The intent of this article is to help you, our customers and stakeholders, to understand what we do and why we do it. The NIST Weights and Measures Division works under the authority of Federal Law, as enumerated in the Constitution and made explicit in the Organic Act (U.S. Code-Title 15 Section 271 “NIST Act”), and excerpts follow below that pertain to the work we do.

The Organic Act reads:

“(b) The Secretary of Commerce (‘Secretary’) acting through the Director of the Institute (‘Director’) and, as appropriate, through other officials, is authorized to take all actions necessary and appropriate to accomplish the purposes of this Act, including the following functions of the Institute— …

(9) to assure the compatibility of United States national measurement standards with those of other nations;

(10) to cooperate with other departments and agencies of the Federal Government, with industry, with State and local governments, with the governments of other nations and international organizations, and with private organizations in establishing standard practices, codes, specifications, and voluntary consensus standards; …

(c) In carrying out the functions specified in subsection (b), the Secretary, acting through the Director and, if appropriate, through other appropriate officials, may, among other things— …

(4) cooperate with the States in securing uniformity in weights and measures laws and methods of inspection.”

The Organic Act can be found in its entirety at: 

NIST also has a duty under the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act (FPLA) to
Based in part on the authority and responsibilities listed above, the Division has adopted the following mission:

To improve the accuracy of measurements, enhance consumer protection, foster fair competition, and facilitate economic growth and trade through technical activities that promote uniformity in national and international legal metrology laws, regulations, standards, test procedures and enforcement.

The work we do as a Division is focused on this mission. It includes the publication of test procedures, guidelines, field manuals and other documents, the training of administrators, metrologists, field inspectors and related industry personnel, responding to thousands of technical inquiries and requests for information, and participation in the development of technical standards related to legal metrology. Our standards development work involves participation in a number of organizations, such as ASTM, OIML and NCWM. The role of the Division is slightly different for each of these organizations. For instance, in OIML, we represent U.S. positions in an international forum based on the input we receive from industry, regulators and others. In the NCWM, our role has evolved over the years since NCWM became incorporated after being sponsored by NIST. We have changed from being somewhat of a "parent" figure to more of a mentor or advisor. Therefore, it may be of value now to clearly define and restate what we do as Executive Secretary, Technical Advisors, and as members of NCWM. It is also important to note that the success of our work depends on the cooperative relationships we develop with our customers and stakeholders.

As Executive Secretary, we publish the agendas and reports of the Conference, as well as the NIST Handbooks that are adopted through the NCWM process. The staff time associated with this task is large and uses a significant percentage of our resources.

As part of our mission, we participate in technical activities that promote uniformity. One of our roles within the NCWM is to serve as Technical Advisors, providing technical expertise and advice to the membership. We do this by serving on technical committees, publishing technical articles and by speaking during the open hearings and committee work sessions on the technical merit of a proposed item. Our goal is to highlight the technical integrity or lack thereof in any proposal, rather than to be seen as taking sides on any given issue. We will also indicate whether we believe that a proposal, as written, will lead to more or less uniformity across the country. We strive to limit our input to information based on fact, or research, and resist being drawn into discussions outside of this realm. But even when talking about

"(a) A copy of each regulation promulgated under this chapter shall be transmitted promptly to the Secretary of Commerce, who shall (1) transmit copies to all appropriate State officers and agencies, and (2) furnish to such State officers and agencies information and assistance to promote to the greatest practicable extent uniformity in State and Federal regulation of the labeling of consumer commodities."

