



THE INSTITUTE REVIEW

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November 2020

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Table of Contents



<u>Article</u>	<u>Page</u>
It's Time to Reserve Your Spot at the Forum	1
Nominations for 2021 Board of Directors	4
Call for Abstracts for the 37th National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC).....	6
Environmental Measurement Symposium 2020.....	7
Laboratory Accreditation Does Make a Difference: Data You Can Rely On	8
Update on Board Initiatives from the October 2019 Strategic Planning Meeting	10
TNI Moves from "Quality System" to "Quality Management System"	12
ChairSpeaks: <i>"Musings from the TNI Chair"</i>	15
Withdrawal of LA DOH from NELAP	18
TNI Expert Committee Openings	19
TNI's Laboratory Accreditation Management System (LAMS) Fully Implemented	20
National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) Dr. Charlie W. Carter Award	21
Member Spotlight: Michael Michaud	22

It's Time to Reserve Your Spot at the Forum...

By Jerry Parr, TNI

The NELAC Institute's **2021 Forum on Environmental Accreditation** will be held **virtually from January 25-29, 2021**. The Forum will feature open public meetings of all 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 accreditation issues to review what has been done and to participate in the efforts to establish a national environmental accreditation program. The 2021 Forum will include:

- ◆ Meetings of TNI Committees to further TNI efforts on environmental laboratory
- ◆ accreditation, proficiency testing, and accreditation of field sampling and measurement organizations;
- ◆ An exhibit program showcasing the latest innovations in environmental monitoring;
- ◆ A general session with updates about TNI programs, a presentation on the value of accreditation and a presentation on TNI's shift to a Quality Management System; and
- ◆ Special sessions on a variety of topics.

Due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic, TNI has decided to make this year's Forum a virtual conference. The focus will be on special sessions regarding important issues surrounding laboratory accreditation.

Many of TNI's committees will have meetings to discuss actions underway. The Forum will also feature TNI's Annual Report.



Special Sessions at the 2021 Forum

If you are interested in presenting at one of these sessions, please contact Jerry Parr at jerry.parr@nelac-institute.org

New TNI Initiatives

- Competency Task Force
- Consumables Task Force
- Mentor Committee
- Training Committee

Assessment Forum: Accreditation Issues with Emerging Contaminants

This session will focus on issues encountered with seeking accreditation, performing assessments, etc. for new contaminants such as PFAS.

Operating a Laboratory During a Pandemic

Presentations from laboratories and laboratory vendors on their experiences dealing with COVID during 2020 on how the virus impacted laboratory operations.



Mentor Session

Implementing the New EPA MDL and TNI LOD/LOQ Requirements

Presentations from Accreditation Bodies, third-party assessors and laboratories in the 2016 TNI Standard that relate to implementing the new requirements for Limit of Detection and Limit of Quantitation for chemical testing.

Implementing the New TNI Calibration Requirements for Chemistry

Presentations from Accreditation Bodies, third-party assessor and laboratories in the 2016 TNI standard that relate to implementing the new requirements for instrument calibration for chemical testing.

Effectively Managing Your PT Program

Presentations from laboratories and PT Providers on topics such as scheduling, LOQ reporting, handling samples, Corrective Actions, etc. for proficiency testing.

Improvements in Laboratory Performance and Data Quality

Speakers will give talks expanding on one of these topics:

- The processes leading to the result can be reconstructed because there is sufficient documentation for the sample, calibration, QC results, and SOP s used,
- The reference materials, reference standards, and reagents are all traceable,
- Competency of analysts is demonstrated by training records, PT results, and Demonstration of Capability results,
- Samples are handled correctly and can be traced from receipt to reported result,
- Quality control results document data quality,
- The result is reported correctly and has met requirements relating to quantitation limits and data flagging.
- The requested methodology was followed in generating the data.

Wastewater Epidemiology and COVID-19

This session will focus on current approaches to COVID-19 analysis of wastewater samples and the application of data through wastewater epidemiology applications. Presentations will focus on the different types of methodologies used to determine presence of COVID-19 in wastewater. Data application, uses and interpretation will also be covered to give a better understanding of how wastewater epidemiology can be used as a tool across different programs and information gathering efforts.

