

*NAPT—working for you***The agricultural laboratory connection**

Did you know there is a program to help soil, plant, and water-testing laboratories ensure that their testing methods meet quality control standards? The North American Proficiency Testing (NAPT) program does this through exchanges and a statistical evaluation of the analytical data. The program guidelines have been developed for the agricultural laboratory industry by representatives from groups familiar with and involved in standardizing methods and developing nutrient recommendations for soil and plant analysis methods within the U.S. and Canada.

Quarterly soil, plant, and water samples are shipped to participating laboratories and analyzed. Results are then sent to the coordinator, who statistically evaluates the data and provides each laboratory with a scorecard of its performance relative to other laboratories performing the same analyses. The resultant information supplies an instructional base for improving performance not only in each laboratory, but for the entire soil- and plant-testing community.

The NAPT program collaborates with multiple state agency programs, namely Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, and Ontario in their laboratory certification process. The March 2008 newsletter posted on the NAPT website ([www.naptprogram.org](http://www.naptprogram.org)) contains contact information for each state or province. The Proficiency Assessment Program (PAP) is an additional service offered to laboratories reporting quarterly soil results to the coordinator. PAP is the soil test assurance program required by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of laboratories involved with federal government nutrient management plans in several western U.S. states. The NRCS has acknowledged NAPT-PAP as a fundamental block in Nutrient Management Conservation Practice Standards, S590. A listing of certified PAP laboratories is available on the website.

**Oversight of the program**

SSSA representatives, an oversight committee, and the NAPT coordinator jointly govern the NAPT program. Janice Kotuby-Amacher, the coordinator, manages its daily operations and preparation of the proficiency samples. The oversight committee sets program policy, establishes technical guidelines, and assists SSSA in the selection and evaluation of the coordinator. The 20 members on the committee represent both private and public sectors committed to ensuring the quality of soil and plant analysis. SSSA staff administer the program, manage collection and disbursement of funds, and provide web assistance.

The group invites crop advisers to take advantage of the resources the NAPT program offers. Subsequent articles in *Crops & Soils* will enhance understanding of soil reports and laboratory methods utilized in various regions. Requests from crop advisers are welcomed. Visit the NAPT website at [www.naptprogram.org](http://www.naptprogram.org) for more information and to view a list of participating laboratories.

For more information, contact Dr. Don Horneck, NAPT Chairman, at 541-561-4376; Dr. Janice Kotuby-Amacher, NAPT Coordinator, at 435-764-7643; or Melissa Fall, SSSA-NAPT Service Representative, at 608-268-4972. ■

**Alabama CCAs gain recognition**

Alabama CCAs just gained more value and recognition for being certified through the hard work of their certifying board and chairman, Joe Touchton. Earlier this summer, the Alabama CCA program entered into a cooperative agreement with the Alabama Department of Agriculture to recognize Alabama CCAs as being qualified for commercial pesticide applicator permits. The Alabama commercial applicators' examination is waived for current Alabama CCAs.

"The new arrangement will simplify the record keeping for those who have both a CCA certification and commercial pesticide applicator permit," Touchton explains. "A CCA will still need to apply for the permit; it is not automatic, but if their CCA [status] is current, then the pesticide applicators' exam is waived."

The agreement covers three categories of commercial pesticide applicator permits: agricultural plant pest control, demonstration and research pest control, and ornamental and turf pest control. Forms for permits and additional information can be obtained by contacting Debbie McClain at [Debbie.McClain@agi.alabama.gov](mailto:Debbie.McClain@agi.alabama.gov) or 334-420-7240.

Although Alabama CCAs will get the commercial pesticide applicators' examination waived, they will still be required to apply for the permit and pay the associated fees and renewals. Continuing education units (CEUs) earned in the CCA Integrated Pest Management category will be honored by the Department as meeting the CEU requirements for the pesticide applicator permit.

"Each January, [the Alabama CCA program] will report to the Department those CCAs with active status and have their pesticide applicator permit through their association with the CCA program," Touchton says. "An active [CCA] status will substi-

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