Calendar 2010

April 12 - 16 SEMAP Gaithersburg, MD
April 22 Webinar: Documenting Traceability and Calibration Intervals NIST/WMD
April 29 Webinar: Internal Auditing NIST/WMD
May 3 - 7 WRAP Gaithersburg, MD
May 10 - 13 Northeastern Weights & Measures Association - Annual Meeting Groton, CT
May 16 - 20 Central Weights & Measures Association Annual Meeting Springfield, IL
May 17 - 21 Basic Mass - Industry Gaithersburg, MD
May 27 Webinar: Supplier Evaluation NIST/WMD
June 3 Webinar: Basic Uncertainty Concepts NIST/WMD
June 7 - 11 CAMAP Gaithersburg, MD
June 22 - 26 Laboratory Administration Seminar Austin, TX
July 1 Webinar: PT Analysis NIST/WMD
July 8 Webinar: Measurement Assurance Basics NIST/WMD
technical issues, there can be disagreement over what is the best course of action. The final decision on whether any proposal is ready to be put forward as a voting item rests with the appropriate standing committee, and the decision to adopt an item rests with the voting membership.

We provide to the U.S. citizens and branches of government advance notification of proposals to change rules affecting commerce to promote uniformity and allow due process through notices published in the *Federal Register*. When we publish the *Federal Register* notice announcing the Interim or Annual Meeting, we include this excerpt for legal reasons: “Publication of this notice on the NCWM’s behalf is undertaken as a public service; NIST does not endorse, approve, or recommend any of the proposals contained in this notice or in the publications of the NCWM mentioned below.” This is intended to clarify that NIST did not necessarily write or create the items and, therefore, does not claim ownership. It should not be misinterpreted to mean that we cannot speak to the items individually during the open hearings.

Our intent is to provide impartial technical input while staying within the boundaries of our authority. We also take seriously concerns about our giving the appearance of doing otherwise. Our collaborations are easy when we reach the same conclusions in our analysis. However, when we differ on the technical merits of a Handbook proposal, as the document’s publisher, we have a responsibility and right to voice our concerns. This is part of the open discussions that have been encouraged in the weights and measures standards development process since 1905. As members of NCWM, we are all striving to be civil when providing input and graceful in our acceptance of constructive criticism.

By explaining to you our purpose and goals as Executive Secretary, Technical Advisors, and members of the NCWM, we hope to facilitate open dialogue regarding our participation in the NCWM and its limitations. We also hope you have a better understanding of our role in the weights and measures system, and we welcome questions, comments and feedback.

**W&M NEWS WEB LINKS**

**Investigation Finds Frozen Seafood Packages Over Weight with Icy Excess**


**Department Makes Sure Oklahoma Scales Measure Up**

http://newsok.com/article/3447216

**Seafood: Ripped Off by Ice**

http://abcnews.go.com/WN/investigators-found-seafood-companies-count-ice-weighing-pricing/story?id=10244900

If you know of a weights and measures topic that has made the news, pass it on to the editor at: linda.crown@nist.gov
Publication 16
NCWM Committee
Reports for the
95th Annual Meeting

For those of you that are planning to attend or just interested in the topics and issues that are under discussion and consideration at this year’s National Conference on Weight and Measures (NCWM), Publication 16 will be available in electronic format between April 16 – 20, 2010. Please stop at our website homepage (www.nist.gov/owm) and look for the link.

This year’s Conference is being held July 11 – 15, 2010, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Additional information regarding the Conference can be obtained at the NCWM website www.ncwm.net or by contacting the Conference directly at 402-434-4880.

Spring has Sprung!

Ah, at long last the winter is over in the Atlantic Middle States. It is time to get those barbecue grills out of the basements and garages and grill that perfect steak. Remember to observe all safety rules. The New York City Fire Department has a great webpage with safety tips for grill safety at: www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/html/safety/barbeque.shtml

In the Field

Is there a W&M topic that you would like to have appear in the Weights and Measures Connection?

How can we better serve our W&M community?

Do you have a safety tidbit to share?

Do you have a W&M event that you wish to post in the Connection’s calendar?

Submissions can be sent to the Editor, Linda Crown at Linda.Crown@nist.gov

Calendar 2011

January 23 - 26
NCWM 96th Interim Meeting
Dallas, TX

Webinars are conducted by the WMD Laboratory Metrology Group. You can get additional information by contacting Val Miller at: 301-975-3602 or by e-mail at: val.miller@nist.gov

Additional details on the above calendar items can be found at: http://ts.nist.gov/WeightsAndMeasures/calendar3.cfm