How Accreditation to the TNI Standard Improves Laboratory Data Quality and Performance

Presentations from accredited laboratories and others who can share experiences on how obtaining accreditation to the TNI standard improved the performance of their laboratory and the quality of the data they generate.



Success Stories with Remote Assessments

Due to COVID, many Accreditation Bodies have begun using remote assessments. This session will feature speakers from Accreditation Bodies, third-party assessors and laboratories on how these remote assessments worked and whether or not they should continue to be used event if things return to normal.

REGISTER TODAY!

You may register now using our [on-line registration system](#).

You may also register by [completing the registration form \(PDF\)](#) on the website and sending it to:

The NELAC Institute PO Box 2439
Weatherford, TX 76086
FAX: 817-623-4777

Nominations for 2021 Board of Directors

By Sharon Mertens, Past Chair

The election for new Directors will begin soon and nominations for individuals to serve a three-year term on the TNI Board of Directors are now being accepted. TNI members may self-nominate or nominate another individual using the [online Nomination Form](#). There are up to six (6) open positions for 2021.

TNI is governed by an elected Board, including five (5) 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 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 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 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 (3) years and are 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](#).

Nominations and Elections Process

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, three (3) Ex-Officio Directors, representing the Department of Energy, Department of Defense, and Environmental Protection Agency serve 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 SMertens@mmsd.com.

2021 Election Timeline

November 5 – December 31, 2019 – Nominations accepted

January 1-15, 2020 – Nomination Committee will review the nominations and prepare a slate of candidates.

January 15 – Voting opens with the announcement of the slate of candidates on the TNI website

February 15 – Voting closes

March 17 – 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 through our website and is easy and quick. Our membership is not large so each and every member's vote can make a difference.

Call for Abstracts for the 37th National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC)

By Earl Hansen, TNI

The Environmental Measurement Symposium (Symposium) is the largest conference focused on environmental measurements in North America. The Symposium brings together scientists and managers from federal and state agencies, the regulated community, academia, and laboratory and engineering support communities. It features presentations, posters, training, exhibits, and networking opportunities. The Symposium was created in 2007 by combining the National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) with the Forum on Environmental Accreditation.

**Abstract submissions are due by
February 1, 2021.**

**See the [NEMC website](#) for more
information**

The NEMC Steering Committee is inviting abstracts for oral or poster presentations in these specific topic areas:

- ◆ Academic Research Topics in Environmental Measurement and Monitoring
- ◆ Advances in Field Sampling and Field Measurement
- ◆ Advances in High Resolution Mass Spectrometry and Its Emerging Environmental Applications
- ◆ Air Monitoring, Methods, and Technology
- ◆ Best Management Practices for Quality Management Systems
- ◆ Building Consensus Methods to Support Environmental Laboratories
- ◆ Challenges and Opportunities for Solid Phase Extraction
- ◆ Citizen Science in Environmental Measurement/Monitoring.
- ◆ Collaborative Efforts to Improve Environmental Monitoring
- ◆ EPA After the First Half Century
- ◆ SARS CoV-2 Wastewater Surveillance Testing
- ◆ Data Quality, Management, and Review
- ◆ Drinking Water
- ◆ Environmental Forensics
- ◆ Identifying and Combatting Inappropriate Laboratory Practices
- ◆ Instrumentation Focus: LCMS
- ◆ Laboratory Informatics
- ◆ Lessons Learned from the Pandemic
- ◆ Metals Analysis and Remediation
- ◆ Microplastics
- ◆ New Organic Monitoring Techniques
- ◆ Operational and Advocacy Issues Impacting the Environmental Laboratory Industry
- ◆ Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in the Environment
- ◆ Public and Private Environmental/Public Health Laboratory Partnerships
- ◆ Sensor Technologies
- ◆ Shale Oil and Gas

Please provide your abstract by **February 1, 2021**. 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 NEMC website at www.nemc.us.

