

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2026**

Meeting Date: Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Attendees: Advisory Committee Members

Scott Lening, Steve Krai, Josh Vieira, Tracy Crane, Louis Sun, Akram Botrous, Ben Carver

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)

Joshua Ziese, Helen Wuellner, Keisha Kelley, Julie Osborn, Valerie Gregory, Jon Hermison, Antonio Aguilar, Sarah Miller, German Myers, Michael Jones, Sahand Rastegarpour

Public

Ian Tillery, Deler Ghazi

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 and 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) Update

- German Myers provided an OE update for November 2025 to present:
 - 13 open cases currently, including 7 new cases.
 - The 7 new cases include:
 - 2 cases of operator misconduct;
 - 2 cases regarding no chief plant operators (CPO);
 - 1 case regarding an Operator-in-Training without certification; and
 - 2 cases regarding operation and maintenance at facilities.

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2026**

- 15 cases closed that resulted in:
 - 3 reprimands;
 - 3 notices of violation; and
 - 1 staff enforcement letter
- 9 pending actions:
 - Notice of Violations were sent out for failure to maintain a CPO

Item 5 – Program Updates

- Advisory Committee Vacancies
 - There are seven advisory committee positions with terms ending on June 30th and one additional position that became vacant in the month of April.
 - Nominations have been solicited through an email subscription list notification email and by listing the solicitation on the WWOCP website. Only three nominations were received. A second solicitation has been sent out for:
 - 1 vacancy for - A person from a statewide organization representing local sanitation agencies other than municipalities including counties or private utility wastewater treatment plants.
 - 2 vacancies for - A person from a statewide organization representing wastewater treatment plant operators and supervisors. Must be employed at a wastewater treatment plant as an operator or supervisor.
 - 1 vacancy for - A member of an organized labor union which represents wastewater treatment plant operators.
 - 1 vacancy for - A person from a university or state university school or division of engineering.
 - Nominations for the second solicitation are due by 4pm on May 26.
- Staffing Update
 - 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 July – December 2025.
 - Examinations –
 - pass/fail statistics for the same 6-month period in 2024 and 2025.

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2026**

- Small fluctuations in the pass percentages are normal, however the pass rates for all grades increased for the 2025 reporting period.
 - Cumulative computer-based testing pass/fail statistics.
 - Cumulative pass percentages have remained consistent with little to no fluctuation from the percentages reported this past fall.
- 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 Operator Certification Information System (OCIS) portal.
 - As of July 2025, wastewater renewal applications for all grades can be submitted electronically through the OCIS portal.
 - As of February 2026, drinking water renewal applications for all grades can be submitted electronically through the OCIS portal.
 - Currently, the OOC is working with the State Water Boards Division of Information Technology on the development of electronic certification applications.
- Customer Service Survey
 - The semi-annual customer service survey results were provided to advisory committee members and stakeholders via email in March of this calendar year.
 - The survey results cover the 6-month period of September 2025 through February 2026.
 - 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 March 2026 through August 2026 will be provided to advisory committee members and stakeholders via email in September 2026.
- Progress on Regulatory Revisions
 - Over this past year OOC staff have made a considerable amount of progress on completing regulatory updates for both Programs.

