



# Nevada Certified Drinking Water Operator's Forum

Hosted by: Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water  
901 South Stewart Street, Suite 4001, Carson City, NV 89701

## Meeting Minutes

### *Combined Meeting with the Nevada Water and Wastewater Training Coalition*

**March 10, 2011, 8:35 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.**

Location: Nevada Rural Water Association Annual Conference  
Grand Sierra Resort, Reno ~ Conference Center Room "Nevada 8"

1. **Call To Order** and Introductions (Forum Chairman Harvey Johnson & NTC Chairman Bob Foerster)

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

**Forum Members present:** Lynn Forsberg (Elko), Harvey Johnson (IVGID), John Hulett (WCDWR), Cameron McKay (KGID), Bob Foerster (NvRWA)

**NTC Members present:** Mark Walker, Co-Chair Nevada Water and Wastewater Training Coalition (UNR), Mike Ariztia (SVGID), Neil Worthen (RCAC)

**Members absent:** none.

**Representing the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP), Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (SBDW):** Jennifer Carr, Chief; Kelly McGowan, Environmental Scientist; and Nan Paulson, Operator Certification Administrative Assistant.

2. **Approval of Forum Minutes from March 10, 2011 – Action Item** Cameron McKay made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. John Hulett seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

3. **Discussion & Possible Action – Merger/Consolidation/Coordination of Forum & NTC**

**a. Brief History of the NWWTC (Foerster)**

Bob Foerster gave a brief history of the Coalition. It began in the early 1990's with Operator Certification. It was developed to identify and meet training needs from general information to continuing training for renewals. Over the years, with UNR's Mark Walker and Dean Adams, a training video was developed. The test results were researched and used as a guide, and emphasized deficiencies. For twenty years the Coalition met quarterly. There is now a realization that there is an overlap of the Coalition and the Operator Certification Advisory Forum.

**THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE NEVADA DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER TRAINING COALITION:** The Nevada Drinking Water and Wastewater Training Coalition is committed to protecting public health and the environment in Nevada's communities by ensuring that high quality training and education is provided for those responsible for drinking water and wastewater systems.

**b. Brief History of the Forum (Johnson, McKay)**

Cameron McKay added that 11-12 years ago, they worked on regulation updates for the program and a way to categorize all water systems and determine what level operator was needed. The point system for water system ranking was changed. Eventually, there were new technologies, and the way operators became certified changed. Cameron added that they originally operated as the Operator Certification Advisory Board and would advise the State Board of Health. It took over two years with subcommittees to set revised requirements. Grades III and IV requirements were changed to add post-secondary classes. This raised the bar for education levels.

After the changes were made, the Board was no longer necessary so it became an Advisory Forum, and has remained in order to help with training and handle new requirements.

Chairman Johnson commented that the Forum has worked with the AWWA to create changes such as testing, and using ABC for the tests.

### **c. Discussion – Benefits & Mechanisms of Streamlining the Groups**

Bob Foerster brought up that there was a lot of overlap between the Advisory Forum and the Training Coalition. For this reason, it seems there would be a benefit in combining the two. The Coalition had been putting together the Water Lines publications. Now, NDEP does the publication after article assignments are discussed by the NTC. Joining the groups would create efficiencies. Also, because the Coalition has no assets, it would not be a problem to combine them.

Mike Ariztia asked about the Coalition tailoring training needs and putting something together for operators. He wanted to know where waste water would be. How would waste water certification be monitored, and what training would there be on that? Chairman Johnson said the NWEA would continue to handle the certification for waste water. Mike A. expressed concern about losing the wastewater element.

Jennifer Carr explained that the Forum originally was an Advisory Board under the Health Division. If there is a need to revert the Forum back to an Advisory Board, it would have to go before the SEC, as it would take a change in statute. If desired, the Mission and Operations Charter can be amended to include both. John Hulett stated that seems like a natural fit, and that industry seems to be making changes to include both.

Cameron added that the SRF & NDEP work hand in hand with Adele Basham and Jennifer Carr and that combining can cut down on time. The goal would be to have more educated operators. Greg Reed asked if there could be a perceived conflict.

