

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP)
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes December 4, 2019

Attendees:

Advisory Committee Members who were present: Jeff Carson, Steve Krai, Tyson Neely, and Josh Vieira, and Rochelle Verspui.

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Staff: who were present: Christa Beck, Gabriel Berzamina, Annette Caraway, Janice Chang, Neal Funston, Valerie Gregory, Darrell Jennings II, Jaime Marotte, Nichole Morgan, Julie Osborn, Christopher Stevens, and Bonnie Sutherland.
Office of Enforcement (OE) Special Investigations Unit (SIU) Staff: Bryan Elder, Jim Fischer, Jamie Johnson

Members of the public that were present: Norah Duffy, Director of Certification, California Water Environment Association (CWEA), and Steve Garner, Certification Manager, California – Nevada American Water Works Association (CA/NV AWWA).

Those who attended by phone were: Advisory Committee Members: Chelsey Charbonneau Erickson (on behalf of Dr. Ramzi Mahmood), Levi Fuller, Michael Melady, and Rick Staggs. Ben Carver Operations supervisor at the Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District, and Matthew Brinker, City of Barstow.

Introductions:

- Annette Caraway, Staff Services Manager II, was the moderator and welcomed all attendees. Attendees introduced themselves.

Public Comments:

- There were no public comments.

Enforcement Update:

- Presented by Bryan Elder, Chief of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) in the Office of Enforcement (OE).
- Staffing Update:

- Jamie Johnson is the new OE SIU employee. She is a Water Resource Control Engineer and has extensive collection experience.
- Case Summary:
 - 93 active OOC enforcement cases
 - 61 active WWOCP enforcement cases
 - 19 cases were closed within the fiscal year
 - 4 closed cases had formal action taken.
 - 3 letters of reprimand
 - 3 suspended certifications
 - Most cases are due to operator misconduct. There are a handful of cases due to fraud or falsification.
 - Most complaints are from operator management and other operators.
 - Most cases do not result in formal enforcement action but instead are resolved by working with the Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) and operators to resolve complaints.
 - WWTPS must have a Chief Plant Operator (CPO) who has the same Grade level or higher than that of the WWTPs classification in order to be in compliance. The list of WWTP's noncompliant WWTPs is getting smaller. This is mainly due to voluntary compliance.
 - As more people become more aware of the OE SIU, the unit has received more cases from agencies who have taken actions. Plant violations take priority.

Examination Update:

Presented by Gabriel Berzamina, Examinations Lead Grader.

- October 12, 2019 Examination results release dates:
 - Grades I-II were released on November 12, 2019.
 - Grades III-V were released on December 3, 2019.
- Next WWOCP Examination will be held on April 18, 2020 and the final filing date (last date to receive the application in the office) is on February 18, 2020.
- The October 2019 Examination passing rates were discussed:

- Grade I – The passing rate is 51.43%, and of the 210 examinees 108 had passing results. This is the lowest passing rate from the last several years; however, more people are taking the exam and it decreases the passing range.
 - Grade II – The passing rate is 43.9%, and out of 214 examinees 94 passed.
 - Grade III -The passing rate is 35.26%, out of 173 examinees 61 had passing results.
 - Grade IV - Passing rate is 22.45%, and out of 49 examinees 11 passed. In the past several years, the passing rate has been lower.
 - Grade V – Passing rate is 26.19%, of the 84 examinees, 22 passed.
- Trends in passing scores:
- There is no trend in the fail/pass rates for the different versions of the examinations. There are 5 different versions.
 - In order to protect the integrity of the examination the WWOCP does not release which version was used for examinations so that examinees cannot identify versions and questions.
 - The WWOCP does not track or survey the examination pass rates of first-time examinees, or any preparatory courses.
- New Scantron machine:
- OOC has a new Scantron machine that has increased capacity to analyze examination results such as determining question difficulty.
 - Examination information will most likely not be available until Fall 2020 as WWOCP analysts are unfamiliar with the new software.

Proposed Equivalent and Formula Sheet Discussion:

Presented by Annette Caraway, WWOCP Staff Services Manager II

- Requested advice on which formula sheet to provide for the WWOCP examinations. It is not practical to provide both. There are currently two

different formula sheets either the Current Equivalents and Formulas sheet revised on January 2014 or the Proposed Equivalents and Formulas Sheet revised on December 2015.

- The WWOCP has been offering both versions for the examinations for the last several years.
- California State University, Sacramento Office of Water Programs is beginning to update its wastewater coursework with the Proposed Equivalents sheet. Other wastewater coursework programs use the Current Equivalents sheet more often than the Proposed Equivalent and Formula sheet.
- Proposed Equivalent and Formula Sheet:
 - Generally, operators who are entering the field tend to prefer this sheet.
 - Generally, this version is closer to being in compliance with Americans with Disability Act (ADA).
 - Generally, this version has additional pages and might look more intimidating.
- Current Equivalents and Formulas Sheet
 - Generally, operators who have taken previous coursework tend to prefer this version.
 - Generally, this format is better known, and it is easier to find calculations quickly.
- Either sheet is used for reference and the examinees are required to know how to manipulate formulas.
- If WWOCP states which version it will use on the exams and gives a deadline then all parties will change accordingly.

Regulations Discussion:

Presented by Annette Caraway, WWOCP Staff Services Manager II

- At this time, the WWOCP is unable to discuss regulation changes.
- The WWOCP will schedule a special session to discuss regulation changes.
- Assembly Bill (AB) 1588 will go into effect on January 1, 2020 and requires review of WWOCP acceptance of military experience. There will be a study conducted and dependent on the conclusions there could be regulation changes.

Wastewater Op-Cert Program Update

Presented by Christa Beck, WWOCP Lead Analyst

- WWOCP and State Water Board Staff:
 - Former WWOCP Manager I Wes Wilkinson retired after holding the position for over 9 years on December 3, 2019.
 - Phillip Cohen is the new WWOCP renewal analyst and will start later this month.
 - Gabriel Berzamina's supervisor Wennilyn Fua, retired and his new supervisor is James Garcia.

- Advisory Committee:
 - As per Assembly Bill (AB) 1588, there will be a new position on the committee to represent wastewater military experience. It will be a person who is active or former member of the United States military who has/is currently working, supervising, or managing wastewater treatment within their military service.
 - Several of the Advisory terms will end on June 30, 2020. In January, a Lyris blast will be sent with position announcements.

- WWOCP Accounts
 - After fee reductions in 2017, it was projected that funds in WWOCP accounts will hit \$1 million around 2022-2024. The projections are still on target.
 - There were more received applications and application fees due to fee reductions. This was anticipated when fee changes were made.

Schedule Next Advisory Committee Meeting

- The Advisory Committee tentatively chose the date of Wednesday, June 10, 2020 for the next meeting to take place at the Cal/EPA building.