

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**SUMMARY OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Monthly Teleconference Meeting: 866-299-3188/9195415544#
December 21, 2016; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB or Board) teleconference was held on December 21, 2016. The agenda for this meeting is provided as Attachment A, a list of the participants is provided as Attachment B, and action items from the teleconference are included as Attachment C. The official certification of the minutes by the Chair or Vice-Chair is included as Attachment D.

ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTION

Dr. Dallas Wait, Chair of ELAB, and Ms. Lara Phelps, Designated Federal Official (DFO) of ELAB, welcomed participants and guests to the teleconference. Ms. Sally Paustian called the roll of the Board members and guests.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MINUTES

Dr. Wait asked for comments on the November minutes and none were offered. Dr. Brian Buckley moved to accept the minutes; Ms. Sharon Mertens seconded the motion. The Board members unanimously approved the November minutes.

OPENING REMARKS AND UPDATES FROM THE DFO

Ms. Phelps informed the Board that Ms. Lu-Ann Kleibacker has retired and a new alternate DFO has not yet been identified. She expressed gratitude for Ms. Kleibacker's efforts. Ms. Phelps explained that the Office of the Inspector General's review of some of the Agency's Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) committees and boards has been completed, and a draft report of the findings has been issued; the comment period already has closed. The final report is anticipated for release in late January or early February 2017. General ideas regarding best practices were sent to all of EPA's FACA groups. No critical findings were cited, and the report was complimentary to all groups.

TASK GROUP UPDATES ON CURRENT TOPICS

Interagency Data Quality Task Force/Data Quality Objective Process

Dr. Henry Leibovitz reported no updates from this group.

Methods Harmonization

Dr. Wait explained that the response from EPA's Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM) seemed to misinterpret ELAB's recommendations regarding methods harmonization. He asked Ms. Phelps for her advice in dealing with this situation. She responded that the misinterpretation appeared to be happening on both sides. EPA seemed impressed and grateful but was not sure that ELAB understood the Agency's limitations regarding changes. Change may take time and is a complicated process. Dr. Wait thought that ELAB's recommendations

recognized this. As an example, the Agency mentioned that a specific method could not be harmonized, but that is not what the Board had requested. Ms. Phelps theorized that one source of misunderstanding could be that the report is titled “harmonization” when not all requests were for harmonization; the overall theme could be misinterpreted. The Board is welcome to respond in a letter indicating that it had not requested specific method changes.

Ms. Mertens mentioned EPA’s streamlining initiative from the 1990s and wondered whether it would be appropriate to focus on prior work. In response to a question from Ms. Mertens, Ms. Phelps explained that EPA staff do not talk about streamlining as much because that effort did not speed up the process, and the methods have moved on. They are doing a much better job at timing while ensuring any flexibility components are not removed. Ms. Mertens asked for clarification on what else ELAB is asking for and whether the Agency might already be addressing these items. Ms. Phelps explained that the FEM had decided to engage in a flexible approach “crusade,” which involves a webinar series to provide updates and receive feedback. She offered to arrange an exclusive webinar for ELAB.

Ms. Debra Waller commented that EPA is not the only method writer and asked whether other organizations have consistency. She suggested contacting the individuals who had developed methods to determine their thoughts on quality control criteria. Dr. Wait recalled that performance-based measurement system methods provided tables with lists of acceptable *Federal Register*-promulgated alternative methods. Ms. Waller noted that SW-846 includes these types of tables; however, her state cannot use SW-846 for wastewater because it has not been promulgated in the *Federal Register*. Many of the methods are old, so the Board’s efforts may be better spent looking toward the future to help EPA incorporate new technology. Dr. Wait responded that as new concepts come forward, the Board will consider them.

Dr. Wait asked whether the new members of the Board had additional thoughts regarding the letter to EPA. Ms. Waller stated that the concerns with the letter were valid and concurred that EPA had misinterpreted the Board’s request. Dr. Wait asked whether the Board members agreed with Ms. Phelps’ suggestion to write a brief response letter. Dr. Mike Delaney and Ms. Ann Bailey indicated their agreement. Dr. Wait will write the letter.

In-Line and On-Line Monitoring

Mr. Michael Flournoy was unable to attend this call; no updates for this group were provided.

Selected Ion Monitoring (SIM)

Dr. Delaney explained that he had sent documents to the ELAB members on two occasions and received no additional comments since the prior meeting. Dr. Buckley indicated that he had not provided an email response because he planned to provide comments and recommendations during this teleconference. He pointed out that the documents did not include sufficient information on the interferences; he also suggested that terminology for the two modes was used too interchangeably. He recommended that the documents consider interferences as one of the principal drawbacks. He also requested that the documents be more specific about the instruments’ capabilities. Dr. Buckley volunteered to provide written comments to Dr. Delaney via email.

