

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025**

Meeting Date: Friday, October 20, 2025

Attendees: Advisory Committee Members

Scott Lening, Steve Krai, Josh Vieira, Tracy Crane, Kody Tompkins, Louis Sun, Akram Botrous, Hailie Hix

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)

Joaquin Esquivel, Helen Wuellner, Keisha Kelley, Julie Osborn, Valerie Gregory, Jon Hermison, Sarah Miller, Tomas Eggers, Antonio Aguilar

Public

Steve Garner, Sue Mosburg

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, California 95814.
- Joaquin Esquivel, State Waterboard Chair, gave welcome remarks and thanks to the committee members.

Item 2 – Agenda Review

- Keisha Kelley reviewed the agenda, there were no comments, and the agenda proceeded as scheduled with a reminder that the meeting is being recorded for note taking purposes only and will be deleted after meeting minutes are prepared.

Item 3 – Public Comments

- There were no public comments.

Item 4 – Office of Enforcement (OE) Updates

- Tomas Eggers provided an OE update for April 2025 to present
 - 40 open cases currently
 - 7 cases closed

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

- 29 pending cases
 - Operator misconduct
 - Notice of Violations sent out - Failure to maintain a CPO

Item 5 – WWOCP Updates

- Advisory Committee Vacancies
 - This past summer the OOC solicited nominations for two vacant positions through an email subscription list notification email and by listing the solicitation on the WWOCP website. The OOC received two nominations for the two vacant positions:
 - A representative from an organized labor union that represents wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) operators; and
 - An individual from a statewide organization representing local sanitation agencies other than municipalities.
 - It was announced that on September 30, 2025, the State Water Board appointed Hailie Hix as an Advisory Committee member for the WWOCP. Hailie is filling the position for a representative from an organized labor union that represents WWTP operators. The appointment began on September 30, 2025, and expires on June 30, 2028.
 - The only nomination received for the second advertised vacancy did not meet the minimum qualifications for the position. The OOC will resolicit for additional nominations to fill this remaining vacancy.
- Staffing Update
 - No change to staffing. The OOC has remained fully staffed.
 - Processing times have remained consistently within the required regulatory 30-day time frame.
- Program Statistics (Attachment A)
 - Comparison of applications received, and the number of certifications issued for the same 6-month period in 2024 and 2025.
 - Certifications – number of valid certificates by grade for each month from January – June 2025.
 - Examinations –
 - Pass/fail statistics for the same 6-month period in 2024 and 2025.
 - The small fluctuations in the pass percentages are normal.
 - Cumulative CBT pass/fail statistics.
 - Cumulative pass percentages are consistent with the pass percentages which is also normal.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

- Online Application Portal
 - The OOC, in coordination with the State Water Board's Division of Information Technology, has continued development of an interactive online application portal to allow applicants the ability to submit applications electronically, review and resolve application deficiencies online, and track application statuses.
 - As of February 2025, examination applications for all disciplines and grade levels can be submitted electronically through the OCIS portal.
 - This past summer the ability to submit wastewater renewal applications electronically through the OCIS portal went live.
 - Currently, the OOC is working with the State Water Boards Division of Information Technology on the development of electronic drinking water renewal applications. Drinking water renewals have a continuing education requirement and development of the electronic renewal application is more complex than wastewater. However, the team has been diligent, and we anticipate launching drinking water renewal applications by the end of the calendar year.
 - Development of electronic certification applications will begin following the completion of the renewal application phase.
- Customer Service Survey
 - The semi-annual customer service survey results were provided to advisory committee members and stakeholders via email in September of this calendar year.
 - The survey results cover the 6-month period of March 2025 through August 2025.
 - There were 14 respondents total for this survey period and the weighted average for overall experience with the OOC program was 3.5 out of 5.
 - Respondents are not required to provide a response to every question; they may skip questions and are given the opportunity to provide additional comments or suggestions to improve the program and leave their contact information. Respondents that leave contact information are contacted by OOC staff to address and resolve any issues, if applicable.
 - Survey results covering the 6-month period of September 2025 through February 2026 will be provided to advisory committee members and stakeholders via email in March 2026.
- Examination Validation
 - Background: small sub work group comprised of three advisory committee members, the program engineer, exam analyst, and management. Project began in March of this calendar year.
 - The sub work group is evaluating the exam questions for correctness, clarity, relevance, and grade appropriateness. Pass/fail rates of each question are considered for the evaluation.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

