

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
Teleconference  
September 19, 2007; 1:00 – 3:00 PM EDT**

The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) meeting was held via regular teleconference on September 19, 2007 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM EDT. The original agenda for this meeting is provided as Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. Items noted for further discussion are included in Attachment C. The official signature of the Chair or Vice-Chair is included in Attachment D.

**INTRODUCTION**

Ms. Lara Autry (USEPA/ORD) welcomed Board members. Ms. Autry then handed the meeting over to the ELAB chair, Dr. Pletl, who took a roll call of the Board. With only six Board members present, the quorum of members of the Board required to hold an official meeting was not met. Those present decided to use the time, however, as an Administrative meeting to share information. Although some good information was shared and noted for a future discussion, no decisions were made, since they did not have enough members present to hold a formal meeting.

There were four guests that participated in the call: Ms. June Flowers representing The NELAC Institute (TNI) Laboratory Accreditation Systems Committee (LASC), Ms. Lynn Bradley representing the Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM's) Communication Action Team (CAT), Mr. Matt Clempson, and Mr. Roger Mus.

**PT INFORMATION**

Ms. June Flowers was introduced, as an invited guest, to share with members some of what has been happening in Florida.

Ms. Flowers told the members that the concern in Florida right now is that there will be cuts for municipal and county labs. She doesn't want to see any close, but it is a possibility. Labs now have 4 performance tests (PT) to do if they are accredited in potable, non-potable, chemicals, and solid waste. Many of the labs are drinking water or wastewater labs. At the TNI committee meeting, the chairman asked if LASC could discuss the issue of using 2 PT per field of testing per year to 1 PT per field of testing per year. We have a wide range of folks on the committee and asked them for their concerns. A main concern was that in making a significant change like this in the standard many parties would like some statistics on failure rates for labs doing just 1 PT versus labs doing 2 or 3 PT tests a year. At this point, we have not been advised by ELAB, but when the topic came up, lots of the non-NELAC folks said one of the big reasons why they don't use NELAC is that they don't have the staff to do 2-3 PT a year and follow ups. They're staying with following EPA's Drinking water and DMR frequency of 1 PT a year. They have to pass one a year.

In summary, the main factors for the states and labs are ever-increasing additions of parameters to PTs, labs doing more PTs, labs are not just doing one PT (e.g., for drinking water) but are doing multiple PTs for water and solids and chemicals, etc. One possibility is to have a different frequency of testing for labs that are doing multiple fields of testing.

Mr. Jeff Lowry asked what Ms. Flowers what she wanted ELAB to do. Ms. Flowers responded that this is a laboratory concern. When labs have a beef about a rule or protocol, they go to ELAB for redress, since ELAB is an advisory board to the Agency. TNI's strategic goals are to increase membership and participation. Ms. Flowers stated that she can't think of a bigger concern of the program than PTs. How

better to encourage membership than to address this? Mr. Lowry noted that he understands this, but wanted to know who at EPA she would like ELAB to contact. Ms. Flowers noted he had a good point since the EPA only requires 1 PT. Maybe ELAB isn't the best group to take this too. Mr. Lowry noted that they can communicate with TNI since TNI is accepted by the EPA.

Dr. Pletl noted something that is related is the issue of DMRQA in the PT program and the overlap that might occur between PT programs and what EPA wants. Mr. Lowry stated that he asked Dr. Carl Kircher about this directly and Dr. Kircher was talking about UCMR PT studies. We can ask Dr. Kircher to clarify this. The reason Dr. Pletl brought this up was that this is something we can provide to EPA as a recommendation. Mr. Eddie Clemons noted that over the years this has been driven by NELAC; some states that were involved from the inception required 2 PT samples so you're fighting the states as opposes to EPA. Dr. Pletl noted that this is a chance to further the goal of getting dual programs removed and getting those labs to move into the TNI program. Dr. Pletl further stated that he thinks it also provides a reason for TNI; and it distinguishes the new TNI from the old NELAC, as we go forward.

