

One-hundred forty-eighth meeting
Water and Wastewater Advisory Council
September 25, 2009
Helena, Montana

CALL TO ORDER

The one-hundred forty-eighth meeting of the Water and Wastewater Operator’s Advisory Council was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Council Chairperson Joanne “Joni” Hall Emrick, Kalispell.

Council members present:

Carol Reifschneider, Jon Dilliard, Roger Skogen, Donald Coffman, and Tony Porrazzo.

Grant Burroughs not present.

Department personnel attending all or portions of the meeting:

Shelley Nolan, Operator Certification Program Manager, Reta Therriault, Operator Certification Technician, Julie Allen, Operator Certification Technician, and Channah Wells, Fiscal Specialist.

Visitor: Scott Anderson from Montgomery-Anderson.

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| Minutes Approved | A motion to approve the minutes from the previously held meeting of May 1, 2009 was made by Carol and seconded by Roger. The motion carried and the minutes were approved. |
| Advisory Council Member Update | Reta reported that Roger had expressed his desire to remain on the Council and a letter requesting his appointment for another term was in process. DEQ Director Richard Opper had signed it and the letter is now in the Governor’s office. |
| PWS Update | <p>The members were provided an updated organizational chart. Jon Dilliard explained the breakdowns of the chart and how the technical services had put those people in the areas where they are actually working. Changes were also made in subdivisions with Rachel Clark moving from a supervisory position and consolidating the subdivisions and engineering managers’ positions. Steve Kilbreath is that manager. Steve Martin is the supervisor over the new data management section. Joni asked about Jenny Chambers and Jon confirmed that she is the Bureau Chief of the Water Protection Bureau and is still on the board at ABC.</p> <p>Jon Dilliard also reported on the PWS/OpCert budget. He said the biggest change has been the vacancy savings rate of 7%, up from 4%. He also mentioned that the program funding side of things is the tightest right now because fees are no longer supporting them, especially in subdivisions. The general fund is supporting the 6 new FTEs. The grants are also helping but both the Homeland Securities grant and the EPA Reimbursement grant will be gone soon and the Bureau will have to look at where things stand at the end of this</p> |

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| | <p>biennium. The Bureau will be asking for fee increases at the next legislature. In the meantime, department will look at travel and training costs and a few other areas to make some reductions/savings.</p> <p>Channah Wells spoke to the SRF funds; OpCert receives 90k from SRF. She also explained the numbers from the Reimbursement grant. These reflect operator reimbursement dollars only. They do not show training expenses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY 2008 a total of \$19,987.34* in reimbursements issued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$3,367.50 to 27 operators for CEC training ○ \$3,080.00 to 22 operators for application/exam fees ○ \$1,297.50 to 10 operators to attend pre-exam training ○ \$1,890.00 to 63 operators for DW renewal fees ○ \$8,134.53 to 44 operators for mileage ○ \$2,217.81 to 24 operators for meals and/or lodging <p>*These numbers are different than previously reported due to a different breakdown and tracking method used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY 2009 a total of \$43,650.05 in reimbursements issued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$11,744.23 to 79 operators for CEC training ○ \$4,200.00 to 28 operators for application/exam fees ○ \$1,748.00 to 12 operators to attend pre-exam training ○ \$4,380.00 to 140 operators for DW renewal fees ○ \$17,002.06 to 104 operators for mileage ○ \$4,575.76 to 71 operators for meals and/or lodging <p>As of the beginning of FY 2010, there is \$300,371.00 remaining in this grant.</p> |
| <p>New Certification Classifications And Updates</p> | <p>Scott Anderson of Anderson-Montgomery Consulting Engineers provided an update on the Industrial Wastewater classifications. He provided 2 handouts showing the collected data on known facilities in Montana and updating contact information.</p> <p>The first handout described the proposed classes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken into system and onsite operators • Only looking at systems with groundwater discharge permits <p>The second handout was the “Needs to Know” list. A survey sent to systems was intended to refine the NTK and allow Montana industrial systems to comment. The return rate of the surveys was poor and he is now working on urging responses through another letter and phone calls. Reta and Julie are helping with this.</p> <p>Scott asked for input as to who would be good to get responses and input from besides operators. Engineers, manufacturers of systems, and other states were offered by the group. He stated that the current NTK list is quite lengthy and makes developing a test</p> |

