



Nevada Water and Wastewater 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

First Official Meeting of the New Combined Forum

November 10, 2011 – 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 pm

Location: Bryan Building, 2nd Floor Hearing Room
901 South Stewart Street, Carson City, NV

Videoconference to: NDEP Las Vegas Office, and Great Basin College
Red Rock Conference Room 1500 College Parkway
2030 E. Flamingo Rd., Suite 230 Lundberg Hall, Room 114
Las Vegas, NV Elko, NV

Phone conference to: 1-888-363-4734, access code 1515199

- 1. Call to Order** and introductions (Temporary Co-Chairmen: Harvey Johnson and Bob Foerster). The meeting was called to order at 10:37 a.m.

Introductions: Mike Ariztia (SVGID), Cameron McKay (KGID), Bob Foerster (NvRWA), Mark Walker (UNR), Charlie Dettling (Summit Eng.), Mike Workman (Lyon Co., and W. "Van" Vanassche (City of Fernley)

Las Vegas Attendance (via video): Tom Georgi (LVVWD); Gary Windholz (LVVWD); Adrian Edwards (City of Henderson); Dave Johnson (SNWA via telephone); Steve Johnson arrived later

Elko Attendance (via video): Lynn Forsberg (Elko County); Jim Kerr (Elko County); Dale Johnson (Elko County); Jim Tharpe (Newmont)

Representing the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP): Jennifer Carr, Chief, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (BSDW); Kelly McGowan, Environmental Scientist, Operator Certification (Op Cert) Program; Nan Paulson (Op Cert Administrative Assistant);

Test Administrator: Ron Penrose (TMWA)

Telephonic Attendance: Jennifer McMartin (Waste Water Certification); Linda Contreras (CA/NV AWWA)

- 2. Approval of Forum/NTC Minutes from June 1, 2011 – Action Item-**

Cameron McKay moved to approve the minutes. Bob Foerster seconded the motion. Approval was unanimous.

- 3. Nominations & Election of a Chairman – Action Item-**

Cameron McKay nominated Bob Foerster for Chairman. Mike Ariztia seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Bob Foerster accepted the nomination and Harvey Johnson turned the Chair over to Bob.

4. Member Representation of Water & Wastewater Systems of Various Sizes (All) – Action Item

Bob Foerster began the discussion of who the representatives would be for each category. Jennifer Carr explained that the categories are the AWWA, NvRWA, and the General Public. The mission is to have four representatives but not more than six. Each member cannot represent more than one category. If there are nine members, there can be two for each size category.

Large: over 10,000 connections

Medium: less than 10,000 connections

Small: less than 500 connections

Cam McKay initiated the discussion, and the following was approved:

Drinking Water:

Large systems--- DW-2- Tom Georgi and Dave Johnson from LVVWD were nominated.

Medium system- DW-2- Cameron McKay and Mike Ariztia

Small system----DW-1- Bob Foerster

Waste Water:

Large system---- WW-1- John Hulett

Medium system- WW-2- Harvey Johnson and John Hulett

Small system---- WW-2- Dale Johnson and Lynn Forsberg

A motion was made by Bob Foerster to approve the nominations above. Mark Walker seconded the motion. All were in favor.

5. Drinking Water & Wastewater Operator Exam Results Review (Jennifer McMartin & Kelly McGowan)

Jennifer McMartin talked about the Wastewater Operator testing. She said that Math was not the only element that seemed to stop operators from passing the tests. She noted the following difficulties: The statistical charts of the Wastewater Operator Exam Results are included at the end of the minutes.

- a) 43%= Not Mastering Advanced (Tertiary) Treatment
- b) Disinfection
- c) Collecting Samples and Math Disinfection
- d) Math, additional treatment, and collecting samples

Cam McKay expressed surprise that collection of samples was such an issue, especially at Grades III and IV level. Jennifer McMartin agreed and added that disinfection is a problem also.

Kelly McGowan talked about the June and September Drinking Water Operator test cycles. The June Treatment in the South was 100% passing and in September it was 63%. It is unknown why there is such a difference. He said he will look into the past tests, as far back as possible, to compile data.

Jennifer McMartin added that ABC is willing to give us the test data for a nominal fee. Linda Contreras from the AWWA said they would be able to compile data by year. An option for the AWWA data would be to start with the D-1, and can have a breakdown of what was not mastered. An example might be Operation of Equipment, Equipment Installation, Math, Performance Procedure, Security, Disinfection Math, etc.

Kelly McGowan interjected that this issue should be addressed, and that these types of percentages can be used as guidelines to help operators. He feels this should be done frequently.

“Van” Vanassche spoke about using the low pass rate as a positive. The information can be used by truly dedicated professionals as a means of knowing where more study is needed. It will help them to learn where to increase their knowledge resulting in passing grades, and passers are employees to keep. Cam McKay agreed with Van's ideas.

Bob Foerster announced that the discussion seemed to be spilling over into the next segment of the Agenda for Training Needs. He said item number 6 was now being discussed.

6. Training Needs – *Open Discussion*

Darrin Price concurred with Van, and added that the water fields need and want knowledgeable people passing the tests. He added that it is also important to teach the knowledge, not just how to pass the tests.

Mike Ariztia said that the lower levels need to focus and gain experience in real operations, and higher levels need higher mastery of math and calculations. If testing failures occur 5, 6, 7 times, the tester will eventually pass. He asked if there should be a regulation to have a year's cooling off after failing a test a set number of times? Should there be a cut-off? If so, testers would have to try harder to pass.

Darrin Price asked what is listed as training, etc., when renewals and results are sent. Per Nan with NDEP, there is no extra information sent but there is more information available on the NDEP BSDW website. It has been updated but can use more development.