Ms. Flowers stated she has heard from others that the DMRQA program is very confusing to the permittees. She wondered why any WP study wouldn't suffice for the DMR. This is maybe something ELAB can address. Mr. Clemons noted that this is two different things; having one PT and asking DMR to adopt. Ms. Flowers commented that no one else is going to make changes to DMRQA program so maybe that is something ELAB can address. Mr. Lowry noted that all ELAB can do is talk to the program. It was noted that ELAB can offer their consensus opinion when they reach one. Dr. Pletl noted that the number of PTs might be influencing the expansion of a national laboratory program. This is something that ELAB can address; it is ELAB's job to advance a national laboratory program, and its part of our charter.

It was asked if EPA has adopted TNI. Ms. Flowers replied that they have not. It was suggested that this should be taken on first. Ms. Flowers replied that the Advocacy Committee is working on this. She received memos from them noting that as long as it is consistent with EPA then it should be recognized. EPA statutory limitations prevent them from coming out more; the only authority they have is the Drinking water recognition process, which TNI has.

Ms. Autry told the team that once a standard is created that meets the needs of other programs within the Agency, even though the Agency doesn't have statutory authority that requires us to run such a program, there is nothing that says we cannot create another step for checks and balance to get better data generation. The EPA has programs, like the Acid Rain program, which buys and sells VOC credits. This program requires knowing that generators of these credits are legit in that they are creating these credits. They are working on an accreditation program so that the persons taking these measurements can be certified. They see this as another threshold in ensuring that they are generating better data. Ms. Lynn Bradley reminded the group that the EPA cannot require something if it creates a sole source. If EPA were to require NELAC accreditation, it would be creating a sole source. Dr. Pletl noted that a way to solve this could be to accept either NACLA or NELAC accreditation. Ms. Bradley replied that would be fine if NELAC is fine with setting themselves up to be competitive. Mr. Lowry noted that NACLA accepts NELAC.

Dr. Flowers gave the group a bit more information about the situation in FL. What has happened is that the Supreme Court of Florida made a ruling a few weeks ago about bonds funding. This will effect how bonds are used to fund government and may invalidate many existing bonds. This will put a great deal of stress on local governments to fund their functions. This could end up having an impact on municipal and county laboratories which will ripple through the budget cycle. Governments will need to find other tax resources to repay the bonds ruled invalid and fund themselves. Labs will be under great stress as they react to budget climate. It was asked what typical labs in FL get accredited for. Members replied that

they do organics, pH, TRC, TSS, nutrients, turbidity. Mr. Lowery noted that this is 5-6 PT and cost about \$300. Dr. Pletl noted that it depends upon labs, some are full service labs. Ms. Flowers replied that it isn't the cost of the PTs themselves, but the staff time.

Dr. Flowers also noted that they have never looked at what 1 versus 2, 3, or 4 PTs a year has on data quality. If ELAB is going to make a recommendation on the number of PTs, it would be good to tie that to data quality. Mr. Clemons asked how this might be done. Ms. Flowers replied that she had considered consulting with one of the states that has a dual PT program and getting input from the PT providers on frequency rate of labs doing 1 or 2 PTs a year to look at the frequency of labs that are suspended and to see if there are more suspended labs only doing 1 PT a year. It was noted that there are more factors that play into measuring quality than just 1 versus 2 PT per year. Dr. Flowers agreed, but noted that it is a good start.

Ms. Autry was asked if the board has restriction on data collection. Ms. Autry replied that they cannot conduct a survey of more than 10 people. She did note that if another organization collects the data and shares it with the group they can use it. Mr. Wyeth suggested that ACIL is willing to do this although they don't touch all the labs discussed. Ms. Flowers noted that the ACIL labs are typically doing 6 PTs year. Mr. Lowery suggested taking what Ms. Flowers was talking about to TNI and requesting them to do it.