Dr. Leibovitz commended the effort put into these documents, emphasizing that they make significant progress in addressing many unspoken issues in the industry. Dr. Mahesh Pujari added that the group has been working for a long time in an attempt to identify an appropriate analyte with a high enough sensitivity for use of SIM. The effort has been robust to guarantee the compound and ensure that industry has what it needs.

Mr. Brad Meadows discussed control ranges, noting that if the previously stated 20 percent range is applied to ions with an expected abundance greater than 15 percent, zero is overlapped, which is contradictory. Dr. Delaney commented that the Task Group had been trying to balance the potential for false positives and false negatives and had not yet identified the right balance; this is meant to be general guidance for EPA regarding what a SIM method should include. He cited the examples of alternate methods being used in SIM mode rather than in full scan. Dr. Buckley suggested that the document state that full-scan methods can be modified to operate in SIM mode so that the modification aspect is obvious. He does not think that fundamental differences exist among SIM-mode protocols. A Board member remarked that, until the technology has been approved, this type of comment may be premature. Dr. Wait thought that the focus should remain on data quality objectives. Dr. Delaney added that EPA can ask ELAB to follow up on specific techniques. Dr. Buckley noted that the document includes a section outlining its scope and the relevant methods.

Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) Testing

Dr. Wait noted that some new Board members have experience in this area. He will schedule a meeting for the first week of January to discuss the additional comments received and will include Dr. Kim Anderson. Ms. Phelps confirmed that Task Groups must comprise no more than seven ELAB members; therefore, Dr. Anderson is eligible to join.

Cyanide Methodology

Dr. Delaney explained that a meeting of the Task Group has been scheduled for January 9, 2017. He noted that he has been in communication with experts who are willing to participate in this effort. His philosophy regarding this issue is to improve methods, provide specificity when necessary and maintain flexibility when possible, and categorize changes as editorial to facilitate EPA acceptance. He asked whether anyone on ELAB had toxicology experience and could review the material. Dr. Buckley volunteered. Dr. Delaney will continue to gather feedback and provide materials to the Task Group members.

Mr. Meadows noted that he and Mr. Flournoy briefed the American Council of Independent Laboratories Environmental Sciences Section about this effort, and the members are interested in participating. The Task Group can discuss how these experts can best contribute their expertise to the effort. Dr. Delaney added that he plans to perform laboratory work on a simple model system in January. Dr. Wait noted that his company has many toxicologists who could potentially provide their expertise.

NEW TOPICS/ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry (GC/MS) Spectral Libraries

Dr. Pujari provided an overview of his discussions with several important laboratories about GC/MS spectral libraries, and these laboratories agreed that the technology has changed and that mass spectra do not match the libraries. Currently, laboratories must detune their equipment, and they would like to know whether EPA will allow doubling up of tune files with other mass spectra and use of a standard. He suggested writing a letter to the Agency requesting deviation from the tuning of the quadrupole.

Dr. Wait noted that methodologies cannot be changed once they are promulgated. Dr. Pujari agreed and wondered how to increase the sensitivity to allow the use of new technology in EPA-approved methods. Dr. Wait asked the Board members whether ELAB should pursue this issue. He asked Dr. Pujari for clarification because Dr. Wait thought that the original request was in regard to the GC/MS libraries themselves. Dr. Pujari confirmed that was the case but explained that when he spoke with the laboratories, this is the issue that they discussed. Their current actions do not meet the methods requirements. Dr. Wait commented that he did not know how to circumnavigate the requirements. He asked whether holding an off-the-record discussion with appropriate individuals during the face-to-face meeting in January would be an option. Dr. Pujari explained that he would not be able to attend in person, but Dr. Wait could speak to individuals during the meeting.

Drinking Water Certification Officer's Course

Dr. Wait asked whether any Board members had thoughts on the drinking water course information that had been circulated, and Ms. Phelps suggested that the guests provide additional information. Ms. Aaren Alger (Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection) explained that The NELAC Institute Advocacy Committee and EPA had met in August to discuss coordination, and this course was part of the discussion. Several states had questions, which are itemized in the letter that was circulated. Dr. Wait asked how the Board could help. Ms. Alger explained that ELAB should be aware of states' concern. She would like the Board to serve as an advocate and advise EPA on this topic.