- The sub work group meets twice a month:
 - Completed evaluation of exam versions A, B, and C for all grades this past summer.
 - Currently nearing completion of evaluating exam versions D and E for all grades

Item 6 – Regulation Scoping – Proposed Regulatory Updates (Attachment B)

- In coordination with the Office of Chief Counsel, the Office of Enforcement and upper management, the Office of Operator Certification has drafted an outline of proposed wastewater regulation changes.
- Proposed amendments to the definitions include:
 - Amend the definitions of “associate’s degree” and “bachelor’s degree” to delete references to accrediting entities that no longer exist and add new accrediting entities, as appropriate.
 - Replace the definition of “full time” with a definition of “one year of qualifying experience” that would apply to all operators, whether they work full time or part time.
 - Add a definition of “high school diploma” to require that diplomas be from an accredited high school.
 - Amend the definition of “science course” to include those courses that currently qualify as “wastewater treatment courses” and delete the separate definition and use of the term “wastewater treatment course” throughout the regulations.
 - Advisory Committee members commented and there was discussion to clarify that the definitions are to be consistent with how they are currently being implemented and there should not be much of a change. The changes will provide clarity.
- Proposed amendments regarding Chief Plant Operators include:
 - Add minimum experience requirements to be a CPO.
 - Consider adding other requirements to ensure CPOs can perform the duties of CPO effectively, such as: Limitations on how many wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) one individual can be CPO over; and
 - Limitations on how far away a CPO may live from a WWTP for which the individual is the CPO.
 - Advisory Committee members commented and discussed the impact, how it is tied to certification requirements, how many WWTPs a CPO can provide adequate oversight, and the driving force around the limitations on distance a CPO can be away from a plant with current communication technology, another meeting to discuss was suggested. Julie stated the recommendations may have come from previous OE issues.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

- Proposed amendments for the Lone Operator requirements include:
 - Considering amendments to ensure that lone operators are not used as a long-term solution in place of hiring the appropriate grade operator(s) or a contract operator, including limiting renewals and amendments to the requirements to be approved to use a lone operator.
 - Advisory Committee members commented that the lone operators provide experience for operators in some cases, considering the low pass rates for higher certifications and the number of job opportunities that are available.
- Proposed amendments for the OIT certification requirements include:
 - Delete the requirement for obtaining 6 education points prior to being certified as an OIT.
 - Amend the amount of time an OIT certificate is valid, from 24 months to 36 months.
 - Advisory Committee commented regarding the following:
 - Fast tracking this issue as it has taken some time. OOC staff responded it needs to be submitted as a package. If there are issues that are not necessary to further discuss and push forward, it is possible to remove them from the package to move forward sooner.
 - Six education points may not be the hurdle that is found with OIT's, as much as the OIT positions available. OOC staff stated that this is an official recommendation from a subcommittee.
- Proposed amendments for Operator Certification requirements include:
 - Update the qualifying experience substitutions to include a maximum for education point substitutions.
 - Amend the certification requirements so that an operator who holds a current certificate may downgrade to a lower certification even if the operator's exam results are no longer valid.
- Proposed amendments for the Examinations section include:
 - Amend language to be consistent with the change from paper exams to Computer Based Testing, including:
 - Deleting language regarding final filing dates
 - Deleting the requirement to wait 60-days to re-take exams
 - Amending the deadline for resolving application deficiencies, which currently is tied to the next filing date
 - Making conforming changes to examination security
 - Advisory Committee discussed the waiting period to clarify there was no waiting period suggested, but processing time will remain 30 days, and the proposed amendment is consistent with drinking water regulations.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

- Proposed amendments for the Operator Certificate Renewals section include:
 - Prohibit renewal applications from being submitted more than 180 days prior to expiration of a certificate
- Proposed amendments for the Disciplinary Action section include:
 - Add downgrade of a certificate to the list of possible disciplinary actions
 - Delete the special retention policy for notices to the State Water Board of discipline action taken by WWTP owners and contract operators against operators, OITs, provisional operators, and contract operators.
- Other minor additional proposed changes include:
 - Change references from the California Department of Public Health to the State Water Board.
 - Incorporate statutory amendments to the Advisory Committee positions.
 - Delete obsolete references and provisions, including section 3680.1, which provided time for privately owned WWTPs to comply with the Operator Certification Regulations.
 - Considering amending deadlines for resolving deficiencies on applications throughout the regulations for consistency across the program.
- Advisory Committee recommends having a special meeting to further discuss regulation scoping.

