaster investigations.

Her career demonstrates a principle she has reinforced repeatedly: quality is not something added to science after the work is done. Quality is what makes the science usable and trustworthy.

Building Stronger Laboratories and Better Professionals

Mitzi has been actively involved with The NELAC Institute since its inception, serving as both a chair and voting member of numerous committees. Her work has helped advance quality systems, accreditation consistency, and technical direction across the environmental laboratory community.

She has also contributed to numerous other organizations and programs, including initiatives for ACIL, DoD, DOE, EPA, and assessments for A2LA and ANAB. Her career has included laboratory auditing, data validation, quality-system consulting, regulatory support, and development of technical and quality-assurance requirements.

Mitzi has averaged more than 30 audits and assessments per year across a variety of programs and accreditation bodies. She has trained environmental assessors, helped laboratories navigate complex regulatory requirements, and provided technical assistance during data-integrity and compliance challenges.

Member Spotlight: Mitzy Miller | continued

Her professional credentials are equally extensive, including experience as an ISO 17025, ISO 17034, and ISO 17043 auditor, a DoD/DOE auditor, TNI assessor, Certified Data Validator, and holder of EPA Drinking Water Certification.

Yet her greatest influence may not be found in standards, audits, or credentials.

It can be found in the people she has helped along the way.

A Mentor, Teacher, and Trusted Advisor

Mitzi has spent decades sharing what she knows. She has conducted workshops, trained laboratory personnel, and assessors, spoken at industry conferences, and mentored professionals throughout the environmental measurement community.

She is known for working patiently with laboratory staff at every level and for turning technical discussions into opportunities to teach. The nomination describes her as a coach, mentor, teacher, and friend whose generosity with her knowledge has helped develop future leaders in the field.

That commitment continues today.

At the 2026 Environmental Measurement Symposium in Houston, Mitzi participated in the TNI Assessment Forum, Modernizing Without Compromise: Validation and Regulatory Acceptance of Method Changes. The session examined how environmental laboratories can embrace new technologies and more efficient analytical methods while preserving data quality and public trust.

It was exactly the type of conversation one would expect Mitzi to be part of technically challenging, forward-looking, and focused on making the laboratory community stronger.

An Award That Fits the Career

Following the presentation of the Charlie Carter Award, I reflected that some awards you present, and some awards you feel.

This was one of those awards.

Charlie Carter's legacy was built on more than technical accomplishment. It was built on science, integrity, energy, teaching, mentoring, and a belief that our industry could always become better.

Those same qualities have defined Mitzi Miller's career.

For more than four decades, she has helped laboratories improve, strengthened accreditation and quality systems, supported environmental emergency response, solved difficult technical problems, and helped generations of laboratory professionals understand not simply what the requirements say, but why they matter.

The Charlie Carter Award recognizes technical excellence, but it also recognizes something equally important: the willingness to use that expertise in service to others.

Mitzi Miller has spent a career doing both.

Her selection as the 2026 Dr. Charlie W. Carter Award recipient is a well-deserved recognition of an extraordinary career and of the lasting influence she continues to have on the environmental measurement community.



ChairSpeaks: Musings from the TNI Chair

Alfredo Sotomayor | TNI Chair, Board of Directors

Intersections

My good friend and Past TNI Chair, Sharon Mertens, recently reconnected with a former employee after 40 years. That they could still talk at length on the phone did not surprise her; I found his career change fascinating. The erstwhile analyst later became a banker specializing in philanthropy and now lived in Houston. Sharon and I spent part of a delightful Sunday brunch indoors, while Houston blistered, talking to her Mr. B. about the financial stability of not-for-profits and how to chase funds for endowments. I was not facetious about my fascination; the conversation veered into philosophy and transcendence, great hooks for me, all facilitated by our attendance at the Environmental Measurement Symposium.

That made me think about other memorable connections made at or strengthened by our annual meetings.

Close Encounter of the Wrong Kind

All attending the first ever NELAC (notice how I did not say conference), were regaled with the frequent pronouncements of the Prophet for the Environment, a rather misguided speaker that took the "E" in NELAC to an apocalyptic level. I had to contend with a heckler, a laboratory director who, to a very large audience, accused me and the program I worked for at that time of not granting his laboratory Wisconsin certification because we disagreed on a critical finding. He was persistent and did not miss a chance to expose my "unfair" treatment of him at conference sessions and social gatherings. I took the high road and was silent, believing that accreditation decisions should not be discussed in public. He was so relentless that attendees started to, uncharacteristically, side with poor, mean me, the accreditor.