Ms. Mertens commented that many of the suggestions are exactly right, noting that online training is the current direction of most programs. Mr. Meadows noted that many programs are rebuilding and asked how the Board can address program deficiencies. Ms. Waller commented on the benefits of the strong camaraderie that comes from taking in-person courses, so she supported the existing structure. She suggested that training could be performed at different locations. For example, mock audits are performed at laboratory facilities. Ms. Patty Carvajal suggested that EPA must consider offering courses more often or changing the structure because many assessors find the current structure stressful and often are not able to attend out-of-state courses.

Dr. Wait asked whether the Board should form a group to explore this issue, which appeared to focus on frequency and location of training, and ultimately provide advice. Ms. Waller did not think that this issue was appropriate for ELAB to address. In response to a question from

Ms. Carvajal, Ms. Phelps explained that it is within the Board's scope because the issue deals with laboratory accreditation. Any Board opinions and advice must be directed to the Agency, but Ms. Alger and other stakeholders could be copied. The ELAB members' consensus was that the Board should provide advice. A Task Group must be established to draft the opinions. Ms. Mertens offered to help or lead the Task Group. Dr. Wait noted that many of the experienced Board members already are leading groups. The following Board members volunteered for this effort: Ms. Carvajal, Mr. Jeff Loewe, Dr. Delaney and Ms. Waller.

Additional Topics/Issues for Consideration

Dr. Delaney informed the Board that the Method Update Rule (MUR) has been prepublished and asked whether it was appropriate to reformulate that Task Group to review the MUR. Dr. Pujari pointed out that this publication is the same as the 2015 MUR, so the Task Group already has reviewed and addressed it. An ELAB member asked whether the Board should review the response to comments. Dr. Wait suggested that ELAB members could personally review the responses rather than the Board formally reviewing them. He noted that any members of the original Task Group who have reviewed the comments could provide a brief, informal update at the next meeting.

Dr. Wait asked Ms. Phelps about the punctuation error in Section 11.3 of Method 6010D that the Board had discussed during its November meeting. She responded that the Board could make EPA aware of the error. Ms. Carvajal explained that the punctuation error changes the intent of instruction, and some accreditation bodies and auditors are citing laboratories because they are not performing the method as written. Ms. Phelps recommended that ELAB write a letter of clarification to convey this issue. Mr. Elan Rieser volunteered to develop the letter and provide it to ELAB to review. Dr. Wait explained that the Board could discuss the letter during the January face-to-face meeting.

PREPARATION FOR THE FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

The next face-to-face meeting will be held on Monday, January 23, 2017, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST in Houston, Texas. At the meeting, the Board will sit in front of an audience and present its current efforts via a PowerPoint presentation. Each Task Group should provide at least one slide detailing its current status to Ms. Kristen LeBaron by January 18 so that she can format and edit the slides. Dr. Wait suggested that Ms. Mertens create a slide outlining the goals for the drinking water group because the Task Group will not have met prior to the face-to-face meeting. He reiterated that it is Ms. Mertens' responsibility to schedule calls with this group.

Dr. Wait asked whether other speakers or items have been planned to fill the block of time because the groups are largely inactive at this time of the year. Ms. Phelps noted that a shorter meeting is acceptable, but she suggested that the Board have an honest discussion about whether the 4-hour block for the winter face-to-face meeting is too much time. The summer meeting usually uses the full time, but the winter one has been shorter recently, so ELAB should reevaluate how long the winter meeting lasts. Dr. Wait recalled that winter meetings were scheduled for 2 hours when he joined the Board, and Ms. Phelps confirmed that the meeting blocks had been shortened for a few years to accommodate other groups, but ELAB members

had indicated that their time had not been equally valued. Dr. Wait reminded Board members that they could call in if they were unable to attend in person.

WRAP-UP/SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

Ms. Paustian reviewed the action items identified during the meeting, which are included as Attachment C.

CLOSING REMARKS/ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Mertens moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Loewe seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:57 p.m.

Attachment A

AGENDA
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD
Monthly Teleconference Meeting: 866-299-3188/9195415544#
December 21, 2016; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Call to Order/Roll Call/Introduction of Guests | Wait/Paustian |
| Approval of Prior Minutes | Wait |
| Opening Remarks and Updates From the DFO | Phelps |
| Updates on Current Topics | |
| Interagency Data Quality Task Force/Data Quality Objective Process: Leibovitz | |
| Methods Harmonization: Wait | |
| In-Line and On-Line Monitoring: Flournoy | |
| Selected Ion Monitoring: Delaney | |
| Whole Effluent Toxicity Testing: Wait | |
| Cyanide Methodology: Delaney | |
| New Topics/Issues for Consideration | Wait |
| GC/MS Spectral Libraries – Task Group? | |
| Drinking Water Certification Officer's Course | |
| Preparation for the Face-to-Face Meeting | Wait |
| Wrap-Up/Summary of Action Items | Wait/Paustian |
| Closing Remarks/Adjournment | Phelps/Wait |