Environmental Measurement Symposium 2020

The Environment in 2020: Past, Present, and Future

By Lara Phelps, USEPA and Jerry Parr, TNI

The 2020 Environmental Measurement Symposium was held virtually from August 3-21, 2020 due to the COVID virus. Almost 600 individuals participated in the 2020 meeting. For the fifteenth year, the Symposium was co-sponsored by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and The NELAC Institute (TNI) under a cooperative agreement.

The 36th meeting of NEMC had 182 technical presentations over 15 days.

- ◇ Thirty (30) technical breakout sessions with 138 oral presentations,
- ◇ A poster session with thirty-three (33) posters,
- ◇ Two (2) keynote presentations,
- ◇ One (1) general session with 4 presentations, and
- ◇ Five (5) vendor lunch presentations.

The technical presentations from the NEMC portion of the Symposium can be found on the [NEMC website](#).

Laboratory Accreditation Does Make a Difference

Data You Can Rely On

By Carol Batteron, TNI and Steve Arms (retired)

The NELAC Institute (TNI) and other proponents of environmental laboratory accreditation have always promoted accreditation as a demonstration of competency. TNI believes that accreditation to the TNI Standard and its Quality Management System (QMS) requirements ensures data of “known and documented quality.” The basic premise is that accreditation to the TNI Standard ensures laboratory competency, and thus gives the data user and regulators confidence that the laboratory generated data are of known and documented quality. In fact, TNI’s Mission in the current Bylaws, states:

The purpose of TNI is to foster the generation of environmental data of known and documented quality through an open, inclusive, and transparent process that is responsive to the needs of the community.

TNI is often asked for data to justify becoming an Accreditation Body (AB) or accredited laboratory. TNI can provide considerable evidence supporting the benefits of environmental laboratory accreditation. However, after focusing on the connection between accreditation and data quality, we have come to believe that accreditation is not just about a quantitative improvement in data quality, but that a laboratory that implements a Quality Management System can generate data that can be trusted for use in decision-making. Over the past few years TNI has begun a series of activities to explore the impact accreditation has on laboratory performance and data quality, and we have developed a new white paper which lays out the results of these activities.

To explore ways to provide more substantive data supporting laboratory accreditation, TNI began a series of activities in 2019 aimed at gathering quantitative information from laboratories who had experienced improvements as a result of becoming an accredited laboratory, as well as examples of failures resulting from lack of adherence to QMS principles. TNI decided that the best way to obtain data was to invite laboratories to share individual stories on the impact of TNI accreditation on their laboratory experience.

We also invited laboratories to share their experiences obtaining TNI accreditation and the impacts they saw on their own laboratory. While some acknowledged that there were short term negative impacts on their laboratory resources while going through initial accreditation process, they felt the long-term benefits outweighed the initial costs.

Independent of the two efforts above, TNI had already collected information on how accredited laboratories that identified non-conforming activities were quickly able to resolve these non-conformances. The session documented that laboratories that had implemented a TNI QMS were able to address such issues effectively.

The results of our efforts lead us to believe that there is no doubt that accreditation to the TNI Standard makes a difference in the quality of the data and in laboratory performance. However, TNI also believes that we need to redefine what we mean by “data quality”. Providing quality data is much more than getting the right answer and being able to reconstruct the result. Quality includes confidence in the data as well as better laboratory operations. The laboratory QMS in and of itself does not generate better quality data, but if followed, ensures that the data will be of documented quality and that the laboratory management is



committed to fostering a culture of quality. Laboratories accredited to the TNI Standard have documented significant improvements, which include efficiency, additional capability, and quicker reports. Traceability, training, sample tracking, and documentation all contribute to better decisions and contribute to laboratories with TNI accreditation having more confidence in their data.

In our new white paper, we propose a *New Guiding Principle for TNI - Data You Can Rely On*.

The value of accreditation to the TNI Standard is that it provides confidence in the data to the laboratory's client and to regulators.

TNI will continue to pursue opportunities to document the value of accreditation to the TNI Standard by:

1. Continuing to collect case studies of non-conformances,
2. Continuing to collect examples of laboratory improvement,
3. Collecting data on AB on how the AB helped laboratories to identify and correct problems, and
4. Refining the new guiding principle.

