



# 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

Tuesday, June 12, 2018 – 10:00a.m. to 12:00p.m.

Location: *Richard H. Bryan Building,  
Tahoe Hearing Room on the 2nd Floor  
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701*

Videoconference to: NDEP Las Vegas Office-  
Videoconferencing Not Available

*Note:* Elko-Great Basin College  
1500 College Parkway  
High Tech Center Bldg Room 123  
Elko, NV

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

### Agenda

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

Meeting was called to order at 10:00am

**Forum Members Present:** Max Sosa, BSDW/OpCert; Bob Foerster, NvRWA; Grant Perkins, Panaca Farmstead; Nathan Adams, Pioche Public Utilities

**On the Phone:** Rod Lewis, State Parks; Jeff Cady, Town of Minden; Michelle Rose, Barrick Turquoise Ridge; Gina Hawkins, Coeur Rochester

**Video Conference with Elko:** Dale Johnson, City of Elko; Jim Kerr, Elko County; Dean Cernick, City of Elko

**Introductions and Guests:** Tom Carrigan, Hawthorne Utilities; Brandon Garden, KGID; Michael Boney, NvRWA; David Herrand, Smith Valley Baptist Church; Adrian Noriega, City of Fallon; Ryan Swirczek, City of Fallon; Rit Palmer, Carson City; Brian Green, NDWR; Katrina Pascual, NDEP; Scott Benedict, SB Engineering; James G Agnew, City of Lodi

#### 2) Approval of Forum/NTC Minutes from March 14, 2018 – Action Item

Nathan Adams-Motion to Approve

Grant Perkins-Second  
Unanimous

#### 3) Drinking Water Exam Results Review from March 2018. (Max Sosa)

Max Sosa- Thanked everyone for his or her participation and for taking an interest in your Water and Wastewater Operators Forum.

Now for a brief summary of the March 2018 exam. 177 applicants applied to take the March 2018 test and 161 applicants took the exam. The overall passing rate was 68%

Regarding the upcoming June test this month, there are 164 applicants scheduled to take the exam. Best of luck to everyone.



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4) **Training Needs/ Forum Input**  
**RCAC has EPA funded training (4 hours) – suggestions on location**

**Max Sosa**- Mentioned that the RCAC EPA funded training can be tailored to whatever your training needs for drinking water would be. It is funded for one 4 hour session at one location, but could be video conferenced elsewhere.

**Link Kieu**- Mentioned that they are looking for a rural location. They are deciding on a second location and they asked if the forum or any of the participants have any suggestions.

**Bob Foerster**- Mentioned if you have any suggestions on a location; please get in contact with Max Sosa.

**Tom Carrigan**- Asked if there could be more trainings in Lagoons. Mentioned that there are not enough trainings for wastewater.

**Bob Foerster**- Answered Tom that he will get in touch with wastewater and will get in touch with Tom to see what we can set up.

**Tom Carrigan**- Asked if they are looking into certifications for Lagoons instead of a general treatment certification for wastewater? Concerned that they are required to have these certifications, but the training and everything else isn't there.

**Bob Foerster**- Answer that there is some history on that. They went to the certification board at NWEA about 10 years ago and ask about that. They were not interested in that at the time.

**Grant Perkins**- Mentioned that maybe we can look into this again since it has been quite some time that it was looked at?

**Bob Foerster**- Answered if they can get a group together, then he would entertain the idea.

**Jim Kerr**- Mentioned that after the SEC meeting and the changes have been approved with wastewater, I would recommend that they get in contact with Bruce Holmgren with NDEP. The motion with the SEC that they will revisit the changes that were made on the last update with NAC 445A.

**Guest**- Mentioned as for studying wise was to go to a plant and get a good tour.

**Grant Perkins**- Mentioned maybe at that year mark we can put together a letter and let everyone sign the letter stating that Lagoons is being neglected in our state. The certifications do not fit what they do there.

**Bob Foerster**- Stated that he will draft up a letter for the next meeting.

5) **NDEP Updates:**

- Katrina Pascual, Bureau of Water Pollution Control-
- Updates to NAC

**Katrina Pascual**- The legislature council have been meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> along with the drinking water regulations. The wastewater regulations passed without any further discussion. They are now in full effect. The board sent out a notification to all the wastewater operators with the new fees, requirements, continuing education for renewals. The continuing education hours requirements will not be in effect until the year 2020. A part of the SEC meeting approvals was to have a review within a year of how the program changes are working. If there are any issues are coming up. Currently, the contract with their board is up in October. Whoever the



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vendor becomes will start on November 1<sup>st</sup> and part of that contract is for the review. They will want the review to be completed in early 2019 so if they need to adjust it if need be.

