

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item

SUBJECT: Presentation of the 2022 Laboratory of the Year

FOR: April, 2022 Board meeting

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Steve Geis, Certification Services Section Chief

SUMMARY:

The Department annually presents the registered Laboratory of the Year Award to Wisconsin's best registered laboratories for their outstanding commitment to producing high quality data. Registered laboratories perform testing solely on behalf of their own facility or municipality, or a subsidiary or corporation under common ownership or control. There are over 200 registered laboratories that were eligible to win the award this year.

The 2022 Registered Laboratory of the Year Award will be presented to Alliant Energy – Columbia Energy Center.

The nomination paper is included in the attached memorandum.

RECOMMENDATION: Information only

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):

- Background memo
- Nomination paper

- Type name of attachment if applicable
- Type name of attachment if applicable

Approved by	Signature	Date
Greg Pils - Director, Environmental Analysis & Sustainability Bureau	DocuSigned by: <i>Gregory Pils</i> E78D5100CF19450...	3/7/2022 11:20 AM CST
Dave Siebert - Administrator, External Services Division	DocuSigned by: <i>David Siebert</i> D2E3F67B71CE4F2...	3/7/2022 11:24 AM CST
Preston D. Cole, Secretary	DocuSigned by: <i>Sarah Barry</i> A7D70DC3770642F...	3/7/2022 12:42 PM CST

cc: Board Liaison – AD/8

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WJR

by Sarah Barry

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2022 Wisconsin DNR

Registered Laboratory of the Year

Instruction and Nomination Forms

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is asking for nominations for registered laboratories that are worthy of receiving the prestigious “Registered Laboratory of the Year (LOY)” award. This award is presented annually* in order to recognize registered laboratories for their outstanding commitment to producing high quality data.

Notes:

- Nominees for the award must be registered laboratories located in the State of Wisconsin.
- Certified laboratories are not eligible and therefore will not be considered.
- Laboratories may be nominated multiple times and can win the award more than once.
- A LOY awards committee will choose the winner.
- Nominations can be made by anyone with the exception that laboratories may not nominate themselves.
- The audit report from the most recent WI DNR laboratory evaluation will be used as part of the nomination package.

Nominating a registered laboratory for the 2020 Laboratory of the Year Award:

1. Complete the Nomination Form presented on the next two pages of this document.
2. Write a summary describing the reasons why you are nominating the laboratory. In the summary, please address the questions asked. Answers to these questions will be used in choosing the winner. Each question may not apply to all labs. If a question does not apply then it does not need to be answered. Please limit the summary to two pages or less.
3. Please submit the completed Nomination Form to Steve Geis by **December 14, 2021** to:

By mail Wisconsin DNR
Laboratory of the Year Award
c/o Steve Geis
101 S. Webster St.
Madison, WI 53707

By email steven.geis@wisconsin.gov

* The Laboratory Certification and Registration Program reserves the right to decide if awards will be issued or not.



*2022 Wisconsin DNR
Registered Laboratory of the Year
Nomination Form – Lab Data Sheet*

Due December 14, 2021

Name of Laboratory	Alliant Energy – Columbia Energy Center
Laboratory Manager	Diane Foreman
Key Laboratory Employees	Greg Eden, etc.
Laboratory Address	W8375 Murray Road Pardeeville, WI 53954
Laboratory Phone Number	(608) 742-0712
Nominator (your name)	Autumn Farrell
Your Affiliation with Laboratory	Last auditor
Your Address	1155 Pilgrim Road Plymouth, WI 53073
Your Phone Number	(920) 400-9191
Your Email Address	Autumn.farrell@wisconsin.gov
Is a 1-2 page summary attached that answers the questions asked on the next page?	Yes.

Nomination Form – Question / Answer sheet
for the WDNR 2022 Laboratory of the Year Award:

Please provide an answer for each one of the questions listed below (unless it is not applicable). Specific examples are always helpful.