In addition to the points above, we will propose revising EL-V1M2-2016-Rev2.1: Quality Systems General Requirements, Section 1.2 (Scope) to reflect the new guiding principle.

You can read the entire white paper on the TNI website [here](#).



Update on Board Initiatives from the October 2019 Strategic Planning Meeting

Most of TNI's Board of Directors and Committee Chairs met a year ago to create the new and forward-looking Strategic Plan that was finalized and adopted in April, 2020. Four new initiatives were authorized by that Plan and four new groups are now meeting monthly to work on them. This article will update you on the progress of those efforts.

Consumables Task Force

The Consumables Task Force (TF) was created by the TNI Board of Directors as a result of the issues and concerns raised during the Mentor Sessions and Assessor Forums at recent TNI and NEMC meetings. Judy Morgan is Chair and the TF is staffed by Bob Wyeth. Its mission will be to support the current TNI Environmental Laboratory Sector Standard (ELSS) requirement for purchased services, supplies, reagents, and consumables that directly impact the quality of tests or calibrations to meet criteria suitable to ensure data of known and documented quality.

The TF includes representation of the vendor community and laboratories, and has begun the process of identifying critical supplies and services. Once those items are identified, the group will develop essential criteria enabling users to ensure that products and support services meet a minimum quality expectation, are in accordance with appropriate applicable standards, and can provide documentation that represents an adequate level of traceability.

The group will also be characterizing products and services which impact data quality in all sectors and types of laboratories. Determining "criticality" in this number of products and services combined with various uses is an enormous task. To manage such an effort, the Consumables TF is categorizing and classifying products by analytical specialty, in general, and following with the consolidation of laboratory services provided.

The TF intends to conceptualize and consider this information as a possible addition to the TNI Standard and/or development of Guidance document(s) to support laboratories and vendors in ensuring compliance with the requirements of the TNI Standards. Full development of the Consumables TF product(s) will be a lengthy process, but preliminary work products for review/consideration by TNI members are expected to be available to assist our membership. Follow the group's progress at <https://nelac-institute.org/committee/consumables>.

Competency Task Force

The Competency Task Force (Competency TF) was created to explore and make recommendations regarding programs to document competencies for Quality Managers, Technical Managers, Assessors, Samplers and others as appropriate. Jerry Parr serves as the Interim Chair and the group is staffed by Lynn Bradley. About twenty (20) enthusiastic volunteers from within the TNI community began meeting in April, gathering monthly to tackle this effort. In time, the group will also explore whether some form of credentialing for those positions or job descriptions could become a new offering under the TNI organization.

The Competency TF selected Assessors, Quality Managers and Technical Managers as the most important positions to address, and is well into creating a list of competencies that TNI's assessor training program should



address. Assessor training is perhaps the bedrock of our accreditation program, and the output of this first effort will serve as both template and basic process for addressing the Quality and Technical Manager competencies later on.

The Competency Task Force is coordinating with the new Training Committee (see below) as well as with the Laboratory Accreditation Body Expert Committee to ensure that the requirements of Volume 2 Module 1 of the Environmental Laboratory Sector Standard are addressed for assessor competency and in the eventual training courses that assessors will need.

We don't yet know exactly how the documented competencies will fit into a possible credentialing activity – that will be explored after the needed competencies are identified and documented. The Task Force is hopeful that a full set of recommendations to the TNI Board can be made in roughly a year's timeframe. You can monitor progress at <https://nelac-institute.org/committee/competency>.

Mentoring Subcommittee of the Advocacy Committee

The Mentoring Subcommittee is tasked to explore and make recommendations on developing a financially sustainable laboratory mentoring plan that provides assistance to laboratories seeking to implement and maintain a quality management system based on the TNI standard. Jacob Oaxaca leads the effort with Carol Batterton providing support. This large and enthusiastic group is first discussing the development of an overall structure for the program and the mentoring process itself. They have created a questionnaire for labs who apply to be mentored as well as an agreement to be entered into between each mentor and its mentee lab plus a descriptive document about the expectations of the program.

A web page announcing the program is in design stage, and the group hopes to complete its foundational work within a year so that the actual program can get underway. The impetus for this effort was the many California labs that will soon be required to have a quality system and accreditation under CA's new program, but participation will not be limited to labs located there. For now, you can monitor the group's progress on its subcommittee page, <https://nelac-institute.org/committee/mentor>.

