

Environmental Measurement Symposium NEMC 2012

Advocacy Support for the Environmental Testing Industry

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Working Together to Protect Our Environment and Improve Our Health

Advocacy Support for the Environmental Testing Industry

The American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL) is the only trade organization representing the commercial laboratory services industry. The Environmental Sciences Section (ESS) is the largest of the sections within ACIL.

Advocacy Support for the Environmental Testing Industry

The ESS represents numerous laboratories and laboratory organizations, both large and small, in the environmental testing sector and represents a majority of the testing revenues committed to protection of human health and the environment.

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One of the major activities of the ESS is advocacy on behalf of all its members and the industry as a whole. Advocacy efforts are directed primarily , but not solely, at federal and state governments.

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ESS Advocacy Effort Focus:

- Method development and improvement
- Industry Surveys
- Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (FAC to EPA)
- Independent Laboratory Institute
- Training, Education and Outreach
- Accreditation

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Method Develop and Improvement

- Response to Method Update Rule (MUR)
- Modifications to Method 624 and 625
 - Independent Laboratory Institute (ILI)

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Industry Surveys

- Member survey (quarterly) on the changes in the industry
- Unfair Competition
- Interactive programs with other trade organizations

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Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board

- Worked with EPA OW regarding use of TNI standard for DW program
- Significant comments on most recent Method Update Rule (MUR); opened dialogue with EPA
- Resurrected revised MDL process
- Ascertained “health” of national accreditation from user community perspective
- Opening dialogue on proposed beach rules

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Independent Laboratory Institute

- Re-organize in early 2012
- Established work group to work with EPA Office of Water on necessary modifications to methods (Methods 624 and 625).

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Training Education and Outreach

- Human Resources
- Benefits Management
- White papers
- “Insights”
 - New product information
 - Technical data

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Accreditation

- TNI participation
- State Involvement
- 3rd Party accreditation

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As an organization ACIL/ESS has been a strong support of a national accreditation program.

TNI Participation

- **Federal level**
- **State government**
- **Information and Training**

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The environmental laboratory accreditation process has been operated and maintained by State regulatory agencies

- Review applications
- Perform assessments
- Manage proficiency test samples
- Charge application fees
- Enforcement if necessary
- Manage renewals and reciprocity

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Factors Effecting NELAP/TNI Standard Implementation

- Direct Participation
 - Regulatory concerns
 - Staffing
 - Training
 - Compliance with standard
- Consistency
- State Economy

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Current economic situation is severely impacting State budgets, affecting the viability of a national accreditation program.

- **Reduced or eliminated ability for out-of-state accreditations (TNI or otherwise)**
- **Compliance with assessment requirements**
- **Qualifications/experience of assessors**

Negatively impacts the ability to verify that laboratories are producing environmental data of known and documented quality

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The ACIL is proposing a solution using a coordinated State level approach to mitigate the accreditation program through a third party process.

- **Eliminates/reduces program costs from State budgets**
- **Will improve administration and operations of the program**
- **Will provide greater consistency for national accreditation**

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Economic benefits to the States include greater licensing fees authorizing laboratories to operate within an individual state.

- States would no longer have to maintain staff or resources to operate much of the program.
- States will still participate in Standards Development and oversee the program; grant accreditation, license 3rd parties, perform enforcement, etc.

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Numerous independent International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), 3rd party accreditation bodies (AB) already exist.

- Typically non-profit
- Non-governmental
- Technical Experts in environmental laboratories sciences
- Utilized in other lab programs (AIHA, food testing, consumer products)

State of Washington, US Department of Defense are already using the 3rd party approach; others are investigating it's use.

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Benefits of a 3rd party accreditation approach for all stakeholders:

- States elimination or minimization of costs
- Operational efficiencies for State programs
- Promotes single internationally recognized quality system standard
- Improved assessment uniformity

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Other benefits for stakeholders include:

- Fields of accreditation would be standardized
- Remove interstate restrictions
- Maintains frequency of assessment as required
- PT uniformity
- States maintain control through fee-based licenses to accredited laboratories and performing needed enforcement for non-compliant laboratory operations

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Continuing benefits for all stakeholders:

- Create effective barrier to prevent laboratories incapable of acceptable performance from initial or continuing accreditation,
- Resolves US EPA concerns resulting from operational disparity in State programs,
- Migration to 3rd party approach will provide employment opportunities in the private sector.

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Conclusion

The ACIL proposal provides a viable solution to the current economic situation that has affected the States ability to effectively operate environmental laboratory programs. The overall economic benefits of this proposal to all stakeholders is considerable. The advantages of the 3rd party approach are numerous without apparent detrimental impact.