



# Nevada Water and Wastewater Operator's Forum

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

## Meeting Minutes Thursday, September 21, 2017 – 9:00am to 11:00am

Location: Richard H. Bryan Building,  
Multi-Purpose Room on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701

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

### Agenda

1) **Call to Order and Introductions. (Bob Foerster)**

Meeting was called at 9:00am

**Forum Members Present:** Max Sosa, BSDW/OpCert; Bob Foerster, NvRWA; Greg Reed, Round Hill GID; Grant Perkins, Panaca Farmstead; Nathan Adams, Pioche Public Utilities; Jim Kerr, Elko County Public Works; Dale Johnson, City of Elko

**On the Phone:** Steven Garner, John Solvie, Tom Georgie, Elise Brachtl, Ashley Jacobson

**Introductions and Guests:** Mike Boney, NVRWA; Bob Lochridge, IVGID; Linh Kieu, NDEP; Chris Hoffert, Lyon County; Brian Gibbs, Lyon County; Scott Fleckenstein, Lyon County; Brandon Garden, KGID; Cameron McKay, KGID; Kevin Ryan, US EPA; Daralyn Dobson, NDEP; James Youngblood, IVGID; Tom Hoffert, Farr West Engineering

2) **Approval of Forum/NTC Minutes from June 12, 2017 – Action Item**

**Nathan Adams**-Motion to Approve

**Grant Perkins**-Second  
Unanimous

3) **Drinking Water Exam Results Review from June 21, 2017. (Max Sosa)**



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**Max Sosa-** AWWA has listed deficient topic areas as a “Partial Mastering” rate of more than 20% so that these areas can be reviewed and further fine tune future training. The areas needing improvement are:

Distribution- Maintenance, operate equipment, security, safety and administration, monitor evaluate and adjust disinfection

Treatment- Lab analysis, monitor evaluate and adjust treatment and evaluate characteristics of source water.

Now for a brief summary of the June 2017 certification exams. 104 applicants took the exam and the overall passing rate was 54% as opposed to 62% previously. In regards to the upcoming test this month, there are 113 applicants scheduled for the September 21, 2017 exam. Best of luck to everyone.

Note : After NWEA updates / introduce John Solvie: The Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) has updated their exams for 2017 and the need to know criteria. John Solvie will be providing information regarding the new updates.

## 4) **Training Needs / Forum Input**

Max Sosa- Recommended when you are studying for the exam, to go to the ABC website and they have examples, study guides and need to know criteria.

## 5) **Waterlines Status**

**Linh Kieu-** Wants to make the Waterlines more of a vocal point to bring it back and whether or not we could incorporate some kind of contact hour capabilities. Wants to make it as if an operator were to read it and they could fill out something like a questionnaire, send it into us and then receive contact hours for it. Thinks that is one of the ways to make it more relevant and help operators to get contact hours.

## 6) **NWEA Updates (Jake or Ashley Jacobson)**

**Ashley Jacobson-** In the next couple of months the industrial waste inspector exam it will be offered as a computerized exam. The Forum Program Review committee is having a workshop at Tri-State if you have questions regarding the proposed regulation changes. There is an NWEA networking event at Tri-State and another one at Red's in Carson City on November 16<sup>th</sup> from 4:30pm-8:30pm.



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## 7) ABC Updates: Call in Guest speaker: John Solvie

**John Solvie**- Explained that the latest exam cycle is complete. This is the most rigid process he has ever seen. The pretesting period is complete so that all the passing scores with difficulty for questions can be assessed. The exams are now in use on the Nevada wastewater side. The focus today is the new exams. All of the new exams have 110 questions on them. In order for exams to be validated, those questions need to be assigned passing values for each question and rather than doing that as a pretest. The best way to validate exams is to have ongoing testing questions. The candidate will still be scored on the 100 questions that are validated on the exam and the other 10 are used for analysis for future exam scores. There will not be time added to take the exam. The 10 questions will let them gather data for future exams and it will just improve the quality of exams moving forward. They had a webinar for the concerns from some testing clients for how to assess with regulatory questions and the regulatory questions have been removed in the exams.

**Cam McKay**- Asked what is the CEU requirement for the PO and is there criteria on what some of that training has to be?

**John Solvie**- Answered if you would like to find that out, referred operators to go to the website [www.professionaloperator.org](http://www.professionaloperator.org) and you can get all of that information. If not, you can call ABC directly.

