

## **Office of Operator Certification (OOC)**

### **Drinking Water Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee**

#### **Meeting Minutes – April 2023**

**Meeting Date: Wednesday April 5, 2023**

**Attendees: Advisory Committee Members**

**Michael Maestas, Chris Castaing, Jim McVeigh, Dan DeMoss, Gregory Williams, Ramzi Mahmood, Jose Martinez, Tai Tseng, John Brady, Steven Garner**

**State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)**

**Christine Gordon, Doug Wilson, Valerie Gregory, Jaime Marotte, Bonnie Sutherland, Julie Osborn, Bryan Elder, Tomas Eggers, Brian Bernados**

#### **Item 1 – Introductions**

- Christine Gordon, Assistant Deputy Director, Operator Certification Program acted as moderator for this meeting. Meeting was held via Video/Teleconference and in-person for California-Nevada Section American Water Works Association (CA-NV AWWA) at the CA-NV AWWA 2023 Spring Conference at Town and Country Hotel in San Diego, CA. Introduced Waterboards staff and Advisory Committee Members.

#### **Item 2 – Agenda Review**

#### **Item 3 – Public Comments**

- There were no public comments.

#### **Item 4 – Enforcement Update – Bryan Elder and Tomas Eggers - State Water Board Office of Enforcement**

- The Office of Enforcement (OE), Special Investigations Unit (SIU) investigates complaints against operators and systems. OE is currently investigating ten (10) open cases: four (4) cases in Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) and six (6) cases in Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP).

## **Office of Operator Certification (OOC)**

### **Drinking Water Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee**

#### **Meeting Minutes – April 2023**

The open cases involve exam misconduct, misrepresentation of experience hours, failure to maintain Chief Plant Operator status, and other categories not yet determined.

OE recently closed 16 cases: ten (10) cases in WWOCP and six (6) in DWOCP. The closed cases involved operator and exam misconduct, lab reporting, and misrepresentation of experience hours. OE took actions that include revocation, reprimands, referrals, and notices of violation. Double counting of experience hours across distribution, treatment and wastewater certifications was noted.

#### **Item 5 – Recycled/Advanced Water Treatment Operator – Steven Garner CA-NV AWWA**

- Advanced Water Treatment (AWT) Program Grades 3-5. Operators must be certified at minimum Drinking Water Treatment Operator Grade 3 level or Wastewater Operator Grade 3 level to be eligible. Currently, there is a total of 152 AWT certified operators at the Grade 3 (90), Grade 4 (40), and Grade 5 (22) level.

#### **Item 6 – Regulatory Update from Division of Drinking Water (DDW) (Surface Water Augmentation, etc.) – Brian Bernados – DDW**

- Direct Potable Reuse (DPR) requires AWT certification. DDW/DPR is DDW's highest priority. Actual permitting of AWT/DPR Ductile Iron Pipe Research Association (DIPRA) systems is 1-2 years out. DIPRA CPO and Shift Operators will need to hold an AWT Grade 5 CA-NV AWWA certificate. Formal rulemaking process will occur soon with a 45-day public comment period. Onsite treatment and reuse for non-potable in high rises, multifamily dwellings, and commercial buildings will occur by the end of 2023. Cross Connection Control Policy handbook with testing and

## **Office of Operator Certification (OOC)**

### **Drinking Water Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee**

#### **Meeting Minutes – April 2023**

certification criteria will be available by the end of 2023. Lead and Copper EPA improvements compliance date set for 2024. Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) revisions are continuing to see if we can get closer to public health goals. It was stated that tertiary should be considered DPR.

#### **Item 7 – Program Update – Christine Gordon, Assistant Deputy Director, Operator Certification Program**

- Translating exams into other languages (Spanish). Which grade levels? Presumably lower grade levels. Barriers to entry? Advancement? Requesting feedback?
- Operator Certification reorganization explained – functionality over program.
- Tentative date for DWOCP and WWOCP Joint Advisory Committee meeting late June 2023. June 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for sub workgroup committees to bring forth recommendations. Exam and certification approval numbers are holding steady despite staffing challenges. Computer based testing (CBT) pass/fail rates in line with paper exam (pre-2020) pass/fail rates. Grade T5 oral exams will be held August 7 -9, 2023 -8/9/23 (Northern) and August 14 – 16, 2023 (Southern). Exam application postmark deadline is June 2, 2023.
- Online Application Submittal Portal for drinking water operator examinations Grades 1 and 2 (D1, D2, T1, T2) estimated date to go live is Fall 2023. Higher grade examinations and certifications are estimated to be completed in 2024.
- Operator certification customer service survey – everyone asked to complete survey.
- Sub work groups presented updates

## **Office of Operator Certification (OOC)**

### **Drinking Water Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee**

#### **Meeting Minutes – April 2023**

##### **A. Guidelines for Operator Experience– Mike Maestas**

Experience recommendations presented from sub workgroup. Citing technological advancements in the water industry, recommending operators receive experience credit on both treatment and distribution sides of the house. No mention of non-potable (wastewater, sewer, collections, etc.) certifications.

##### **B. AB 1588 Military Experience/Education– Steve Garner**

Recommendations will be finalized September 2023. The sub work group verified other states requirements and how experience is evaluated. Pilot evaluations are being conducted.

##### **C. One Water Regime – John Brady**

The sub workgroup is using the strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats (SWOT) methodology to evaluate the one water concept. John talked about direct potable reuse, advanced water treatment, drinking water, and wastewater. There are more commonalities between drinking water treatment (DWT) and wastewater treatment (WWT) although there are some that are exclusive to each. Recycling plants allow certified DWT operators to work recycled operator duties. More coordination between drinking water and wastewater operations is needed, and reuse – where we are drawing from now can be used as potable or non-potable. The group found that most DW and WW facilities classifications are generally level. Need to meet the standards to protect public health and will continue to review regulations and best practices in DW and WW, looking at other states to add comparison and identify best practices. Already have recommendations on regulation changes that have not yet been drafted.

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)**

**Drinking Water Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee**

**Meeting Minutes – April 2023**

**D. Operator in Training (OIT) Requirements/Experience – Chris Castaing**

Working on evaluating and adopting an amendment to WW OIT qualifications while keeping public health and safety a priority. Looking at changing educational credits.

**Item 8 – Schedule Joint Advisory Committee Meeting to discuss potential recommendations from the sub workgroups – Late June 2023 (tentative)**

Any member of the public may address the Committee on any matter within the Committee's jurisdiction that is not on the agenda. Comments will be limited to three minutes per speaker or otherwise at the discretion of State Water Board Staff. Members of the public are encouraged to provide their comments in writing to the Committee members and State Water Board staff.