## **Max Sosa / Linh Kieu, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water**

- o Updates to NAC
  - o Should certification be made available to operators that operate non-community water systems (transient)?
- o Updates regarding 2017 ABC exams – Regulatory section

**Max Sosa-** Would like to thank the Nevada Drinking Water and Wastewater Operators Forum, the Forum Subcommittee and all water systems operators who participated and provided comments/feedback during the Drinking Water Operator Certification Program review process.

The new regulatory changes to the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) governing the Drinking Water Operator Certification Program were presented to the State Environmental Commission (SEC) in February 2018 and were given final approval by the Nevada Legislative Commission on May 16, 2018.

## **New Drinking Water Operator Certification Regulation changes: (Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018)**

1.	NAC 445A.6285	clarifies NDEP language to approve certified operator for temporary relief of person in responsible charge;
2.	NAC 445A.629	clarifies that any public water must be classified for distribution and treatment using the classification point system;
3.	NAC 445A.632	revises language to be consistent with the passing score set by the testing organization;
4.	NAC 445A.633	revises requirements for education and experience for applicants to be certified by the program;
5.	NAC 445A.639	increases the number of hours of continuing education for an operator of certain certificates;
6.	NAC 445A.640	revises the requirements of continuing education for operators who hold multiple certificates;
7.	NAC445A.651	increases the fees charged by the Division for issuing and renewing certifications;

## **New Continuing Education (Contact Hours) Requirements:**

- An operator will only need to obtain continuing education requirements for their highest grade (effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018)
- An operator who holds certificates for both distribution and treatment must comply with the respective requirements for continuing education for each type of certificate (effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018)

- **Increased contact hour requirements:**

The current contact hour requirements for renewals applies to certifications that expire on 12/31/2018 as follows:

- Op 1 – 5 contact hours
- Op 2 – 5 contact hours



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- Op 3 – 10 contact hours
- Op 4 – 10 contact hours

The new increased contact hour requirements for renewals will apply to certifications that expire on 12/31/2019 as follows:

- Op 1 – 7 contact hours
- Op 2 – 7 contact hours
- Op 3 – 14 contact hours
- Op 4 – 14 contact hours

### New Work Experience Requirements for a Full Certification:

Classification	Years of Experience
• Grade-1.....	6 months
• Grade-2.....	1 year
• Grade-3.....	2 years with <b>1 year certified as a Grade 2 Full</b>
• Grade-4.....	4 years with <b>1 year certified as a Grade 3 Full</b>

### New Fee Requirements Implementation Schedule:

	July 1st 2017-June 30 <sup>th</sup> 2018	<b>July 1st 2018-June 30<sup>th</sup> 2019</b>	July 1st 2019-June 30 <sup>th</sup> 2020	July 1st 2020-June 30 <sup>th</sup> 2021
• For the issuance of a full certificate	\$84	<b>100</b>	110	120
• For a certificate issued pursuant to paragraph (c) of subsection 2 of NAC 445A.634 (Reciprocity)	57	<b>125</b>	140	150
• For the issuance of a certificate as an operator-in-training (OIT)	57	<b>90</b>	100	110
• For conversion of a certificate as an OIT to a full certificate	30	<b>30</b>	35	40
• For the renewal of a full , provisional or OIT certificate	30	<b>40</b>	45	50
• For the reinstatement and renewal of a full certificate	100	<b>140</b>	145	150

- Please note that all the new applications and new fees for the Drinking Water Operator Certification program will go into effect **July 1, 2018**.
- **Transitioning to the New 2017 ABC Standardized Exams:**  
The Drinking Water Operator Certification program will continue using the 2012 ABC exams until at least **December 31, 2018**.
- **Transitioning to the New Continuing Education (Contact Hours) Requirements:**
- **Current = NAC 445A.640** An operator who holds a full certificate and a certificate as an operator-in-training at a higher classification than the full certificate must comply with the requirements of continuing education **for each certificate** to qualify for the renewal of both certificates.



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As of 1/1/2017, operators have not been required to maintain their underlying OIT(s). They are still required to maintain their Full certification (if they have one) and be required to upgrade/test in ascending order.

**Linh Kieu**- Explained the process is now you have to maintain your highest certification, regardless if you have an OIT or Full. Explained the OIT and Full renewal process that we have scenarios that were sent out and passed out in the forum. Went over how the opcert program wants to make just one application for renewals. You would have to pay for all your certifications, but send in just one application.

**Grant Perkins**- Asked why do you need a grade 2? Once you get a grade 3 OIT, you know you have the 2. Why not make them live by that 3 and if they don't convert, then it goes back to a 2?

**Guest**- Asked if it is for the mere sake to generate revenue?

**Linh Kieu**- Answered that when they did their analysis, we did away with the underlying OIT's. Your D2 would still be on a different track and that D2 represents that you worked and gained experience. You can go up all the way to a D4 OIT with no experience.

