

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – November 12, 2024**

Meeting Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Attendees: Advisory Committee Members

Jose J. Martinez, Bryan Miller, Jack Bebee, Chris Castaing,
Jose Martinez, Ian Tillery, Doug Culbert, Mike Maestas,

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)

Jon Hermison, Valerie Gregory, Julie Osborn, Josh Ziese,
Christine Gordon, Keisha Kelley, Antonio Aguilar, Sarah
Miller, Tomas Eggers

Public

Sue Mosburg, Chris Molina, Steven Molina, Freeman
Ensign, Yan Zhang

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 building located at 1001 I Street, Sacramento, California 95814.

Item 2 – Agenda Review

- Keisha Kelley reviewed the agenda, the agenda proceeded as scheduled with reminders that the meeting is being recorded for note taking purposes and that advisory committee meeting members participating remotely must appear on camera.

Item 3 – Public Comments

- Freeman Ensign, Operations Supervisor at 3 Valleys Municipal Water district in Claremont, addressed the committee with the request that a percentage of administrative trainings count towards required continuing education units.

Item 4 – Office of Enforcement (OE) Updates

- Tomas Eggers provided an OE update:

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- Since April of 2024: There were a total of 11 open cases consisting of operator misconduct, reporting lab falsifications, experience hours and duties issues, and approximately 6 expired or insufficient certification level cases.
 - Closed 9 cases, including several revocations currently in progress.
- Reminder: It is the operator's responsibility to renew their certifications timely.

Item 5 – Treatment and Distribution Exam Formula Conversion Sheet

- Advisory committee member Mike Maestas proposed the formation of a subcommittee to review the current exam formula conversion sheet for possible revisions/updates to make it more accurate and efficient.

Keisha Kelley directed advisory committee members interested in participating on the subcommittee to reach out via email.

Item 6 – Program Updates

- Keisha Kelley provided the following updates:
 - New Advisory Committee members
 - Representing a statewide organization representing medium to large water systems – Chris Castaing
 - Representing a statewide organization representing small water systems. – Doug Culbert
 - An employee of an educational institution, professional association, public agency that provides water treatment or water distribution courses of instruction – Jack Bebee
 - Representing professional engineers specializing in sanitary engineering – Trung Derek Nguyen
 - An active or former member of the United States Military who is working, supervising, or managing, or who has previously worked, supervised, or managed in water treatment or distribution within their military service – Jose J. Martinez
 - Advisory committee members have been updated on the website.
 - 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

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- 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 45-day timeframe.
- Program statistics (attached)
 - Comparison of applications received, and certifications issued for the same 6-month period in 2023 and 2024.
 - Certifications - number of certificate holders by grade for each month from January through 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 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 DWOCP and Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP).
 - In October 2024, the ability to submit grade 3 examination applications 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.
- 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 through August 2024.
 - There were 27 respondent's 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

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leave their 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 through February 2025 will be provided to the advisory committee members and stakeholders via email in March 2025.
- 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 the Office of Chief Counsel, OE, and the Division of Drinking Water for input before being discussed with the advisory 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 committees 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 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 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 making a determination as to if the applicable recommendation requires a regulation change to implement)

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Item 5 – Meeting Recap

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