Training Committee

The Training Committee is TNI's newest standing committee, chaired by Calista Daigle and staffed by Ilona Taunton (who is also TNI's Training Coordinator). The committee has twenty-eight (28) voting and associate members. They are coordinating with the Competency Task Force to ensure that the eventual training courses and program align with that group's recommendations. The committee's Charter is nearly complete, and plans are to form workgroups to address priorities outlined in its Charter.

The Committee has discussed the possibility of training tracks and what a track might include, starting with a comprehensive list for a Quality Manager track and discussed what other tracks could be beneficial. They also intend to work with National Environmental Field Activities Program (NEFAP) to address field-related training. The long range goal is to improve and expand TNI's training activities to more fully address the needs of the environmental testing community.

When the Charter is approved, you'll be able to see it here: <https://nelac-institute.org/committee/training>.

TNI Moves from “Quality System” to “Quality Management System”

By Jerry Parr, TNI

Background

At the first meeting of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) in February 1995, a newly formed Quality System Committee, chaired by Silky Labie of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, presented the first version of the Quality System Standard (Chapter 5). At that time, the language in the standard stated:

Quality Systems include all quality assurance (QA) policies and quality control (QC) procedures, which shall be delineated in a QA Plan to help ensure and document the quality of the analytical data. These shall include QA policies, which will establish essential QC procedures applicable to environmental laboratories regardless of size and complexity. The laboratory shall meet any additional or more stringent requirements as specified by the analytical methods, specific programs or Agencies.

Note the emphasis on QA/QC as compared to the overall management system in ISO/IEC 17025.

By 1997, NELAC had moved to ISO/IEC Guide 25, and in 2002, moved to ISO 17025: 1999. The language remained unchanged until the final 2003 NELAC Standard. The 2009 (and 2016) TNI Standard was revised to contain some, but not all, of the language contained in the 2005 version of 17025.

These documents use the terms management systems, quality systems, and quality management systems somewhat interchangeably. Also used is technical management system and “technical, managerial, and documentation requirements.”

The 2005 version of ISO 17025, contains a definition (in a Note):

The term 'management system' means the quality, administrative and technical systems that govern the operations of a laboratory.

This definition is very consistent with the opinion of the TNI Board of Directors, where the Board indicated items such as financial performance, personnel, and health and safety are outside the scope of TNI's Module 2.

The 2009 TNI Standard contains this definition:

Quality System: *A structured and documented management system describing the policies, objectives, principles, organizational authority, responsibilities, accountability, and implementation plan of an organization for ensuring quality in its work processes, products (items), and services. The quality system provides the framework for planning, implementing, and assessing work performed by the organization and for carrying out required QA and QC activities.*



The 2017 version of 17025 takes a very different approach, organized as follows:

Section 4 General Requirements

- 1) Impartiality
- 2) Confidentiality

Section 5 Structural Requirements

Section 6 Resource Requirements

- 1) Personnel
- 2) Facilities
- 3) Equipment
- 4) Traceability
- 5) Externally provided services

Section 7 Process Requirements

- 1) Reviews of requests, tenders, and contracts
- 2) Selection, verification and validation of methods
- 3) Sampling
- 4) Handling test items
- 5) Technical records
- 6) Measurement uncertainty
- 7) Ensuring the validity of results
- 8) Reporting results
- 9) Complaints
- 10) Non-conforming work
- 11) Control of data

Section 8 Management Requirements

- 1) Management system documentation
- 2) Control of management system documents
- 3) Control of records
- 4) Actions to address risks and opportunities
- 5) Improvement
- 6) Corrective actions
- 7) Internal audits
- 8) Management reviews

In looking at all of this, it is important to note that Section 1 is informative only. It does not impose any requirements for laboratories, but helps set the stage for the importance of the requirements contained in Sections 4 through 8 of ISO 17025:2017.

Note: ISO has published close to 100 “management” standards. Some of these could be used by laboratories, or organizations that have laboratories. Examples include:

TNI Moves from “Quality System” to “Quality Management System” cont.