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2026**

- In the fall OOC completed scoping of high-level regulatory updates for the WWOCP and at Advisory Committee Meetings held on October 20 and November 24, the WWOCP Advisory Committee reviewed and provided feedback on the proposed updates.
- Currently the WWOCP's rulemaking package is in the drafting phase. OOC staff are meeting weekly to draft the regulatory amendments, taking the Advisory Committees feedback into consideration, and tentatively project going to public notice in early 2027. From there it can take up to a year to complete the rulemaking process.
- Fee Changes
 - Authority, guiding principles, and process
 - Pursuant to subdivision (e) of Water Code section 13628, the State Water Board is required to review its fees each fiscal year to ensure that the fees collected provide sufficient revenue to recover the costs of the WWOCP and to compensate for past over-collection or under-collection of revenue. Subdivision (e) of Water Code section 13628 also authorizes the State Water Board to adopt amendments to the WWOCP fees through the emergency rulemaking process. The emergency regulations remain in effect until they are revised by the State Water Board.
 - The OOC reviews the programs fund to ensure that:
 - The fees generate sufficient revenue to cover program expenditures; and
 - Works within legislative budgetary authority.
 - The fee setting process consists of:
 - An annual review of Program expenditures and revenues including actuals for prior years as well as estimates for current year and projections for future years;
 - Determining if the fee schedule needs adjustments;
 - Conducting an Advisory Committee meeting to discuss adjustments and proposed changes to the fee schedule;
 - Taking the fee schedule proposed changes to the Board for approval; and
 - Implementing the approved fee schedule changes via the emergency rulemaking process.
 - Background
 - The WWOCP's revenue comes from fees paid by applicants, certified operators, and registered contract operators for various services associated with certification. There are approximately 6,000 certified wastewater treatment plant operators. The operational expenses for WWOCP fall into three broad areas: 1)

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2026**

issuing and renewing certificates and registrations; 2) administering operator examinations; and 3) enforcement against operators, contract operators, and wastewater treatment plant owners that have violated the WWOCP Regulations. More specifically, the WWOCP's responsibilities include:

- Processing certification applications;
 - Processing renewals for approximately 6,000 operators once every 3 years;
 - Classifying wastewater treatment plants;
 - Processing examination applications;
 - Administering examinations through CBT;
 - Registering and renewing approximately 75 contract operator registrations;
 - Maintaining physical files, the Operator Certification database (OCIS), and the WWOCP website;
 - Conducting outreach and customer education, as necessary;
 - Investigating complaints of misconduct and conduct appropriate enforcement actions;
 - Amending the WWOCP Regulations, as necessary; and
 - Coordinating with the WWOCP Advisory Committee.
- Program revenue and expenditures
 - Effective November 16, 2017, the WWOCP fees were reduced with the goal of lowering the fund reserve to a prudent reserve of \$1 million over six years.
 - Since 2017 the costs to administer the WWOCP have consistently outpaced the revenue that the WWOCP collects. Although the level of effort to administer the WWOCP has remained relatively steady and no additional staff are anticipated for future WWOCP operations, the associated operating costs have risen significantly since the WWOCP fees were reduced. Increases in staff salaries are the primary factor driving the increases in operating costs.
 - Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and cancelations of the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 examinations, the WWOCP experienced a reduction in examination and certification applications and associated fees. Fewer operators applied for the Fall 2020 examination, and because of the canceled examinations there was a reduced number of operators that qualified for certification. The WWOCP therefore experienced an additional unanticipated reduction in revenue, which has decreased the WWOCP Fund reserves.
 - The OOC met with the WWOCP Advisory Committee to discuss fee adjustments to close the gap between expenditures and revenues and achieve a prudent fund reserve in the summer of 2024.

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2026**

- The Advisory Committee recommended three years of fee increases at equal rates.
- Taking that recommendation into consideration OOC projected 35 percent fee increases in FY 24-25, 25-26, and 26-27 to close the gap between expenditures and revenues and achieve a prudent fund reserve.
- The WWOCP fees increased by 35% in FY 24-25 and 25-26. Currently, the estimated revenue for FY 25-26 is projected to be just under \$1 million and expenditures are projected to be about \$1.3 million.
- These estimates indicate that a 35 percent fee increase effective FY 26-27 is necessary to close the remaining gap between expenditures and revenue.

Item 6 – Next Advisory Committee Meeting

- The OOC will reach out via email no later than July or August to begin scheduling the next meeting for the Fall.

Action Items

- The OOC to provide data on how many wastewater treatment plants are in each plant classification in future statistics.
- The OOC was asked to provide data on the number of electronic applications received through the OCIS online application portal.

