

One-hundred-sixty-fifth meeting
Water and Wastewater Advisory Council
Thursday, July 18, 2019
Helena, Montana

CALL TO ORDER The meeting began at 1:08 p.m. This meeting was held in room 239/240 at the Helena DEQ. Council members present: John Alston, Leo Malinak, Jon Dilliard, Andy Loudermilk, and Logan McInnis. Department personnel attending all or portions of the meeting: Greg Olsen, Operator Certification Program Supervisor. Reta Therriault and Jen VandenBos, Operator Certification Technicians. Jon Kenning, Water Protection Bureau Chief.

Minutes Approved	Previous meeting minutes approved as written.
Advisory Council Member Update	Jen reported that Andy Loudermilk was re-appointed by the governor, effective immediately. There is a vacancy for a position on the Advisory Council. The position is for an individual who holds the highest wastewater certification. The vacancy announcement was passed out and it will also be posted on DEQ website.
PWS Update	<p>Jon D spoke to the Operator Certification Program and the Public Water Supply Section. The budget and funding looked good for fiscal year 19 although it was tight due to money being shifted. The budget for fiscal year 20 has not been finalized yet, but it is looking better on public water supply and operator certification side due to an increase in SRF money. Jon D feels secure and the programs should be fine. Jon also spoke of the Lead in Schools as the new project for Public Water Supply.</p> <p>Staff update: Rebecca Landewe has been hired with field services in the Billings DEQ office and Jodi Stoner-Granberg has been hired with field services in the Helena DEQ office. Public Water Supply is fully staffed.</p>
Upcoming and proposed changes with Operator Certification	<p>Greg spoke of creating a Montana Rules test that would be part of the application process for new operators. The rules test would be 20-25 questions and would be written by rule managers. This will be a way to verify that applicants have read through the Montana Rules. The MT Rules test would be sent out with the study materials packet. The applicant would need to complete the “test” and return it to the DEQ office before they could take their exam. The target date to implement the Montana rules portion is January 2020.</p> <p>At the upcoming Bozeman Fall Water School, DEQ will be recording all review sessions and turning them into online training. This will make training available online for operators to review before they go to the review sessions. It’s a possibility that once they reach a certain place within the trainings there will be a series of questions to answer before they can continue. We are hoping this will aid in operators better prepared for the exams. Everyone has a concern with the exam pass/fail rates. John A brought up a concern with some operators having to take the most complicated exam. There has been some</p>

	<p>discussion about changing certifications and doing a step system. This would require a law change in statute. Greg O. has spoken to Montana Rural Water about doing an apprentice program with operators so they can get more experience over time rather than having a new operator jumping into the system. The new operators would have a mentor through a surrounding community or Montana Rural Water. Jon D said the more training we can make available online for new operators, the better.</p> <p>Jon Kenning spoke on Water Protection Bureau being in the process of updating the wastewater study materials. Currently it is just in the preliminary review. Staff time and resources are currently being used up for other things other than revamp. He raised the question if they should be steering the training towards getting operators to pass the exam or teaching them what is relevant to the system they are operating.</p> <p>Greg O. also spoke to Montana Environmental Training Center (METC) about putting together a boot camp. This would be a one-week boot camp that METC would put on to help operators pass exams. There was also mention that AWWA has put together an exam prep app for your phone. All items that have been brought up are up for discussion with everyone. We are now asking for support and help with upcoming changes with the classifications. Most states follow the ABC certifications. Montana is one of the few that does not and is opposite of ABC certifications. This is because Montana was one of the first programs to create certifications. At this point it is not feasible for Montana to create and support their own exams so we need to figure out how to get ABC exams to work for Montana.</p>
Renewals	<p>Reta reported that 1622 renewal invoices were mailed out. \$70,050 was the total amount billed. As of today, July 17th, \$62,930 has been paid, \$38,650 for drinking water and \$24,280 for wastewater. There is an outstanding balance of \$7,160.00. There have been 169 suspension letters mailed that included a \$30 late fee. Suspensions are a bit high for a non-CEC year, however it is suspected that the program will receive phone calls from retirees, people how have moved out of state, or no longer want to keep their certification.</p>
Other Issues	<p>John A. brought up the location of the advisory council location on DEQ's website. Jen reported that with the new website revamp they have placed all advisory councils for the department in one main area. She will be bringing up the issue at the upcoming web board meeting to get approval to link the water and wastewater advisory council to the operator certification webpage.</p> <p>John A also asked what happened to the water drops for certificates. Reta reported the department and program are moving towards going electronic so a new certificate was created that removed the water drop stickers. This new process will save both time and money.</p> <p>Reta gave an update on the IT department is working on developing something to be placed online for training providers. This will list the trainings that have been approved by the State of Montana.</p>

Date of Next Meeting	The date of the next meeting will be the during the week of Bozeman Fall Water School.
ADJOURN MEETING	Adjourn at 2:22