**Mike Boney**- Asked what would be the equivalent certification for a professional operator's cert?

**John Solvie**- Answered that the PO is not really an equivalent certification, it's really a dual tap certification. The requirements for the PO program for the wastewater and the ABC requirements for certification exceed that in Nevada for both initial education, experience and continuing education moving forward. Because of that, the same exam that is used for the PO program is already the same exam that we are using here in NV. We are in a position to offer operators a dual path for certification because right now if you become ABC certified and receive your PO, you can get a one to one certification in NV.

**Kevin Ryan**- Asked how long will the old exams be supported for states or operator certification programs that choose not to move ahead or perhaps have a delay in passing new legislation to allow different than 70% passing rate? Has there been any discussion on the public health guidelines that assure no backsliding for existing certification



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programs when the guidelines are published and is that been questioned regarding moving the regulatory language for these exams.

**John Solvie-** Answered that ABC is a non-profit association made up of certifying authorities so they create those exams, they are a credential agency also to create those exams, but they have no regulatory jurisdiction over programs. The role ABC has with almost every testing client is to provide a contracted service to be able to provide the exam content. ABC is very well aware of the concern and the issue with the 70% is written into many state regs. It is very challenging for testing clients to try to engineer the exam to end up with passing values of questions that you can come up with a 70% passing score. There are some testing clients that choose to use the old exams. The old exams are considered not the current exams.

**Steve Garner-** Asked for clarification of that the exams of 2012 will be continued to be the standardized exams thru 2018?

**John Solvie-** Answered that he does not have the answer to that right now and will get with ABC and get back to us.

**Greg Reed-** Asked if John could talk a little about what the grading process is and how it works?

**John Solvie-** Answered a good example is if someone is taking an SAT test, you take an exam and in order to get a passing score, for example you would have to get like a 1238, but that number really doesn't mean anything. It just means that's what is considered a passing number. The same is with certification exams. You go through any validated exam process and it has to include a cut score analysis. A cut score analysis is based on a passing value of a particular question. It has not yet been determined what the passing score will be with ABC.

**Grant Perkins-** Asked John if there will still be a summary sheet sent with the results that explains the areas you did well on and the areas that still need to be worked on?

**John Solvie-** Answered yes and it will be a little more detailed on the summary sheet.

**Linh Kieu-** Wanted to let everyone know an update how Nevada will be taking exams with drinking water. The plan is to use the 2012 exam thru next year. With the help of AWWA and the forum, we will try to transition into whether how we bridge the gap with the regulatory piece being removed. Whether we have a webinar or mandatory training we do with the renewal, but we are still working on the aspects of that.



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**Max Sosa-** Wanted to mention that the regulations are very important in the exams because they are usually tailored to the environment to where the operator is located and they should be in the exams.

**John Solvie-** Mentioned that there is a state specific module available that ABC is encouraging to use. You would use your 100 questions standardized exam and if the state wants them to know specifically, they can create a separate module to go along with that exam.

## 8) **NDEP Updates (Max Sosa, Bureau of Safe drinking Water)**

**Max Sosa-** Please note that as of the end of July 2017, NDEP has a new Website and it can be accessed by going to <https://ndep.nv.gov/> select water and there you will find the operator certification page.

When you renew in 2017. You go to the operator certification page select renewals and the applications will be at the bottom of the page. If you are going to use the epay system go back to the operator certification page and go to I want to... (remember checks only please, no credit cards) and select epay.

NDEP no longer has a training calendar. A new feature on the website is the NDEP Approved Contact Hours it is a spreadsheet listing all the continuing education contact hour that have been approved for renewal with their expiration date. Currently there are 156 courses that I have approved in 2017. We try to update the training monthly or depending when the training providers turn in the training approvals. I am working towards having the training providers provide me a list of approved courses so that I can do more than one approval at a time. I would like to thank Nevada Rural Water and TMWA for their cooperation. To access the NDEP approved training go to the operator certification page and select Continuing Education (contact hours).

Renewal applications are accepted September 1st: Renewal notices have already been sent out. We have processed 25 renewals and sent out the wallet cards. We are also no longer printing the renewals cards all at one time. Advantage; you get your card faster and there is more time to take care of any unforeseen issues.

Renewal Policy Update:

From this point forward, effective January 1, 2017 :

Operators will be required to maintain only their highest OIT grade for their respective certification type (Distribution or Treatment) and not their corresponding underlying OITs.



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Operators will still need to maintain their Full certifications (if they have one) and are required to renew, convert and test in ascending order as per (NAC 445A.630.5).