Limit your reply to these questions to 2 pages

1. Does the lab have a strong, working quality system? [*Discuss what makes that system effective and stand out.*]

There are many additional QC being analyzed just so that the lab feels more confident in the results. The lab does an excellent job of documentation. They spend considerable time evaluating the data to ensure they are operating at a high level. They also work to be proactive and make their processes more efficient. During the on-site evaluation, everyone interviewed showed a strong commitment to being the best.

2. How does the lab respond to quality system “failures”? [*Discuss what triggers the lab to take action.*]

The lab is very good at documenting and following up on all QC failures and all out-of-the-ordinary incidents in the lab. They take all deviations very seriously and are very transparent with any issues they have. They also enter any applicable issues into a software system to schedule work and track fixes and costs. The lab does not often encounter quality system failures since they are very proactive and take action when data starts to approach limits.

3. Does their corrective action program conform to the Plan-Do-Check-Act approach, or something else? [*Describe the lab’s model for corrective action and whether it incorporates proactive checks, feeds back to the analysts, and results in continuous improvement. Please provide an example.*]

The facility monitors and tracks many systems to not only identify potential problems, but also improve performance. It is rare for a recurrence of issues since the lab does a thorough job of investigating the root cause and ensuring corrective actions resolve the issues. Also, all testing issues are discussed at daily lab meetings which also helps to determine if issues are isolated events or recurring issues that need further investigation.

4. Does the quality system consider things beyond failure of quality control samples?

The facility closely monitors all of the sample results to ensure any adjustment to BOD or TSS volumes are made appropriately. All data is reviewed for trends or anomalies.

5. Do they have any unique practices to proactively avoid problems?

The lab does utilize control charts for HEM. The lab takes many measures to track and monitor its systems. Additionally, they perform extra hexane rinses of the Horizon apparatus used for HEM to ensure quantitative transfers which has resulted in improved recoveries. The lab is also very good at performing preventative maintenance on lab equipment.

6. Do they have any innovative solutions to common lab problems?

7. Is the lab successful because of a single (or small number of) analyst(s), or is it because of a corporate/municipal culture and support system?

The Columbia Lab is mostly successful because of a small number of analysts. It is the lab's responsibility to completely understand, sample, perform, and report all laboratory testing results. Alliant Energy corporation ensures that the lab has the monetary resources to properly conduct all analyses.

8. Describe the lab's training program for new staff. [*If there was a major staff changeover, is there a sufficient trail of bread crumbs to guide the replacements?*]

9. Does the lab communicate with DNR staff when issues/questions arise? Give examples (*check with other LabCert staff members as they may have contact with the lab as well*).

The lab has reached out to me with questions regarding the revised MDL procedures and on what acceptable modifications may be made to methods.

10. Has the lab made significant strides since its last audit? [*Does the lab deserve special consideration for its efforts to improve or overcome difficult circumstances? Give examples.*]

Their most recent audit resulted in no deficiencies. The audit before that had only a few deficiencies, which were effectively resolved. I have nominated this lab after both of

my last two audits. I am impressed with their attention to detail and desire to operate at the highest level.

11. What makes this lab stand out from others?

During the audit, it was obvious that this lab was part of a culture of continuous improvement. The staff that I spoke with asked very good questions related to compliance, but also asked many questions on how they could improve on what they were already doing. Even though the facility is expected to be decommissioned in three years, the lab staff is still looking for ways to improve the current testing.

I was impressed with how knowledgeable the staff is. While interviewing Greg, he was clearly aware of all of the method requirements even though he rarely, if ever, encounters some of the issues with the facility's samples. For example, the lab does not need to use BOD sample volumes of less than 10 mL, but he knows pre-dilutions must be made if using less than 3 mL. Also, the facility's samples for TSS have never even approached the maximum residue allowed, but Greg immediately knew what the maximum is. It is not common for lab staff to know some of these requirements when they don't have to normally worry about them.

This is a registered lab, but they strive to be as good as or better than a commercial lab. I believe they operate at a higher quality level than some commercial labs than I have audited.

I asked the lab why they think they would deserve the Lab of the Year nomination, and one thing they said was, "One of our company's core values is to "Act for Tomorrow" by using our resources wisely, caring for the environment, and continuously improving ourselves and our company."

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