**Guest**- Asked how many people out there going to work as an OIT and not get a full?

**Max Sosa**- It all depends on what their needs are, what facility they are working at. Everyone starts out with a grade one. The program covers the smaller systems and the larger systems. The difficult part is finding a happy medium. You have to still establish a level of competence with the certification that you have. You are allowed to carry one grade above your system requires. You have people out there are unemployed and they are figuring if I can pass my operator in training certificates, I can get my foot in the door.

**Linh Kieu**- Explained when they were looking at the numbers, they have around 2,000 active certificates in NV and about 300 of them are OIT's. That is why we track it separately.

**Guest**- Asked Max how does he judge an operators experience?

**Max Sosa**- Answered it has to do with the time and the complexity of the system that they are working at.

**Guest**- Asked when someone is converting from an OIT to a full certificate, is there any supervisor sign off on it?

**Max Sosa**- Answered it is just based on the system that they are at. Mentioned that this has been brought up before and other states do what they call a peer letter. Maybe we can implement this if the forum agrees to it?

**Linh Kieu**- Mentioned that with all these regulation changes, we will have to change our application. We have been talking about a peer letter or attestation to add to the application. We will probably take it to the next forum and see what everyone thinks about it.

**Guest**- Mentioned that he knows a few individuals have never been in a treatment facility, but they work for an organization that splits up into different levels and those people have gone up to a D3 F.

**Jim Kerr**- Mentioned that he thinks supervisor signature should be on every application. The supervisor should review the app before sending to NDEP.

**Bob Foerster**- Mentioned that they need to put supervisor signature on the application, on the agenda as an action item for the next forum. Mentioned that they need to have a policy that works around the instances when someone doesn't want their boss to know they are testing up or doesn't feel comfortable going to their boss.



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**Linh Kieu-** Mentioned that there has been alternatives. Peer review or another supervisor elsewhere.

**Guest-** Mentioned on the wastewater side that they have a place on the application for a supervisor signature.

**Jim Kerr-** Commented that he doesn't agree with a peer letter because anyone can sign off your application. Agrees that the supervisor needs to sign off on the application. Mentioned what if we did an appeal process with NDEP?

**Bob Foerster-** Agrees we need a mechanism like that if they are going to do this. He thinks if we had NDEP notify that if the signature is going to be a problem for whatever reason, Max's office can go to the human resources records of the employer and find the information to verify.

**Jim Kerr-** Asked how about an appeal process through NDEP that is administered by Nevada Rural Water where you have 3 people interview the operator if he or she is qualified to test.

**Bob Foerster-** Thinks we still need to rely on employment records.

**Linh Kieu-** Mentioned something that we can do is we can contact NWEA and see if they had issues and if they had, we can ask how they handled them.

- Should certification be made available to operators that operate non-community water systems (transient)?

**Max Sosa-** Explains that State Parks have operators that do not get certified and they have serve about 300,000 people. The way the system is structured they fall in between the cracks, but State Parks requires them to be a certified operator. They can't get a D1 Full because of the way the facility is classified. It was validated with how much they really are working in the water system so they will be able to get their D1 Full certification now.

**Grant Perkins-** Agrees that it is a good idea because it will make them get continuing education hours, which will make them better serve the public.

- Updates regarding 2017 ABC exams – Regulatory section

**Linh Kieu-** Explained ITCA has spearheaded a national movement to start creating a new regulatory set of questions for the new 2018 exams. Management was reluctant to go this route so we are volunteering for this process in developing the questions. We will let everyone know when that goes on. If we might need to pull volunteers or help us do that, we might go to the forum or the subcommittee we had. We will try to hold off and use our old ABC exams as long as we can. Hopefully, we will have the old exams until 2019 as well.

6) **NWEA Updates: Ashley Jacobson**

No Updates

7) **Implementation of drinking water program review changes**

- Logistic planning for maintaining Contact hours for operators' highest certificate(s). Specifically, current Full and OIT's with different expiration dates, and when operators receive new OIT certifications.

**Max Sosa-** Went over the scenario worksheet that was handed out.



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**Jeff Cady**- Asked can he go more than one grade above your system?

**Max Sosa**- Answered if you were operating multiple systems for a reasonable amount of time, you would be able to test for a full certification if you meet the requirements.

8) **Member's Open Comments**

No member's comments

9) **Public Comments**

**Linh Kieu**- Mentioned that we will be starting to implement a computerized exam. Hopefully in the next few months we're going to implement a computerized exam so everyone has that availability with the State of NV.

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

**Bob Foerster**- Agenda items were discussed earlier for the next forum.

11) **Next Forum Meeting(s) - Action Item**

**Bob Foerster**- Proposed October 2, 2018 at 9am

12) **Adjourn**

**Grant Perkins**-Motion

**Jim Kerr**-Second

Unanimous

Adjourned at 11:30am