Item 7 – Next Advisory Committee Meeting

- The OOC will reach out via email to begin scheduling the next meeting before the end of the year to further discuss the regulation scoping. The planning of the Spring 2026 meeting will also begin soon. Any additional comments, questions or suggestions are welcome via email from the committee.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

Attachment A

Wastewater Operator Certification Program
October 20, 2025, Advisory Committee Meeting

Statistics

WASTEWATER		
	2024 1/1/2024-6/30/2024	2025 1/1/2025-6/30/2025
Applications received (exam, cert, renewals)	2,510	1,770
Certificates issued (new and renewals)	1,655	956

NUMBER OF VALID CERTIFICATES						
Grade	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025	June 2025
OIT	693	709	704	722	735	742
1	783	792	796	794	798	808
2	1,474	1,469	1,469	1,481	1,482	1,476
3	1,807	1,809	1,815	1,820	1,835	1,840
4	417	420	419	419	418	416
5	1,069	1,078	1,078	1,076	1,076	1,083
Total	6,243	6,277	6,281	6,312	6,344	6,365

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL Reporting Period 1/1/2024- 6/30/2024				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
WW Grade 1	188	103	85	55%
WW Grade 2	202	116	86	57%
WW Grade 3	150	61	89	41%
WW Grade 4	37	10	27	27%
WW Grade 5	79	22	57	28%

COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL Reporting Period 1/1/2025- 6/30/2025				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
WW Grade 1	203	110	93	54%
WW Grade 2	201	96	105	48%
WW Grade 3	182	69	113	38%
WW Grade 4	39	6	33	15%
WW Grade 5	87	25	62	29%

CUMULATIVE COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL Reporting Period: 2/20/2021 (CBT Inception) – 6/30/2025				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
WW Grade 1	1,619	876	743	54%
WW Grade 2	1,661	907	754	55%
WW Grade 3	1,524	551	973	36%
WW Grade 4	427	117	310	27%
WW Grade 5	736	210	526	29%

Wastewater Operator Certification
October 20, 2025, Advisory Committee Meeting

Proposed Regulation Changes

Definitions

- Amend the definitions of “associate’s degree” and “bachelor’s degree” to delete references to accrediting entities that no longer exist and add new accrediting entities, as appropriate
- Replace the definition of “full time” with a definition of “one year of qualifying experience” that would apply to all operators, whether they work full time or part time
- Add a definition of “high school diploma” to require that diplomas be from an accredited high school
- Amend the definition of “science course” to include those courses that currently qualify as “wastewater treatment courses” and delete the separate definition and use of the term “wastewater treatment course” throughout the regulations

Chief Plant Operators (CPOs)

- Add minimum experience requirements to be a CPO
- Consider adding other requirements to ensure CPOs can perform the duties of CPO effectively, such as:
 - Limitations on how many wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) one individual can be CPO over; and
 - Limitations on how far away a CPO may live from a WWTP for which the individual is the CPO

Lone Operator

- Considering amendments to ensure that lone operators are not used as a long-term solution in place of hiring the appropriate grade operator(s) or a contract operator, including:
 - Limiting renewals
 - Amendments to the requirements to be approved to use a lone operator

Operator-In-Training (OIT) Certification

- Delete the requirement for obtaining 6 education points prior to being certified as an OIT
- Amend the amount of time an OIT certificate is valid, from 24 months to 36 months

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2025

Operator Certification Requirements

- Update the qualifying experience substitutions to include a maximum for education point substitutions
- Amend the certification requirements so that an operator who holds a current certificate may downgrade to a lower certification even if the operator's exam results are no longer valid

Examinations

- Amend language to be consistent with the change from paper exams to Computer Based Testing, including:
 - Deleting language regarding final filing dates
 - Deleting the requirement to wait 60-days to re-take exams
 - Amending the deadline for resolving application deficiencies, which currently is tied to the next filing date
 - Making conforming changes to examination security

Operator Certificate Renewals

- Prohibit renewal applications from being submitted more than 180 days prior to expiration of a certificate

Disciplinary Action

- Add downgrade of a certificate to the list of possible disciplinary actions
- Delete the special retention policy for notices to the State Water Board of discipline action taken by WWTP owners and contract operators against operators, OITs, provisional operators, and contract operators.

Minor Additional Changes

- Change references from the California Department of Public Health to the State Water Board
- Incorporate statutory amendments to the Advisory Committee positions
- Delete obsolete references and provisions, including section 3680.1, which provided time for privately owned WWTPs to comply with the Operator Certification Regulations
- Considering amending deadlines for resolving deficiencies on applications throughout the regulations for consistency across the program