

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD

November 2024

EMPLOYEE: Jesse Milliken-Callan

UNIT: Wastewater Consolidation/Non-15 Land Discharge Permitting Unit

TITLE: Water Resource Control Engineer

SUPERVISOR/TITLE: Scott Armstrong, Senior Engineering Geologist

Jesse Milliken-Callan is a Water Resource Control Engineer in Rancho Cordova's Wastewater Consolidation and Non-15 Land Discharge Permitting Unit. Jesse originally joined us as a permit writer in October 2023 and quickly found his passion working directly with disadvantaged communities and facilitating their consolidation with local sewer service providers.

Jesse recently managed a stalled sewer consolidation project involving long-standing disagreements between the community of Plainview, Strathmore Public Utility District, the City of Lindsay, their consultants, and a grant-supported non-profit organization. This project originally began in 2021, but miscommunication among these parties delayed progress, risking the loss of grant funding for both the local sewer system's capital improvements and the wastewater consolidation effort.

By coordinating several meetings, Jesse listened carefully to each party's concerns, built trust, and showed genuine care for their issues. After researching local community sanitation challenges, the compliance history of potential sewer providers, and consulting with the Department of Financial Assistance, Jesse presented his findings and recommendations to the utility district's Board. Jesse proposed a fair and equitable path forward that highlighted the community's need for reliable sanitation. His kind but firm approach resulted in all parties agreeing to collaborate, allowing both the wastewater consolidation and sewer improvement projects to move forward together. With California's fiscal climate potentially affecting funding priorities, Jesse's prompt, clear negotiation and effective facilitation skills were crucial to keeping these projects on track to address nitrate impacts on local drinking water.

In the meantime, due to the recent hiring pause and losing a permit writer position, Jesse reviewed County LAMP 5-year Water Quality Assessment reports as part of Region 5's On-site Wastewater Treatment System implementation efforts in addition to preparing individual Waste Discharge Requirements.

Throughout his work, Jesse actively engages with dischargers and members of the public where he developed a reputation for fairness and empathy. His professional yet friendly approach interacting with all project stakeholders has proven to be very effective in solving problems. We are very fortunate to have Jesse working on many of our Wastewater Consolidation and permitting projects and he is well deserving of this award.