Ron Penrose mentioned that at TMWA, a number of upper level operators (D-3 as example) seem to be a threshold where people put their effort in, or not (effort in what?) It seems that the testers either know the material or they don't. He also likes the idea about having a waiting period if a tester fails a certain number of times. Ron said he has set up study information for employees and they still did not pass.

Mike Ariztia added that a waiting time would also give testers a chance to look at themselves and see where they are and where they want to go. He added that employers can only do so much and that some testers just cannot be kept (where?).

Jennifer McMartin commented that the wastewater applications require a supervisor signature attesting to the operator's experience. She has also had some supervisor's not sign the documents because it puts the supervisor on the line. If a supervisor does sign for false experience, then the supervisor risks their own certification.

Jennifer Carr said this has been a topic of discussion for BSDW. Cam McKay expressed concern that this might result in personnel inequality and possible discriminatory issues. Mike Ariztia affirmed that the supervisor would only be attesting to experience, not that the operator is ready for an exam.

Dave Johnson shared his concern about testers that might be able to do field work but just have difficulty taking tests. Adrian Edwards commented that a 100% pass rate would indicate the test is too easy. Jennifer Carr stated that the drinking water test passing averages in the Nation were at 50%. There needs to be more concentration on the most difficult areas for training purposes.

Kelly McGowan announced that changes in Management and Industry are having an effect as more mature operators are moving up into management positions. They may not be as comfortable with supervision and leadership requirements such as planning. Kelly would like to see something like a 20 hour course for managerial classes. He asked if that could be possible. NDEP allows 2.5 contact hours pertaining to safety for renewals, so how much would be allowed for management training?

Mike Ariztia noted the challenges for rural operators in regards to training. Crystel Montecinos' training is critical and needs to be supported. He added that the video conferences help operators to maintain their certification with the least discomfort and travel.

Cam asked if the Forum should write a letter of support for their training. Mark Walker of UNR said he appreciates the feedback on the critical values of training by UNR and its value after 12 years. Cam asserted that the attitude of the Board was to support the renewal of Crystel's contract at UNR.

7. NDEP Updates (Kelly McGowan)

Kelly talked about the Drinking Water Operator renewals. Many operators graciously sent in their applications early and they are being processed. BSDW's goal is to have them out on time this year.

Kelly announced that he had been to a number of trainings, one of which was in Idaho. They have a program that auto-generates notification with a telephone call and email when renewals are due, testing is needed, etc. This program also records if the telephone call was answered or if it went to voicemail, and if the email went through. The upfront cost is about \$2,800-3,000. It is worth looking into for NDEP.

Some states may be having a money crisis with raising fees so they collect connection fees to fund the program or set up a small production tax. Kelly added that he is not advocating a tax increase, just that we need to think of ways to improve, especially when facing degradation of Federal funding. Jennifer Carr said this is an interesting idea, but she also recognizes that fiscal crisis would not permit this change.

Kelly said Nan has been working on E-filing, as we are one of the few still taking paper applications. He would like to see us end up as paperless. Kelly mentioned that Utah, Arizona, and Idaho are helpful, as he has been talking with them about strengthening Reciprocity. We want to appreciate each State's efforts and support each other. He would like to see the Inter-Mountain States and CA get involved, and it looks promising!

Jennifer Carr announced that NDEP's Facebook group created and re-created a page for BSDW. It was advertised a second time and members have increased from 5-43. This is a good resource to help with communication. Jennifer added that members must send a request directly to her and she decides if they are okay to approve so that they can read what is written and post information.

Adrian Edwards suggested using Linked-In, as that is more professional/business related. Jim Price commented that he heard, at the AWWA Conference, that some groups are going to Smart Phones. It's relatively cheap for groups. If interested, check out Smart Phone App for Business.

Jennifer McMartin said she had to leave at 11:55 for an Executive Business Meeting. She will send in information for Water Lines.

8. Water Lines Publication (All Attendees)

a. Article Assignments for Next Edition

Jennifer Carr stated that Water Lines articles are due to Marcy McDermott in two weeks (Monday after Thanksgiving) for publishing by December 20th. She added that a regulation change will be needed to have the number of Forum members changed to 10.

Bob Foerster said a Backflow article will be in the Water Lines 10th edition. ABPA is okay to use now for backflow training and testing.

Ron Penrose mentioned that he can write an article about a project related to River Diversion. Glendale Water Supply Project won ENR Project of the year.

Jim Price will put together an article regarding Water College opportunities available at the AWWA. He also said he will write a letter of support for Crystel Montecinos' training. He does not like to see free opportunities disappear.

Mark Walker advised that he will write a summary of records and evaluations for Crystel's training. He added that he can provide a concise article of whom and what businesses have been impacted by Crystel's training. He has received 14 letters and emails in the last three days supporting her training. He is open to receiving more. Letters should be directed to him.

Jennifer Carr said she will have an employee work on the Disinfecting By-Product rollout in 2012. She will see if Andrea Seifert has time for it.

9. Member's Open Comments

Chairman Foerster opened the Member's Open Comments. Cameron McKay announced that he would like to see some recognition for Don Allen's work. Don was very instrumental in enhancing the training programs.

10. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

11. Upcoming Meetings – NvRWA Conference, March 19-22, 2012

The meeting will be at the Grand Sierra Resort on March 21st, Wednesday, from 2:15 to 3:15 p.m.

Jennifer Carr reminded members to sign in, as attendance certificates are now made by BSDW for renewals. These are valid for two contact hours.

12. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Chairman Foerster; it was seconded by Harvey Johnson. Adjourn: 12:08 p.m.

Reminder to Certified Operators: You are eligible to receive renewal contact hours for attendance at Operator Forum Meetings!

Attachments of the Wastewater Operator Exam are on the following pages.