- 24518 – Crisis management of water utilities
- 30401 – Human resource management
- 41001 – Facility management
- 14001 – Environmental management systems
- 35001 – Biorisk management for laboratories

Because of the variety of “management” standards, the TNI Board of Directors voted unanimously on September 9, 2020 that TNI should use “quality management system” to ensure no confusion with the other management standards and has proposed the following definition for TNI’s Quality Systems committee to consider:

Quality Management System: *The quality, administrative and technical systems that govern the operations of a laboratory. It describes the policies, objectives, principles, organizational authority, responsibilities, accountability, and implementation plan of an organization for ensuring quality in its work processes, products (items), and services. The quality management system provides the framework for planning, implementing, and assessing work performed by the organization and for carrying out required QA/QC activities.*

ChairSpeaks

"Musings from the TNI Chair"

All the Things We Are

"...the promised kiss of springtime that makes the lonely winter seem long."

J. Kern; O. Hammerstein II

I have always liked having four seasons. I enjoy their contrast and what they do to me: the exuberance of summer opposed to the introspection of winter; the mellow melancholy of autumn against the crisp awakening of spring.

However, this year, I found summer too fleeting, and now I feel as if have already started the early winter of my discontent. It has not been exactly Christmas in July. This long stretch of understandable restrictions has been harder to cope with than what I had anticipated.

I have been coming to work on site throughout the pandemic, and even the limited interaction that affords with others has helped tremendously. Deprived of most external organized activity, I am finding that in solitude I have revisited former selves, some refreshing, annoying, or not too healthy; a mini-karmic journey of my own during this lifetime. Gratefully, I have also experienced surprising moments of insight, albeit many rather fleeting.

The Opportunity

In the beginning, suddenly, I had a surfeit of accessible private time. So...I made a very concerted effort to transform a perceived negative into a positive. I had a chance to practice what I have always been taught, and at the onset of the pandemic I assiduously psyched myself, crazy words, into making the best of it.

Could not eat out? Found renewed joy in cooking more. Could not go out with friends? Stayed home and read. Theaters and concert halls were dark? Netflix and YouTube came to the rescue.

Watching from my couch a complete baseball or football game, or listening to an entire opera on CD, filled some evenings with no pangs of overindulgence. Having very long phone conversations was a great alternative to bland texting.

At a deeper level, I used the new available time to explore the core of my essence, what defines me and what makes us ourselves. That was harder than working on my abs! My empathy quotient rose dramatically; I started to tear up when I watched hearing-aid commercials. I wanted to make it better for all. I started donating to causes.



I felt and thought I was experiencing earlier, and with more intensity, the warm cozy feeling one has at the beginning of winter. I craved soups and drew comfort knowing my sanctuaries were never more than two and a half hours away. There were times I felt as if I were a witness, full of insight, twice removed from my skin and bones, looking deeply in, discovering and rediscovering. Not up to where I thought I should be, but not so bad at that point.

As Time Goes By

I did not think this interregnum would last as long as it has. I expected a gradual easing of restrictions even thinking it would take months to get back to the way we were before March. I had paced myself for a much shorter race and I was sorely in need of more stamina.

What started as refreshing was now frequently unsettling. Without the variety and distraction that being with others and spending time off the home base provides, I succumbed to a deep wish to break away and get-out-of myself. I was not then, and I am not now, really losing it, but there is a fine line between meaningful examination and too much involvement with the self.

We need a balance between in and out, and that is so hard to sustain during the pandemic. Energy that before could be put to better use is now weakened by cabin fever and fighting the blues and blahs. Striving to stay healthy and worrying about the health of our loved ones stresses our equilibrium precariously. I started to grieve for the not so well and those victims of the indirect and sometimes unforeseen consequences of the pandemic wave.

The Sweet Spot

Counting one's blessings is an established way of making the best of it. It is not a profound idea, but that is part of its charm; it is within all's reach. Even if it does not directly offer respite to those in dire straits, if it moves others better abled or luckier that can assist, what is the harm? It has helped me some.