Wastewater Operator Certification Program
April 28, 2026, Advisory Committee Meeting

Statistics

WASTEWATER		
	2024 7/1/2024-12/31/2024	2025 7/1/2024-12/31/2024
Applications received (exam, cert, renewals)	2,149	1,685
Certificates issued (new and renewals)	1,313	844

NUMBER OF VALID CERTIFICATES						
Grade	July 2025	Aug 2025	Sep 2025	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025
OIT	762	744	746	728	746	731
1	807	812	801	802	790	786
2	1,485	1,496	1,504	1,514	1,521	1,520
3	1,843	1,851	1,856	1,856	1,859	1,873
4	415	422	425	422	425	427
5	1,089	1,100	1,103	1,116	1,124	1,125
Total	6,401	6,425	6,435	6,438	6,465	6,462

Wastewater Operator Certification Program - Statistics
 April 28, 2026, Advisory Committee Meeting

COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL				
Reporting Period 7/1/2024 - 12/31/2024				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
WW Grade 1	193	99	94	51%
WW Grade 2	215	112	103	52%
WW Grade 3	201	76	125	38%
WW Grade 4	47	13	34	28%
WW Grade 5	83	18	65	22%

COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL				
Reporting Period 7/1/2025 - 12/31/2025				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
WW Grade 1	179	113	66	63%
WW Grade 2	209	121	88	58%
WW Grade 3	185	76	109	41%
WW Grade 4	46	15	31	33%
WW Grade 5	103	30	73	29%

CUMULATIVE COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL				
Reporting Period: 2/20/2021 (CBT Inception) – 12/31/2025				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
WW Grade 1	1,813	996	817	55%
WW Grade 2	1,880	1,030	850	55%
WW Grade 3	1,722	630	1,092	37%
WW Grade 4	479	134	345	28%
WW Grade 5	847	242	605	29%

Office of Operator Certification Customer Service Survey - Results

September 1, 2025 to February 28, 2026

14 respondents

Questions

Are you a certified operator?	yes	10	72%										
	no	4	29%										
Ratings: 1 (low) to 5 (high)							weighted avg: 3.5	1	2	3	4	5	Number of Respondents
Rate your overall experience with the Office of Operator Certification			22%	7%	7%	28%	36%					14/14	
What was the purpose of your interaction (within the last 24 months) with the Office of Operator Certification?	Examination	29%						14/14					
	Certification	29%											
	Renewal	21%											
	Program Information	0%											
	Other (please specify)	21%											
Did you feel our team answered you promptly?	yes	57%						14/14					
	no	43%											
How likely are you to recommend our program?	very likely	43%						14/14					
	likely	29%											
	neither likely nor unlikely	7%											
	unlikely	7%											
	very unlikely	14%											
How satisfied are you with our programs / services?	very satisfied	29%						14/14					
	satisfied	36%											
	neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7%											
	dissatisfied	0%											
	very dissatisfied	29%											
How easy did the Office of Operator Certification make it for you to solve your issue?	easy	36%						14/14					
	somewhat easy	29%											
	neither easy nor difficult	7%											
	somewhat difficult	7%											
	difficult	21%											