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| | <p>difficult. Roger mentioned that operators say they get tested on things that don't apply to their systems. He said he tells them their systems could change.</p> <p>Shelley asked about talking to Steve Kilbreath about how many systems truly are "septic systems". Scott replied that he was going by discharge permits for his contact lists.</p> <p>Shelley asked when Scott anticipated being completely done with the development of the tests. Scott hoped by spring, 6 months.</p> <p>Tony mentioned that hospitals and similar industries discharge into municipal systems or land apply and Scott reminded us that this was one of the reasons for the survey. It is needed to build accurate tests that apply to industries in Montana.</p> <p>Tony brought up the need for more certified operators and possible reasons for the lack of operators. He spoke specifically to smaller systems and said that many small systems do not understand the regulations or do not have the budget to pay operators and are reluctant to add that expense to their budgets. Scott mentioned that DEQ has to decide if they will enforce the regulations and this may help systems understand the "need". Jon mentioned that there will always be groups that fall through the cracks but there is a need for certification and regulations. Educating homeowner associations about what it costs to run a system correctly should become one of our priorities. Scott stated that often boards are there because no one else wants the job so there is a huge lack of understanding of just how important their water and wastewater systems are and how they work. Tony suggested that things should be put together in a simple terms so they (boards) know and can be educated. He offered that perhaps a video, presentation or power point might be used. Jon concluded the discussion of industrial wastewater certification stating that anyone who knows of industrial operators should let Scott know.</p> |
| <p>Water Schools and In-Office Exams, Compliance Status Report and Enforcement Update</p> | <p>Exam stats for the Helena School, 5/22/09 and updated In-Office stats were added to the stats previously provided. Julie also provided an updated summary of the post test surveys. The responses remained similar to previous summaries. Julie reported that math is still an issue but that the pass rate has improved and the Helena school was very good. During the prep in Helena, the math was reviewed as applied math – real life math and questions that apply to how an operator uses the math.</p> <p>Updated compliance reports were provided in meeting packets but not discussed.</p> |
| <p>CECRC Update and ATP's Received</p> | <p>Reta informed the Council that Dustin White was a new member of the committee. The committee approved Dustin and a woman from Montana City as training providers.</p> <p>Carol suggested that the treatment exams be reviewed for relevancy and appropriate for entry level operators into surface water and</p> |

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| | <p>membrane use. She said this was something that had been discussed in the CECRC meeting. Donald mentioned changes in existing systems are going to affect operators' knowledge. Shelley suggested gearing the 2B exam/classification to membrane. Carol moved that DEQ consider reviewing surface water exams (1 & 2B). Tony seconded and motion passed. Julie mentioned that the cost from ABC for reports concerning the questions missed on these two exams for the past 5 years had prevented further movement on this project. Jon stated that this was a legitimate cost.</p> |
| <p>Renewals & Revoked Operators Update</p> | <p>Reta reported that 1569 renewals had been mailed out. As of the date of this meeting, 75 operators had been revoked. \$40,690 in fees were received for drinking water renewals; \$26,670 in fees for wastewater renewals; and \$3,090 in late fees was received.</p> |
| <p>Other Issues</p> | <p>The 30 Day Wait was discussed. 30 days from the dates on the application or the date of the results letter before attempting a test. Jon and Shelley will check to see if the language in the rule has been changed and approved.</p> <p>DEQ vs Operators responsibilities: This was a question Tony brought up. He said that small systems don't understand and that the owners of these systems need to be educated. Jon said that operators should document incidents where boards are uncooperative with their operators and the responsibilities of the operators. Carol asked if there was an existing document that described board responsibility. Does DEQ have one? MAP? MRWS? All need to educate boards and small system owners.</p> <p>Transient systems: Shelley stated that approximately 900 transient systems in the state treat their water. Should they have certified operators? Transient systems are our biggest health threats and there are some very complicated systems being run by untrained people. She said that qualifications and the types of classifications for certification would have to be explored. She asked if the Council would support requiring certified operators for these systems. Roger asked if it would put more folks to contract certified operators rather than training and hiring their own. Shelley mentioned that the new ground water rule would catch some of these systems. She also stated that it would not change their systems, just would put trained people in place. These systems cost more to regulate than community and NTNC systems. Carol moved to find out the legal aspects to make this requirement--does DEQ have the authority? Roger seconded the motion and it carried. Jon proposed to report back on authority and then some options, i.e. contractor and operators.</p> |

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| | <p>Summer School dates: Julie asked why summer school is in May rather than later in the summer. Concluded that due to harvests, ranching, and system improvements during the summer months, it was not feasible to run a school during the summer. Julie suggested that we do away with this school since the attendance is consistently low and perhaps make it just an exam prep and test session. Another suggestion was to ask MRWS if they might like to have it. This would be discussed with Barb Coffman and Kevin Durocher. (Julie)</p> <p>Systems without operators: Are there lists? Julie stated that the compliance list covers this as far as systems that require certified operators.</p> |
| Date of Next Meeting | The date of the next meeting will be March 12, at 1pm. It will be held in Helena at the DEQ, Metcalf building, Rm 111. There was some discussion about possibly making this a remote meeting to help cut costs. |
| ADJOURN MEETING | At 3:25 pm Roger Skogen moved to adjourn the meeting. Donald Coffman seconded and the motion carried. Joni Emrick adjourned the meeting. |
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