Dr. Pletl noted that 2 PTs a year is a negotiated number based on the wants of the states. There is no actual data on the quality. Ms. Flower noted that the old method was 1 WS and 1 WP. Now, EPA issues 2 WS a year, if you fail you have to do another WS six months later. Mr. Wyeth noted that having 2 PT is based on history. It was suggested that TNI needs to look at other PT schema, i.e. those from other countries. CAEAL does 8, 4 twice a year. Mr. Wyeth suggested that they have other issues, they are factories. Almost everyone else does significantly less than we do. For most, as long as you pass, you're good. Mr. Lowery suggested we need to look at CAEAL. Did they have some type of study that brought them to the conclusion that they needed 8 per year? No one knew the answer to this question.

Mr. Wyeth noted that ELAB has been asked to look at fields of testing. Why divide Wastewater and Drinking water when technology is virtually the same for both? Mr. Lowery noted that this goes back to the issue of redundancy in PT programs. The idea of defining a PT matrix and sub-matrices held by the same PT is one way to address this. Another approach suggested is MQO. If you did that, all you would need to show is that you met the MQO. Mr. Wyeth noted that this is right, but we could also resolve if we come to some scientific understanding of uncertainties...this just isn't going to happen. This is something long term we want to keep in mind when we're addressing this.

There are always going to be issues brought up by the community. Are there issues ELAB thinks are important and overarch other issues? If we focus on core issues it could solve some of the other problems. Might be moving mountains but it would have a huge benefit. It was agreed that this is something to consider.

Mr. Lowery wanted to know if there had ever been a letter written to the Agency stating ELAB's position on DQOs and MQOs. Mr. Wyeth replied that we have written letters regarding the entire PBMS process but they didn't get into that level of detail. The data quality discussion has always been a part of the subject; never the main topic.

Another issue that was brought up is different PTs for different techniques, as new technologies are developed more and more PTs are added. Dr. Pletl suggested that a way to get around this is if you meet a standard for accuracy and precision then you don't need PTs for every scenario. Mr. Wyeth suggested that if it was just matrix analytes then setting some sort of MQO could work, but as long as it is methods,

analyte, matrix, and technology then it becomes a much harder issue. Dr. Pletl suggested that with PBMS and people tweaking methods in their laboratories the best way to track down these changes and maintain quality is with MQOs. Mr. Lowery agreed that there is value in that. He noted that based on reading the Homeland Security document, they need to know what they're getting too. All of these sources need to know what they're getting and most of our users don't know what they are getting. Everyone in Florida is focused on Methods Detection Limits, as if that is the quality measurements. Mr. Lowery stated that what Jim is proposing speaks directly to quality, this is more important than the MDLs and many people don't realize this.

#### **NEMC PRESENTATION DISCUSSION**

Ms. Autry noted that she is having a small group discussion next week about putting together the information package they're creating for the public. She hopes to be closer to sharing this information package with the group by their next call. Mr. Lowery asked for more information on what the package will be. Ms. Autry replied that the package is to outline the broader vision of the program and to share what the specific offices are doing based upon what their statutory and regulatory requirements allow them to do. The package is going to be consistent between programs. The hope is to generate interest with stakeholders. Ms. Autry also noted that the FEM wants to hear back if they are going far enough and if people actually will use this. They'd also like people to step up to the plate and test how this will be used.

Ms. Judy Morgan asked Ms. Bradley to talk about what FEM's Communication Action Team (CAT) is doing in regards to the methods clearinghouse. Ms. Bradley stated that CAT has been for the last year and a half creating a methods clearinghouse and expanding the MICE line. CAT developed proposals but was not able to get funding to implement them. Ms. Morgan approached Ms. Bradley at the NEMC meeting regarding ELAB's charge to make the question and answers for methods available. Ms. Morgan was invited to join CAT's meeting last week. The group discussed the history of the project and what was tried, discarded, etc. The group decided to try to expand the webpage that CAT has developed containing links to collections of methods. The idea was to contain a more comprehensive resource of links to the couple of question and answer pages that exist from different Program Offices. The CAT team will ask programs that do not have question and answer pages to create a page or create an email box where questions can be asked and their answers captured. During this discussion, it was suggested that this could be done on a regional level. It also came up that the CAT webpage should have a page of links to regional lab contacts, urls, emails, etc so that if a lab is told contact their EPA region regarding a question they will know exactly whom to contact. Currently stakeholders often just contact whomever they might know and it can take several calls before they get someone who can answer their questions. This will be a low budget version of the clearinghouse. The capture of information may not be as thorough and systematic but it will be an improvement over what we have now.