Health experts sometimes recommend starting a gratitude journal to narrow the gap between hope and despair. So, let me count the ways:

I am grateful for my family, friends, and home. I am grateful for having a job I love that has kept me fully employed, and for my laboratory staff that has continued to provide essential services without a pause. I am grateful that we can have so many goods and services delivered to us physically and virtually. And I am deeply grateful for TNI.

During the pandemic, TNI has conducted its business and functions uninterrupted. Our committees continue to meet and our standards continue to be developed. TNI has enlarged its training offerings and maintains an enticing buffet of virtual courses and seminars. This summer, TNI successfully delivered its first ever virtual conference. The 2020 NEMC was a resounding success by all accounts. Building on that success, but also considering the projected pandemic status and our constituents' limitations for this winter, TNI's 2021 Forum on Laboratory Accreditation will also be offered virtually.



As great as those TNI accomplishments are, I am most grateful for the Institute's people. Our Executive Director, Staff, and Program Administrators are efficient, superiorly-abled smooth operators. Our Directors are sincerely committed to furthering TNI's mission. Our committee members are la crème de la crème and the Institute's bedrock, donating their time and talents kindly and, yes, gratefully. And this pandemic has not changed that one bit.

TNI's people also include, most importantly for me, many, many friends. So many of us became more than acquaintances by working together on tough issues, sharing a set of basic beliefs, and always trying to do what was best for what was a glimpse of, after many incarnations of community forming, what we now know as TNI. To me, those connections were and continue to be deep and transforming. I build new ones every time we meet. How I miss the face-to-face contacts! I would love to see all of you again and feast on your real, not virtual presence.

TNI's people are the "angel glow that lights the sky." Despite all my apprehensions, I remain optimistic because I can count on so many blessings; you among them. I hope you can mine our TNI family and services for blessings of your own too. Perhaps you could start a personal gratitude list.

Until we can again contemplate the constellations together, in person, within touching or hugging distance, remember to be grateful for all the things you are, share, have, and contribute; and never forget to,

Only connect.

Alfredo

Alfredo Sotomayor
TNI Chair

Withdrawal of LA DOH from NELAP

By Jerry Parr, TNI

On August 3, 2020, the Louisiana Department of Health formally notified the NELAP Accreditation Council of their intent to withdraw from NELAP on August 20, 2020 and revert back to a drinking water certification program based on the EPA certification manual. DOH currently accredits nine (9) laboratories: three (3) in Louisiana and six (6) out-of-state as a primary AB. DOH also recognizes twenty-three (23) laboratories as a secondary AB. The primary reason for this decision was stated to be the cost to accredit the out-of-state laboratories.

Kristin Brown, Chair of the NELAP Accreditation Council, has reached out to these nine (9) laboratories to let them know that we are there to help them transition to another NELAP AB or NGAB if they choose to do so. TNI plans to maintain their accreditation status in LAMS until their current certificate expires at the end of the year. LA DOH will accept NELAP accreditations into its state certification program, so that the twenty-three labs with secondary recognition will need to work with LA DOH to ensure that they remain able to report data to LA DOH's drinking water program.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality continues to be a recognized NELAP accreditation Body for all fields of testing other than drinking water.

TNI Expert Committee Openings

By Paul Junio, Northern Lake Service

TNI's "Procedures for Expert Committee Operations (SOP 2-101)" requires that we annually post the number of openings available for Committee Members for each of our Expert Committees. Regardless of when committee membership changes, members who are interested in participating on committees are encouraged to submit an application. Membership on an Expert Committee can be time-consuming, but also very rewarding. If you feel that you are able to provide input on the basis of your interest category (generally these are Accreditation Body, Laboratory, or Other), and have an interest in joining a committee, the table below shows the number of committee members present on each Expert Committee as of the conclusion of the Winter Meeting, along with the interest category that they represent.

Committees may have from five (5) to fifteen (15) members and must maintain balance among the different stakeholder groups. Balance means that no one stakeholder group represents more than 50% of committee membership. Also, committee membership is limited to no more than two (2) members of the same organization sitting on a particular Expert Committee, unless approved by the TNI Board of Directors. TNI members are allowed to serve on more than one expert committee at a time. Choose wisely if you feel that you can do that!