He repeated his behavior at future conferences, albeit with diminished intensity. I continued to evade as much as I could; by that time everyone knew the sad story of the aggrieved laboratory and the assessor from hell. Until at one meeting he deliberately cornered me and said, "Let me buy you a drink. Let's talk."

To be even, after the first one, I had to buy him a drink. We started to understand each other. I started to separate the man from the tale. He started to understand there was nothing personal about how we treated his laboratory. So many starts…I discovered we had a mutual interest in classical music. He had a PhD in Chemistry but was passionate about playing the viola.

And then, just like that, our friendship began. At future meetings we made time to catch up. At one momentous one, he met who would become his future wife. I had met her years before when she had a different last name, at a laboratory I assessed. I liked her very much; she was incapable of heckling. He is Jeff Flowers. She is June Flowers. Those that know them can attest to Jeff's intensity and June's sweetness. They complement each other very well. And that's a happy ending for all, isn't it?

The Ubiquitous Expert

After repeatedly requesting a response, without success, to my assessment report, the laboratory withdrew its Wisconsin certification. Years later, when a business opportunity materialized, laboratory representatives flew to Madison requesting an expedited accreditation. During the required on-site assessment, I was introduced to a man that seemed to know a lot about hydrocarbons and environmental analyses.

When I assessed other laboratories under the same ownership, this man would either be on site or would join any teleconference where I discussed compliance plans to address findings. He later confessed that whenever I was at one of his company's laboratories, he was asked to attend and follow. We were often at opposite sides of the argument; it was the typical dichotomous regulator -- regulated dynamic, sprinkled with a bit of admiration at the breadth of his analytical command. We disagreed at times, but I respected the man and he respected me.

The man left the laboratory and formed his own business. He attended the first NELAC meeting. He spoke eloquently about the need for a national laboratory accreditation program. That was certainly something we had in common. We met at other national meetings;

I gave him a ride from the Albany airport to Saratoga Springs on one of those occasions. Once in DC in a presentation involving many stakeholders, I nodded affirmatively several times at his proposal to create a not-for-profit to develop standards, relieving EPA of that duty. I nodded because I had previously drafted something similar to say when it was my turn to present. He approached me, curious about my take, and of course, at the bar, we discussed some more. After a few more crucial conversations, not all at the bar, he approached me to join a Board he was creating.

If by now you do not know who this man is, you must be new to the environmental accreditation community, a perennial amnesiac, or residing in Planet 9 from outer space. I have had the pleasure of collaborating and creating with Jerry Parr for many years because our paths converged at a national accreditation meeting. I got to know him pretty well. I now cannot imagine my professional life and the state of accreditation without Jerry's presence. And with Jerry, we get a bonus; Kay, his wife, a phenomenal conference planner and organizer and outside of TNI, a crusader of causes dear to me. How fortunate I am! How fortunate are we!

The Right Stuff

These are two stories of beneficial conversion made possible by our meetings. A wrong encounter turned into a close one of the best kind; an expert morphed into a friend. What started with a need to protect self-interests ended in solid mutual purpose. A phone call concludes in Houston, thanks to the Symposium, in a felicitous re-encounter. There are many others I could write about, and I am sure most of you could spin further similar tales.

TNI does not meet in Xanadu or Shangri-La, but wherever we convene, there is always the pleasure of forming valuable professional connections, making new friends, rejoicing with old ones, or the possibility of intersecting with someone that could change us by surprise.

If you have never attended one of our meetings, I hope you consider it. And if you have not been to one in years, come back and get reacquainted with all their goodness, not just for the environment, but also your spirit.

Until I see you again, soon…

Only connect.

Alfredo

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We are grateful for the generosity of the organizations that have joined us as members:

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Miami-Dade Water and Sewer
Microbac Laboratories, Inc.
Napa Sanitation District
Orange County Public Health Water Quality Lab
Pace Analytical Services
Pace Analytical Services, LLC - Melville
Scientific Analytical Institute
Spotsylvania County Laboratory Services
Tarrant County Public Health
USEPA - National Analytical Radiation Environmental Laboratory
Vermont Department of Health

Patrons

A2LA
ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB)
City of Phoenix Lab Services Div.

Patrons | continued

FL Dept of Health ELAP
Hillsborough County
Illinois EPA
International Accreditation Service
Kansas DHE
Louisiana DEQ / OES
Minnesota DOH
New Hampshire ELAP
New Jersey DEP - OQA
New York State DOH
Oklahoma DEQ
Oregon Health Authority
PA-DEP - Laboratory Accreditation Program
Perry Johnson
State Water Resources Control Board-California ELAP
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Utah Department of Health and Human Services
Virginia DCLS
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