Ms. Morgan noted this will be much better than what we currently have, which is basically trying to search all over the EPA's website and making calls. A centralized source of information will be good. It may not be exactly what ELAB had outlined but it is a definite coming together of a group of people to bring a centralized source of information to the EPA's website.

Mr. Wyeth asked if there is any chance of the low budget method having a means of maintaining an archive the answers to various questions. Ms. Morgan replied that question and answers will be posted as FAQs something like the MICE line does. Ms. Bradley noted that they won't be able to go back and capture answers that have been given in the past as many programs have not retained documentation on these. The MICE line has retained questions and those are available. We will be able to capture what exists now and going forward. Ms. Morgan and Ms. Autry expressed their excitement about this noting that they are encouraged to hear about a way to move forward. Ms. Bradley is contemplating how to

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reach out to the Regions and carry this to them. Ms. Morgan suggested that Mike Payton is passionate about regional communication and would be a great contact. Ms. Autry and Ms. Bradley discussed the schedule of the regional lab directors and the meeting with ORD and which would be the best to bring this to them. MS. Autry suggested the best bet would be to talk with them on Oct. 17. Ms. Bradley deferred to Ms. Autry's advice.

### **WORKGROUP REPORTS**

Ms. Morgan stated the previous discussion was her report. Mr. Wyeth suggested that we don't have enough people on the call to do these.

### **PENDING AND NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Website**

Dr. Flowers asked for comments on the website. He noted that it looks great. Mr. Wyeth thanked Ms. Autry for reaching out to the right people and getting this done. Ms. Autry apologized that this took so long. She noted that she hasn't heard from all of the board members about their opinion on the websites. At this point, she is planning to go ahead with the current template. It was asked that each of the workgroups look at their section and fill in the holes that currently exist. Ms. Autry asked everyone to think about how they want to populate the website. It is reasonable that Ms. Autry will be asking for data to populate the site in November. She also asked that everyone look over the original write-ups and see if there are any changes needed. Ms. Autry also stated that she is planning for a definitive deadline to maintain and update the site once a month. She noted this means she will need information from the members on a schedule.

#### **TNI meeting**

The TNI is being held in January at Newport Beach, CA. The ELAB meeting is on Wednesday morning and being held concurrently with the Assessor Forum. The open forum is the Tuesday night before. Ms. Autry explained that one of the unfortunate realities in planning this meeting is that problems with travel to the west coast. Many east coast members will have an entire travel day to get here. This means that anything held on Friday would be sparsely attended; therefore, the conference had to be compressed into 4 days. Holding these meetings concurrently was necessary.

Ms. Morgan asked why ELAB has its open forum before its face to face meeting. Ms. Autry explained that at one time there was interest from the board to have their open meeting the night before so that any questions that were brought up could be addressed during the meeting and those issues could be hashed out while everyone was still in town. The idea was this would allow for more face to face discussion and prevent the board from needing to ask people to attend their calls if the board needed more information from them. It was a way to try and generate dialogue. Often issues that came up during the open meeting would be on the agenda for the face to face meeting. Now, more often than not these issues are not addressed during the face to face. Mr. Wyeth noted that Ms. Autry's recollection was exactly correct. He went on to note that it is a different board now and the issues are different. The nature of the questions and concerns at the open meeting is different; they tend to be of a broader nature and are more complex. They are not issues that can be discussed and a conclusion reached in 10 minutes. This schedule does not serve the same purpose now. This will be added to the agenda for discussion at the next meeting. Ms. Autry asked the team to agree to stay with the current format for the Newport meeting as there is little time to make changes to the schedule. The group agreed to this.

### **Homeland Security eLRN**

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Ms. Autry asked if the group would like to have Allan Antley invited to the next meeting. If so, it would be good to have one of the work groups prepared to ask him questions. It was agreed that he would be invited for the November meeting so that ELAB still has October to discuss this document.