Date	Please share your experience / Any additional comments you would like to provide or suggestions that could help improve our program?		Would you like to share your name and contact information?			issue category
	Open-Ended Response		Name	Email Address	Phone	
10/7/2025	I mailed my paperwork in as soon as I passed my test in April and I wasn't notified that I needed to send in one more paper. This resulted in me trying to call and emailing a month or two later asking about the status of my cert. I then received an email from Andrew Cline stating I didn't receive a letter I was supposed to get which set me behind 6 months on getting my cert. Andrew was a life saver and helped me get everything I needed and ultimately got me my certification. I wasn't to say thank you to Andrew Cline he's awesome!	An email along with a mailed letter would help on the fluidity and speed of the process. Once again thank you Andrew Cline for resolving my problem and having exceptional customer service!				certifications
10/9/2025	I have no idea how to schedule my test, and nobody will answer my emails.					exams
12/22/2025	I received prompt, informative, professional and very kind, personal service from Mercedes Jones. I so appreciated her positive take on this program and the possibilities offered. Ms. Mercedes Jones is an absolute asset to your program!	Please come up with a better way to show proof of high school graduation without the diploma. The company Parchment cannot be the only way! They walked me through the process (they said I had to do as a "3rd party"), with me literally on the phone as the Parchment representative guided me thru the process which turned out to be incorrect and kept being rejected by my son's high school. My son was not able to give written permission, hence our dilemma.	██████████		██████████	HS diploma
1/3/2026	overall great. no problems. my only tiff was when I received my water distribution cert it read Water Treatment Operator Grade D2 and didn't have the operator number on it.	really make sure the certs have the correct info on them before sending them out. only got one that was wrong. the increase in fees is hard to deal with. good thing I got my grade 3 waste mid last 2024. but overall been great. love how the exams push you to persevere.				certifications

1/7/2026	The Grade 5 exam I had just taken had several errors where the right answer was not in the multiple choice. There also seems to be an error with the grading for said exams.		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	exams
1/21/2026	Staff used to answer the phone and answer questions before. But now you leave a message wait a few days then might get a return call. Be sent an email saying that it may take two weeks for a response. The fees have become way to expensive. The fees will not fix California's crippling debt, so make costs responsible.					customer service, fees
1/27/2026	I am trying to pay my d3 renewal online it is basically impossible. So i guess ill pay with a check like its 1952. Update your [REDACTED] system. Cant wait till trump starts auditing the state of California you guys are so stupid/corrupt	Yeah update your payment system you [REDACTED] morons this is the [REDACTED] state where apple resides and you cant get an online payment system that works omg	[REDACTED]			online payments
2/5/2026	Alex Strack was super professional. He listened to me and was able to satisfy my needs. I am very pleased with his phone call and would recommend anyone reach out to Alex if they need help. I had a concern that I wasn't notified and Alex looked it up and said yes you're right and made it right. Very happy with him and my conversation. Everything is great	look at your numbers on the website. some of them dont work and say line busy non stop thinking it works and it doesn't	[REDACTED]			exams

Division of Financial Assistance Wastewater Operator Certification Program Fee Schedule Changes April 28, 2026

*Presented by:
Keisha Kelley, Program Manager*



Discussion Items

1. Fee Setting: Authority, Guiding Principles, Process
2. Background
3. Program Revenue and Expenditures
4. Proposed Fee Change
5. Open Discussion and Question

Authority Guiding Principles Process



Background



Program Revenue and Expenditures

(amounts listed in thousands)

	FY 2017/18	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21
Revenue	\$1,008	\$703	\$682	\$571
Expenditures	\$1,046	\$1,212	\$969	\$985
Difference	(\$38)	(\$509)	(\$287)	(\$414)
% Difference	-3.63%	-41.99%	-29.62%	-42.03%

	FY 2021/22	FY 2022/23	FY 2023/24	FY 2024/25
Revenue	\$630	\$608	\$771	\$873
Expenditures	\$1,388	\$1,212	\$1,077	\$1,201
Difference	(\$758)	(\$604)	(\$306)	(\$328)
% Difference	-54.61%	-49.84%	-28.41%	-27.31%
Fund Balance				\$573

Proposed Fee Change

			35% Fee Increase	
	FY 2025/26 Estimate	TOTALS	FY 2026/27 Estimate	TOTALS
Revenue				
Fees	\$997		\$1,345	
Subtotal		\$997		\$1,345
Expenditures				
Personnel Services	\$1,088		\$1,120	
Supplemental Pension Assessment	\$7		\$7	
Pro Rata	\$65		\$65	
Contract – Computer Based Testing	\$153		\$153	
Subtotal		\$1,313		\$1,345
Difference		(\$316)		\$0
Difference %		-24.07%		0%

The background features three overlapping, wavy, light gray bands that curve across the top and middle of the slide, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Open Discussion and Questions