Attachment B

PARTICIPANTS LIST
Board Members

| Attendance (Y/N) | Name | Affiliation |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Y | Dr. A. Dallas Wait (Chair) | Gradient Representing: Consumer Products Industry |
| Y | Dr. Henry Leibovitz (Vice-Chair) | Rhode Island State Health Laboratories Representing: Association of Public Health Laboratories |
| Y | Ms. Lara Phelps (DFO) | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Representing: EPA |
| N | Ms. Lu-Ann Kleibacker (Alternate DFO) | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Representing: EPA |
| N | Dr. Kim Anderson | Oregon State University Representing: Academia—Oregon State University |
| Y | Ms. Ann Bailey | EcoChem, Inc. Representing: EcoChem, Inc. |
| Y | Dr. Brian Buckley | Rutgers Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute Representing: Academia and Laboratory—Rutgers |
| Y | Ms. Patricia (Patty) Carvajal | San Antonio River Authority Representing: Watershed/Restoration |
| Y | Dr. Michael (Mike) Delaney | Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) Representing: MWRA |
| N | Mr. Michael Flournoy | Eurofins Environment Testing USA Representing: American Council of Independent Laboratories |
| N | Dr. Keri Hornbuckle | The University of Iowa Representing: Academia—The University of Iowa |
| N | Dr. Deyuan (Kitty) Kong | Chevron Energy Technology Company Representing: Chevron |
| Y | Mr. Jeff Loewe | NiSource, Inc. Representing: Industry—NiSource, Inc. |
| Y | Mr. Brad Meadows | BSK Associates Representing: Commercial Laboratory—BSK Associates |
| Y | Ms. Sharon Mertens | Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District Representing: The NELAC Institute |
| Y | Dr. Mahesh Pujari | City of Los Angeles Representing: National Association of Clean Water Agencies |
| Y | Mr. Elan Rieser | Con Edison Representing: Utility Water Act Group |
| Y | Ms. Debra Waller | New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Representing: State Government—NJDEP |

PARTICIPANTS LIST (CONT.)
Contractors and Guests

| Attendance (Y/N) | Name | Affiliation |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Y | Ms. Sally Paustian (Contractor) | The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc. (SCG) |
| Y | Ms. Aaren Alger (Guest) | Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection |
| Y | Ms. Amy Dindle (Guest) | Batelle |
| Y | Mr. Joe Lapceovich (Guest) | First Energy |
| Y | Ms. Donna Ringel (Guest) | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 2 |
| Y | Ms. Cathy Westerman (Guest) | Virginia Department of General Services |

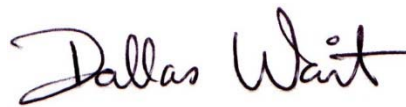
Attachment C

ACTION ITEMS

1. Ms. LeBaron will finalize the November meeting minutes and send them to Ms. Phelps via email.
2. Dr. Wait will compose a one-page letter addressing EPA's response on the Board's methods harmonization recommendations and distribute the letter to the Task Group and ELAB.
3. ELAB members will send their comments on the SIM documents to Dr. Delaney so that the Task Group can incorporate them.
4. Dr. Wait will schedule a meeting of the WET Testing Task Group, including Dr. Anderson, during the first week of January.
5. Dr. Buckley will review the accuracy of the toxicology information in the cyanide document and provide a response to Dr. Delaney; if desired, Dr. Wait may contact toxicology experts at Gradient for additional feedback.
6. A Task Group will draft opinions and advice regarding the Drinking Water Certification Officer's Course. Ms. Mertens will lead the Task Group, which includes Ms. Carvajal, Mr. Loewe, Dr. Delaney and Ms. Waller.
7. Mr. Rieser will develop a letter clarifying the punctuation error in Section 11.3 of Method 6010D and provide it to ELAB to review.
8. ELAB members will provide slides for the face-to-face meeting to Ms. LeBaron by January 18, 2017. Ms. LeBaron will edit and format the slides prior to the face-to-face meeting.
9. *Outstanding action item from November 2016:* The Board will determine whether it will form a Task Group to review the Independent Laboratories Institute's document regarding the addition of microwave and interference-resolving technologies to Method 200.8.

Attachment D

I hereby certify that this is the final version of the minutes for the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board Meeting held on December 21, 2016.



Signature, Chair

Dr. Dallas Wait

Print Name, Chair