The Chairman said the Forum should monitor tests of ABC to make sure they are applicable to what operators need. It should be put into the Mission Statement that training people have to excuse themselves from monitoring tests. It would also be good to have operators review these tests. One suggestion would be to call the AWWA, since they have the contract with ABC, and have them get a sample test. Bob Foerster said the monitors will have to excuse themselves, and when the NWEA reviewed a test, the rules would not allow the reviewer to take tests in the future.

Harvey Johnson asked if everyone was ready to vote to combine the Forum and the Coalition. Mike Ariztia said he'd like to have more logistics before a vote. Mr. Johnson asked if anyone would like to form a sub-committee. John Nelson added that someone should talk with the NWEA before voting. Harvey said the NWEA is actually doing training, and that the Board does the test and certification. John Hulett agreed the NWEA should be consulted as a next step.

Jennifer Carr talked about the mission of the Forum. The Forum's webpage has a copy of the charter documents. The name of the Forum can be changed, too.

Cam McKay said a sub-committee to work further on the consolidation concept was a great idea and made a motion to create a subcommittee that will include himself, Bob Foerster, Mike Ariztia, and Mark Walker. They will cc correspondence to Jennifer Carr and Adele Basham. John Hulett seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Bob Foerster will Chair the subcommittee and report back to the combined group at the next meeting in June.

## **4. On-Line Testing for Water Operators- Status Update/Discussion**

Chairman Johnson said the on-line testing seems to be working out well and it is a good option for only \$68 more than the original test price. Some of the benefits are a higher passing percentage, it is in a controlled environment, the tester is not looking at a series of questions, and the tester will know immediately if they pass or fail. If a tester fails, they would have to wait for 30 days to retest. ABC works with AMP, through H & R Block. It's only in Reno and Las Vegas at this time. Hopefully, if more operators test there, H & R Block would have more testing available in the rural areas.

Jennifer Carr mentioned that AWWA's on-line testing will hopefully be up and running soon. NDEP has a contract with them to proctor exams. It may take a regulation change to do this at the State level, and NDEP is still waiting for

the AWWA to try it first. There will be several managerial changes to consider before it is feasible for the NDEP program. If an operator takes an on-line exam through AWWA and is certified, they can apply for reciprocity in NV.

There were comments from the audience asking if schools can do the proctoring or the UNR Cooperative Extension. An agreement would have to be looked into regarding the security of the test. It would be nice to have multiple organizations available for testing. Mike A. noted that some national exams are available through Sylvan Learning Centers.

Harvey Johnson said the passing rate of wastewater tests is only at 50%, and for grades 3 & 4, the results are dismal. People just are not studying and they need to put time in for that. The national averages were about the same. Ray Dummar added that if operators get reimbursed even if they fail, then there is no incentive to study.

## **5. Certified Water Professional Designation – Discussion**

Harvey Johnson said that in Colorado wastewater and water certified operators can have designated professional letters, like an RN. CWP = Certified Water Professional. Harvey is interested in pursuing this for Nevada and mentioned there would have to be some kind of enforcement for those who really are not certified if they used the designation. John Hulett said the Colorado program could be researched, as well as how to get such a designation in Nevada.

Jennifer Carr said there would need to be more research in how RNs and PEs are approved for designation in Nevada. NDEP does not have the staffing for a new certification program. Kelly McGowan said that the Erosion Control Association is a recognized international certification. It takes years of classes to attain so there is some value in their certification. An opinion from the audience was offered that it seemed like a possible incentive program and may be a way to get recognition for upper-level operators.

Harvey said that is just one way to show an operator is certified. National Environmental Trainer has an exam that requires the tester show documentation of hundreds of hours to get certified. It's a very rigid system. Looking at a Colorado model is worth the time to check. He and John Hulett will do more research.