Committee	AB	Lab	Other	
Asbestos	2	3	2	
Chemistry	5	4	4	
Microbiology	5	4	5	
Quality Systems	4	2	6	
Radiochemistry	4	2	5	
WETT	0	2	2	
PTP Executive Committee	3	3	4	
Laboratory Accreditation Body	4	3	5	
LASEC	4	4	4	
Field Activities	4	4	2	
Stationary Source Audit Sample	2	3	2	
	AB	Lab	Other	PT Provider
PT Expert	3	5	0	3

**The proficiency Testing Expert Committee has an additional interest category for PT Providers.*

All TNI members are welcome to apply by filling out an application. You will be notified that your application has been received. New members are generally added at or during the first expert committee meeting of the calendar year, although they may be added at any time. Expert Committee members serve a three-year term, with the possibility of serving a second consecutive term.

If you have an interest in a committee that is already full or cannot accommodate another person in your stakeholder group, remember that you can also participate as an Associate Committee Member. Any TNI Member can request to become an Associate Member of any Expert Committee, by contacting the Program Administrator or Chair of the particular committee. Associate Members are frequently targeted to become full Committee members – this will likely happen with the WETT Committee due to its large number of Associate Members at the moment. Membership openings on the WETT Committee are exacerbated by memberships not being staggered when the Committee was created 6 years ago.

These numbers are subject to change. With all of that said, if you are interested, but still have questions, feel free to [contact me](#), and I will help where I can.

TNI's Laboratory Accreditation Management System (LAMS) Fully Implemented

By Dan Hickman, TNI

After many years of stops and starts, TNI can finally announce that all Accreditation Bodies (ABs) have uploaded Fields of Accreditation (FOA) for all their laboratories into LAMS. These include Primary and Secondary FOAs. It has been a difficult time because of the different ways ABs store their data. We have fifteen (15) ABs and three (3) Non-Governmental Accreditation Bodies (NGABs), with 1260 active laboratories, and a total of 692,041 Fields of Accreditation records. TNI congratulates the ABs for their continued effort to make this happen.

We encourage laboratories to check their demographic and FOA data in LAMS. Laboratories should contact their AB for corrections to the data. Questions about LAMS or content of the tales should be directed to the LAMS comment form.

Go here to access LAMS: <https://lams.nelac-institute.org/>.

National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC)

Dr. Charlie W. Carter Award

By Lara Phelps, USEPA

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 the environmental 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 National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC) as part of the Environmental Measurement Symposium (Symposium) held jointly with the Forum on Environmental Accreditation. The recipient will provide the Monday Keynote Address at the Symposium, receive free registration for the full Symposium, and be presented with the award in the year that follows the nomination.

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 NEMC website (<http://www.nemc.us>) 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:

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 (2) nominators to complete the submission. Self-nomination is not permissible.

The NEMC Steering Committee, which is made-up of representatives managing the conference in addition to 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.

Member Spotlight:

Michael Michaud

By Zonetta English, Louisville Jefferson Co. MSD

Michael Michaud has had a remarkable career in the environmental industry and has worked in the private and public sector. His wide range of expertise includes: Petroleum, Chromatography, Pharmaceuticals, and Research and Development (R&D). Michael is currently the Manager of the Water Quality Control Division for the City of Abilene, TX. He has been with the City of Abilene for thirty-three (33) years.

Michael has been active with TNI as a member of the Mentoring Subcommittee. He also volunteered to mentor California in its accreditation implementation.

In addition to his busy work schedule, Michael enjoys backpacking, hiking, camping, white water sports, and woodworking. He enjoys eating ethnic foods; his favorites are Greek and Mediterranean. While attending the TNI conferences and meetings, he enjoys exploring with the Katsikis' to find great restaurants.

He has been married to his wife, Gay Lynn, for thirty-eight (38) years. They have three (3) adult children.

When asked *"Why do you support the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program?"* Michael responded, *"To deal with both Environmental and Drinking water issues, all of the data providers must be doing their analysis in similar ways so that problems can be properly diagnosed and solved. Basically, public and environmental safety."*



Michael Michaud