Mr. Lowery noted that the security document was pretty well written, there are a few holes but on the whole is pretty fleshed out. Mr. Wyeth raised the concern of laboratories on how to report their data. Mr. Lowery noted that a consistent electronic reporting formatting would solve problems with multiple labs reporting. This is something that ELAB should be concerned about. Reporting needs to be timely and move easily for those who are making the decisions. Mr. Wyeth also noted another issue that has been brought up is the question of how laboratories support their continuing preparedness from a cost perspective. Mr. Lowery agreed that this is not well handled in the report. This is an area where we can help, if Mr. Antley wants our help. Mr. Lowery noted that there needs to be a clearly laid out plan for what the lab is required to do for a QA program, there needs to be a minimal program that is clearly laid out. Mr. Wyeth brought up his concern that the document states that participating labs need not be accredited but they should have QA in place. Mr. Wyeth believes that there should be some sort of accreditation required, especially since much of this data will be electronically reported with only minimal validation.

Mr. Roger Mus from ACLAS noted that his company has a laboratory accreditation program that is recognized by ILAC. One thing they have done is to develop a sector specific accreditation program with a specific set of parameters that apply to that situation. He wanted to know if it was appropriate for him to discuss this with ELAB. Mr. Wyeth replied that this is appropriate. The general topic ELAB has pushed for years is that all laboratories need to have a form accreditation. Mr. Wyeth believes a class specific accreditation is appropriate, he just wants to see labs involved in these types of programs have some sort of accreditation. Mr. Mus brought up the concern of labs, especially smaller labs, about multiple accreditations. Labs have to maintain many different types of accreditation. Is it possible to streamline accreditation? Could labs have one assessment that could work for multiple accreditations? His company is considering offering a joint accreditation where there is one assessor and the result would be multiple accreditations.

Dr. Flowers noted that time is running short and this discussion needs to be shelved so that the remaining agenda items could be discussed.

### **Chair/Vice Chair Selection**

Ms. Autry stated that when the new election is held we need to record what is done so that we do have a process to follow in the future. Ms. Autry committed to drafting a document, as discussed in August, so that we have it to review for the next meeting and the board can vote to enact it.

### **ELAB Measures of Success**

Ms. Autry encouraged everyone to reread Dr. Pletl's email and go to the website he lists. That website has everyone's current contact information and information about the board's goals and achievements. Dr. Pletl asked Ms. Autry if ELAB could take a greater role in adding updates to the website. She noted that there needs to be discussion regarding how the information is formatted and what the measures of success are. If ELAB would like to be more involved in this, Ms. Autry would be thrilled with that.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Dr. Flowers adjourned the Board's informational discussion at 3:05 p.m. EST.

**AGENDA  
for  
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

September 19, 2007; 1:00 – 3:00 PM EDT

Conference Call

Call in number: 1-866-299-3188; code 9195415544#

|    | Topic  | Individual Responsible   |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | Opening Remarks  | DFO  |
| 2  | Roll Call for ELAB Members<br>Introduction of Guests   | Chair  |
| 3  | Approval of or changes to Previous Meeting/Call Minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August 15, 2007</li> </ul>  | Chair  |
| 4  | Boston meeting review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Forum <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. # PTs/year</li> <li>2. Hexavalent Chromium holding time</li> <li>3. Role of DMR QA, privatization</li> <li>4. Redundancy in accreditation/PT programs</li> </ol> </li> <li>• ELAB meeting <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comments on structure, time, etc.?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>  | Chair<br>All<br><br>All  |
| 5  | Performance Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEMC presentation discussion</li> <li>• Next steps?</li> </ul>   | Chair<br>All<br>All  |
| 6  | Work Group Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring Work Group</li> <li>• Laboratory Management Work Group</li> <li>• Measurement and Technology Work Group</li> </ul>  | Chair<br>Morgan<br>Flowers<br>Lowry  |
| 7  | Pending and New Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comments</li> <li>2. Approve website for release?</li> <li>3. Next steps – assignments for missing information</li> </ol> </li> <li>• TNI/ELAB Meeting in January <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proposed schedule</li> <li>2. comments</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Homeland Security eLRN</li> <li>• Chair/Vice Chair selection process</li> <li>• New Jersey Air Methods and ELAB charter</li> <li>• ELAB Measures of Success</li> </ul> | Chair<br>All<br>All<br>All<br>DFO/Chair<br>All<br>All<br>All<br>Chair/Vice-Chair<br>All<br>Chair |
| 8  | Comments and/or Additional Issues  | All  |
| 9  | Open Discussion and Comments from additional Guests  | All  |
| 10 | Review Action Items and Assignments  | Chair  |
| 11 | Adjourn/Closing Remarks  | Chair/DFO  |