- A CERTIFIED OPERATOR WITH:
- D3 FULL, D4 OIT CERTIFICATION;
- T1 OIT, T2 OIT, T3 OIT CERTIFICATION
  
- WOULD ONLY RENEW THE:
- D3 FULL, D4 OIT AND T3 OIT CERTIFICATION
  
- AND WOULD NEED THE FOLLOWING CONTACT HOURS:
- D 3 FULL / 10 HOURS, D4 OIT 10 / HOURS,
- T3 OIT / 10 HOURS

The operator would still be required to maintain the D3 Full certification and is required to convert and test in ascending order as per (NAC 445A.630.5).

If you have D1 OIT due 2017 / D2 OIT due 2018 you would renew the D2 OIT only. You would have to convert your D1 when eligible and then convert the D2.

I am happy to announce that the Nevada Drinking Water Operator Certification Program has now been approved by the VA and veterans are able to obtain certification testing reimbursement from the VA. If you are a veteran, please make sure that you include your MOS designation on your applications and inquire with the VA.

During the month of August 2017 Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC), Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN) and AWWA all provided free training for small water systems. Funding was provided by EPA grant money. The training took place throughout Nevada in Elko, Pahrump, Caliente and Carson City –record attendance, 42 attendees in Carson.

The Nevada Water and Wastewater Operators' Forum subcommittee, the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (BSDW) and WPC Water pollution control will be at Tri State 2017: providing a Nevada Drinking Water and Wastewater Certification Operator Regulation Update Workshop Wednesday September 27, 2017; 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at the Monterrey Bay Room

The Nevada Water and Wastewater Operators' Forum (Forum) subcommittee and the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (BSDW), has been reviewing operator certification policies and Operator Certification regulations (NAC 445A.615 – NAC 445A.652) and is ready to report to the forum.





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## 9) Operator Certification Program Review Committee Update & Presentation

**Greg Reed**- Let everyone know what has been done at the Program Review Meeting. There has been a subcommittee going over all the rules NAC rules. We were not looking at NRS. Looked over NAC 445A.615 to 445A.652. The rules were last changed in 2002 so they felt there were changes in the industry that have resulted in the need to go back and look over the NAC. The Program Review Committee believes they have captured everything, however, even the conversation this morning about perhaps going to a requirement that you have to take a specific training topic in order to recertify, that is a topic all new from where we started. The Committee asked input from the operators and received some responses. There are four categories that have been ranked in order of priority. The first priority is improving health and safety of the public by increasing the areas where the rules are now relatively weak compared to other states. They looked at other states at a guideline; we didn't look at the other states at an end all goal. One of the desired accomplishments is wanting to provide opportunities for operators to increase their knowledge of expertise thru additional licensing options. Another item looked at was potentially changing the revenue structure for the department. The money used by the Operator's Certification Program is used to support the operator certification personnel.

## 9) Operator Certification Program Review Committee Update & Presentation-Action Item

**Bob Foerster**- Went over the Program Review presentation that would be presented at Tri-State. The mission of the committee was to review the policies and regulations that had to do with drinking water certification. Reviewed NAC 445A. Reviewed the bureaus experience and policy questions that have come up over the years. The subcommittee met about monthly from March to September. Went through an in-depth review of the parts of NAC 445A that were related to certification. The recommendations were put into the four priorities that Greg was just discussing. The committee went over the priorities that were deemed most important: language change, fees, continuing education and full certificate-issuance required education and experience.

**Cameron McKay**- Disagreed with the certifications that offered operators to go two certifications higher.

## Action Item-Question for approval of the recommended changes to the Operator Certification Program

**Grant Perkins**-Motion to Approve



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**Jim Kerr**-Second  
Unanimous

10) **Member's Open Comments**

**Max Sosa**- Wanted thank all the operators for their participation. They have been doing great. Wanted to let everyone know that every email that came in was reviewed, presented to the committee and put into consideration.

11) **Public Comments**

**Kevin Ryan**- Wanted to congratulate us on our report. Commented that the annual submittal for Operator Certification Program came out very well. He used our annual submittal format as a model for other states on how to report to EPA.

**Steven Garner**- Wanted to update this community that the advanced water treatment operator certification committee met yesterday and they are moving forward with the job analysis results that came from two subject matter expert panels reviewing through the tasks necessary for treatment levels.

12) **Agenda Items for the Next NWWOF Meeting**

No suggestions

13) **Next Forum Meeting(s) – Action Item**

Proposed November 29, 2017

**Jim Kerr**-Motion to Approve

**Dale Johnson**-Second

14) **Adjourn**

**Greg Reed**-Motion to Approve

**Jim Kerr**-Second  
Unanimous





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Adjourned at 11:05am