

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)  
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes – October 30, 2024**

**Meeting Date:**        **Wednesday, October 30, 2024**

**Attendees:**        **Advisory Committee Members**

Steve Krai, Monte Hamamoto, Josh Vieira, Scott Lening,

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

Christine Gordon, Keisha Kelley, Julie Osborn, Valerie Gregory, Jon Hermison, Sarah Miller, Tomas Eggers

**Public**

None

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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, California 95814.

**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.

**Item 3 – Public Comments**

- There were no public comments.

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

- Tomas Eggers provided an OE update:
  - Fiscal year 23/24 there were a total of 14 enforcement actions including closed cases resulting in reprimands, revoked licenses and staff enforcement letters.
  - This fiscal year there were multiple suspensions, and 2 revocations for exam misconduct and falsely misleading information.
  - Reminder: It is the operator’s responsibility to renew their certifications timely.

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**Item 5 – New Advisory Committee members and vacant positions**

- Two new members representing statewide organizations representing municipalities – Scott Lening and Tracy Crane
- One new member representing a current or former member of the US Military who gained experience working, supervising, or managing wastewater treatment withing their military service – Chris Lehman
- Currently seeking nominations to fill 2 open positions.
  - 1 open position for a representative from an organized labor union to represent wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) operators; and
  - 1 open position for a representative from a university, state university school, or division of engineering.
- An email notice seeking nominations was sent on October 25th to the wastewater operator and tribal wastewater operator email subscription lists.
- The information was posted on our website at the same time.
- Nominations must be submitted by 4pm on November 22nd.

**Item 6 – WWOCP Updates**

- Staffing Update
  - The OOC program currently has three vacancies:
    - 1 vacant Drinking Water certification analyst position in Unit 2
    - 1 vacant clerical position in Unit 2
    - 2 vacant clerical support positions in Unit 1

The workload of these four desks has been redistributed amongst the staff in the program. Processing times have remained consistently within the required regulatory 30-day time frame.

- Program statistics (*attached*)
  - Comparison of applications received, and the number of certifications issued for the same 6-month period in 2023 and 2024.
  - Certifications – number of certificate holders by grade for each month from January – June 2024.
  - Examinations –
    - pass/fail statistics for the same 6-month period in 2023 and 2024.
    - Cumulative computer based testing pass/fail statistics.
- 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

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- applications electronically, review and resolve application deficiencies online, and track application statuses.
  - In September 2023, phase 1 of the portal was launched allowing applicants to submit applications for Grades 1 and 2 examinations electronically for both the Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP) and WWOCP.
  - In October 2024, the ability to submit Grade 3 examination applications electronically for both the DWOCP and WWOCP was launched.
  - Subsequent phases will integrate higher grades and more complex certification and renewal applications as the portal is developed. After examinations, we intend on the next phase of the portal to include electronic submission of renewal applications.
- OOC 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 2024 – August 2024.
  - There were 27 respondents total for this survey period and the weighted average for overall experience with the OOC program was 3.74.
  - 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 2024 – February 2025 will be provided to advisory committee members and stakeholders via email in March 2025.
- Examination Validation
  - Background: A small sub-workgroup was created, comprised of three advisory committee members, the program engineer, the wastewater exam analyst, and management. The project began in March of this calendar year
  - The sub-workgroup has continued to meet regularly, and the project has picked up steam.
- Regulation scoping
  - In May 2024, OOC staff began conducting frequent meetings to initiate scoping regulatory updates necessary for each program.
  - OOC staff have nearly completed outlines identifying updates/changes. Once OOC staff complete identifying updates/changes, the outlines still need to be reviewed by Office of Chief Counsel, OE, and Division of Drinking Water for input before being discussed with the advisory

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committees. We are aiming to have outlines ready for discussion with the advisory committees for the Spring 2025 meetings.

- Background (for benefit of new advisory committee members): sub-workgroup recommendations
  - Calendar year 2023 sub workgroups brought forth recommendations to the DWOCP and WWOCP advisory committees for consideration at a joint advisory committee meeting. The top recommendations considered include:
    - Approval of a guidance document that outlines the OOC process for evaluating and awarding experience credit for drinking water operators, including dual certificate holders. (complete – posted to website in August 2024)
    - Modify the operator-in-training (OIT) education requirement so that the required six education points may be earned after the OIT certification is obtained, but prior to expiration. This would allow three (3) years to earn the education points and experience hours concurrently. (Requires regulation change to be implemented and has been included in regulation scoping)
    - Modify the drinking water experience requirement to include experience at advanced water treatment facilities for certified drinking water treatment operators. (Requires regulation change to be implemented and has been included in regulation scoping)
    - Assess the feasibility of providing reciprocity and/or an examination waiver to individuals with military experience in the operation of drinking water and wastewater treatment plants. (Still in the process of deciding if the applicable recommendation requires a regulation change to implement.)
- Steven Garner included that California Water Environment Association and CA-NV American Water Works Association offer the Advanced Water Treatment (AWT) operator certification programs and currently has 172 AWT3, 52 AWT4, and 40 AWT5 certification holders.

**Item 7 – Next Advisory Committee Meeting**

- The OOC will reach out via email no later than December to begin scheduling the next meeting for the spring.