

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)  
Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP) Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes – April 5, 2024**

**Meeting Date:** Friday, April 5, 2024

**Attendees:** Advisory Committee Members

Jose Martinez, John Brady, Mike Maestas, Ian Tillery, Bryan Miller, Dan DeMoss, John Hamner, Chris Castaing

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

Christine Gordon, Keisha Kelley, Julie Osborn, Valerie Gregory, Tomas Eggers, Daniel Freed, Jon Hermison, Sarah Miller, Sahand Rastegarpour, Jamie Johnson, German Myers

**Public**

Sue Mosburg, Larry Lyford, Sharon Wong, Richard Souza, Felicia James, Dimas Reyes, Jeffrey Potte, Jesse Bartlett-May, Sue Murphy, Ignacio Rodriguez, Adam Watchel

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**Item 1 – Introductions**

- Keisha Kelley, OOC Program Manager, acted as moderator for this meeting. The meeting was held via Video/Teleconference and in person at the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) building located at 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

**Item 2 – Agenda Review**

- Keisha Kelley reviewed the agenda. There were no comments and the agenda proceeded as scheduled. It was explained that the meeting is being recorded and public comments will be limited to 3 minutes per speaker.

**Item 3 – Public Comments**

- There were no public comments.

**Item 4 – Office of Enforcement (OE) Update**

- Tomas Eggers of the OE, Special Investigations Unit, presented updates on Drinking Water Operator Certification (DWOC) matters. Tomas Eggers thanked

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his staff for catching up on the case backlog and thanked OOC staff for gathering information and supporting OE.

- Case Updates: There are currently six open/action-pending cases. The four open cases include two operator misconduct cases and two expired certification cases, and the two action-pending cases are certification revocation cases.
  - OE closed eight cases of various categories from June 2023 to present.
- OE stated that systems have a duty to report operator disciplinary actions that are taken.
- In the last six months OE has seen an uptick in the number of operators working without valid certifications; this includes operators working with expired certificates that they have not renewed.
  - A discussion began concerning the responsibility of the operator, chief operator, and water system. The renewal period for certification, small water systems, and when to submit disciplinary actions to OE were discussed.

**Item 5 – Program Updates**

- Keisha Kelley provided the following updates:
  - Staffing Update
    - The OOC program currently has two vacancies:
      - First level manager over Unit 2 - became vacant at the end of December 2023. DWOCP is currently in the recruitment process and anticipates that interviews will take place in late April 2024.
      - Certification analyst position in Unit 2 – vacant as of April 1, 2024. A recruitment package to backfill the position was submitted earlier in April 2024.
  - Program statistics (reference document was displayed on screen).
    - Certifications – number of certificate holders by grade and type as of December 2023.
    - Examinations – pass/fail statistics for July 2023 – December 2023.
      - The timing of the next T5 exams was brought into question and program staff proposed that they take place in August/September 2024.
      - Advisory Committee members and the public suggested that DWOCP provide additional statistics for individual operators.
    - Processing times – due to implementing the DWOCP’s reorganization and reducing its high vacancy rate, processing times

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have consistently been well within the required regulatory 45-day processing time frame.

- Renewal applications – generally within 30 days.
  - Certification and Examination applications – Generally within 2-3 weeks.
- Online application portal
    - DWOCP staff have been diligently working with State Water Board Information Technology (IT) staff to address unanticipated bugs since the launch of phase 1 in September 2023.
    - The go-live date for the higher grade level of examination applications is projected to be late summer/early fall 2024.
    - After higher grade level examinations are live on the portal, DWOCP staff intend for the next phase of the portal to include electronic submission of renewal applications. Drinking Water (DW) renewals have the highest volume of submissions; launching the ability to submit renewals electronically will benefit DW operators tremendously.
  - Operator certification customer service survey
    - Semiannual customer service survey results were provided to Advisory Committee members and stakeholders via email in March 2024.
    - The survey results cover the 6-month period from September 2023 – February 2024.
    - There were 18 respondents total for this survey period and the weighted average score for overall experience with the OOC program was 3.6 out of 5.
    - Respondents are not required to provide a response to every question; they may skip questions, are given the option to provide additional comments or suggestions to improve the program, and are given the option to provide their contact information. Respondents that provide contact information are typically contacted by OOC staff to address and resolve issues, if applicable.
    - Survey results covering the 6-month period from March 2024 – August 2024 will be provided to Advisory Committee members and stakeholders via email in September 2024.
  - Renewals Reminder
    - The renewal reminder notices, including notices of expiration, are generally sent out by the OOC as a courtesy to assist operators.
    - It is ultimately the operator's responsibility to renew their certificate before it expires regardless of whether the operator received a notice from OOC.
    - Operators cannot legally operate with an expired certificate.
    - Any person operating without an appropriate, valid, unexpired certificate is violating the law and enforcement action may be taken against the operator, chief operator, and the owner of the facility.

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- A discussion concerning the communication between OOC, Division of Drinking Water (DDW) and OE on expired operators began. OOC informed the attendees that the OOC website maintains a list of current operators.
  - It was suggested that a representative from DDW attend the next Advisory Committee meeting.
- Sub-workgroup recommendations and regulation scoping
  - Regular internal meetings conducting regulation scoping will begin shortly. The Advisory Committee will be informed of all proposed changes once they have been identified.
  - The following sub-workgroup recommendations have been identified as requiring a regulation change to implement and identified as changes to be included in the first regulation package for the DWOCP:
    - Additional experience credit for chief/shift operator designations.
    - Update regulation 63830(a)(4) regarding employer verification to also require the chief operator or supervisor name, position, Distribution/Treatment (D/T) certification number of chief operator or supervisor, water system classification, and water system number.
    - Update Water Treatment experience requirements to allow certified treatment operators to fulfill experience requirements with experience gained while working at water recycling treatment plants.
  - Comments were made on the possible timeline and suggestion period for the revised regulations.

**Item 5 – Meeting Recap**

- Keisha Kelley informed the attendees that the OOC will reach out via email in August 2024 regarding the Fall 2024 Advisory Committee Meeting, which may take place in October 2024.