## **6. NDEP Updates (Jennifer Carr):**

### **a. Certified Backflow Assembly Tester Regulation Amendment**

Jennifer Carr thanked the Forum for their efforts in gathering information on this issue. A year and a half earlier there were issues in NE Nevada with securing properly certified testers, and at about the same time the regulated community expressed concerns about program costs because the AWWA raised rates for Backflow Certification. After a Forum subcommittee conducted appropriate research and found that ABPA and AWWA were equally rigorous, a regulatory amendment was done. ABPA is now recognized and the amended regulation was effective as of July 2010. Now, there is a new opportunity to use AWWA, ABPA or an equivalent organization as approved by NDEP.

### **b. On-Line Approved Contact Hour Training Calendar & Other Operator Resources (Demo)**

Jennifer said there are new resources available. They are listed on the Forum Website at <http://ndep.nv.gov/dwo/index.html>. There are external links to other agencies, along with past issues of Water Lines. There was also going to be a notice put up if the renewal cards were going to be much later. Regarding the renewal cards, certification is still considered valid if we received a complete renewal application. On the link there are also previous meeting minutes, exam analysis, calendar of events (click on class, then window of training will populate, and will tell contact information, test application deadlines). Other listings include Federal Grant Opportunities, Education & Training, and under Resources Information is the EPA Ground Water Rule, AWWA Competency Model, Flu outbreak and employee loss, Sample Testing Link.

An audience guest asked about Water Quality Compliance and if information could be submitted to Andrea Seifert, on-line. The guest was particularly interested in reporting for MRDLs, pumpage reports, & residuals? Jennifer replied that the NDEP is not currently set up for electronic reporting from individual water systems, but we are making progress with several certified laboratories.

**c. Contract Operator Expectations – Coming Soon in 2011**

Jennifer said it is the desire of NDEP SDW to be more clear regarding NDEP expectations for contract operators. NDEP is modifying software to be able to identify if an operator wants to, or is, a contract operator. More activity on this issue will be forthcoming in 2011.

**d. PWS Staffing Plans – Be Proactive**

With economic issues, layoffs, and other factors, Jennifer reminded the group that it is important to plan for and maintain minimum staffing requirements. Issues with systems not having enough properly certified operators on shift has become more of a problem. Day shift operators, Supervisors and the Operator in Responsible Charge all have specific requirements for levels of certification in the Regulations (NAC 445A.617 – 445A.652).

**7. Waterlines Publication**

**a. Brainstorm Operator Input on Articles they'd like to see in 2011**

An audience guest asked about water lines being mailed to them. NDEP is working on getting away from mailing paper and is trying to do this electronically. It is more environmentally correct, and saves money and time. If someone requests a hard copy, it can be arranged. Mike Ariztia said his office prints some out and puts them in their break room. Cameron said that operators who have given us their email addresses will get an electronic copy of Water Lines. There is concern that copies aren't making it to the entry-level operators.

A question was raised about new regulations for de-chlorination, hydrant flushing, & line flushing. Jennifer said she will ask BWPC do a de-chlor article in a future issue. Other ideas for articles include: LT2 implementation at IVGID, Washoe County's energy management program, and cross-connection program clarifications. Audience participant "Scott" said he would like to see a Cross Connection Control Program discussion to avoid an issue similar to what Lovelock experienced.

**b. Critique Current Issue & Article Assignments**

Cameron McKay said he would like to see Operator of the Year profiled. A member of the audience suggested writing to clear up myths. Bob Foerster mentioned that operators should know the NAC and NRS 445A regulations, as it is their rules to live by. He will see if Crystel will do a talk on it.

Adele Basham said there were thoughts of discontinuing Water Lines but she can see the value in it now.

**8. Member's Open Comments**

Harvey Johnson opened up the floor for comments. He mentioned that the NWEA website can be used to post training for waste water operators. There were no other comments.

**9. Public Comments**

There were no comments.

**10. Upcoming Meetings**

Schedule 2011 Meetings – June 1st, September 15<sup>th</sup>, & December 15<sup>th</sup>. All are proposed for 9 am (but 10:00 am is typical). Meetings for the rest of the year are available with phone and video conferencing as usual.

**11. Adjourn**

Chairman Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

*Reminder to Certified Operators: You are eligible to receive renewal contact hours for attendance at Operator Forum Meetings and the Nevada Water and Wastewater Training Coalition Meetings!*