## Attachment B

**MEMBERSHIP LISTING AND GUESTS****ELAB MEETING****September 19, 2007; 1:00 – 3:00 PM EDT**

| <b>Attendance<br/>(Y/N/Guest)</b> | <b>Name</b>                   | <b>Affiliation</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Y                                 | Mr. Robert (Bob) K. Wyeth     | Severn Trent Laboratories<br>Representing: ACIL  |
| Y                                 | Ms. Lara P. Autry, DFO        | US Environmental Protection Agency<br>Representing: EPA  |
| N                                 | Mr. Gerald (Gary) Dechant     | Analytical Quality Associates, Inc.<br>Representing: DOE Analy. Mgmt. Pgm.                                       |
| N                                 | Mr. Paul Banfer               | EISC (Environnemental Info. Sys. Corp.)<br>Representing: Information Systems                                     |
| N                                 | Mr. James (Jimmy) Jordan      | Bechtel Jacobs, Inc.<br>Representing: Large Go's Contractors   |
| N                                 | Mr. Rock Vitale               | Environmental Standards, Inc.<br>Representing: Third Party Assessors   |
| Y                                 | Mr. Eddie Clemons             | Golden Specialty Laboratory<br>Representing: INELA   |
| N                                 | Mr. Scot Cocanour             | Promium<br>Representing: Lab. Customers of Information<br>Technology   |
| Y                                 | Dr. Jeff Flowers (Vice-Chair) | Flowers Chemical Laboratories, Inc.<br>Representing: Elected Officials for Local Gvt                             |
| N                                 | Dr. Reza Karimi               | Southwest Research Institute<br>Representing: Non-profit Research and<br>Development Organizations with Academia |
| Y                                 | Mr. Jeff Lowry                | Environmental Resource Associates<br>Representing: Proficiency Testing Providers                                 |
| Y                                 | Ms. Judy Morgan               | Environmental Science Corp.<br>Representing: Commercial Env. Lab.  |
| N                                 | Mr. Joe Pardue                | Parallax, Inc.<br>Representing: Clients of QS Services   |
| N                                 | Ms. Nan Thomey                | Environmental Chemistry, Inc.<br>Representing: Small Laboratories  |
| Y                                 | Dr. Jim Pletl (Chair)         | Hampton Roads Sanitation District<br>Representing: Municipal Env. Lab.   |
| Guest                             | Ms. Lynn Bradley              | US Environmental Protection Agency<br>FEM Communication Action Team, invited                                     |
| Guest                             | Ms. June Flowers              | LAMC committee, guest  |
| Guest                             | Mr. Matt Clempson             | Guest  |
| Guest                             | Mr. Roger Mus                 | Representing: ACLSS, guest   |

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Attachment C

**ITEMS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

1. ELAB members were asked to review the ELAB website and think about how they want to populate the website.
2. Ms. Autry will ask Allan Antley to join ELAB's November meeting to discuss with members the Homeland Security document.
3. Ms. Autry will develop a Chair/Vice Chair Selection Process document for the group to review at the next meeting.
4. ELAB members were asked to review Dr. Pletl's email to them and look at the listed website so that the group could discuss their involvement in these annual updates.

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Attachment D

I hereby certify that these are the final version of minutes for the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board Meeting held on September 19, 2007.

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Signature Chairman

James J. Pletl, Ph.D.

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Print Name Chairman