

One-hundred-sixty-seventh meeting  
 Water and Wastewater Advisory Council  
 Thursday, May 14, 2020  
 Zoom Meeting, Montana

**CALL TO ORDER** The meeting was held via Zoom and began at 2:30. Council members present: John Alston, Amy Steinmetz, Logan McInnis, Andy Loudermilk, and Leo Malinak.

Department personnel attending all or portions of the meeting: Greg Olsen, Operator Certification Program Supervisor. Reta Therriault, Operator Certification Technician, Jen VandenBos, Operator Certification Technician, and Ryan Weiss, Wastewater Protection Section Supervisor for Wastewater training and technical assistance.

<b>Minutes Approved</b>	John Alston called the meeting to order and the previous meeting minutes were approved as written.
<b>Advisory Council Member Update</b>	Jen reported there are two vacancies on the advisory council. One vacancy for an individual who is an employed wastewater treatment operator holding the highest wastewater certification and the other vacancy for an individual serving on the faculty of a university or college and whose major filed is related to water supply systems, wastewater treatment, chemical or civil engineering, chemistry, or bacteriology. John said he has spoken to Ron Edwards, who holds a 1C wastewater certification, and is interested. John is going to approach Craig Woolard, with Montana State University, and see if he would be interested or could recommend someone from the University.
<b>PWS Update</b>	Amy and Ryan gave an update on Montana Environmental Training Center (METC) and the transition to MSU – Bozeman. DEQ has had several meetings, some internal, some with the METC steering committee, and some with Craig Woolard (MSU-Bozeman) about transitioning METC from MSU-Northern to MSU-Bozeman. Craig Woolard intends to take on METC through MSU-Bozeman and has support from the university. He is trying to get his arms around the scope and what is needed for the program. DEQ has been working to clarify what those needs are and would like the council to give us the operator perspective. Ryan gave a summary of what the core needs specific to DEQ-funded piece of METC. The focus needs to be on operators, prospective operators that will be sitting for the exams, operator certification review trainings, and re-focus on the model. Some prospective operators attend the review and are not passing. The trainings need to provide meaningful knowledge, skill, and CEC classes. Limit the scope on water schools. There needs to be more focus on coordinating with other assistance/training providers rather than competing. A spring and fall school would be maintained and they would be three to four days long. Improve coordination and limit offerings. From a DEQ standpoint we would like to see new instructors

	<p>recruited instead of the same courses offered repeatedly by same DEQ staff. Work to move training online with webinars, teleconference, and on-demand so rural operators still have the opportunity to get CECs. A survey could be put out to operators to get an idea of training they would like to see offered. John Alston stated that selecting Craig Woolard is the right decision. He is internationally known in the water world, a former AWWA president and he is still very active with AWWA. He will bring a lot of new ideas. METC can go nowhere but up. METC did do a few things well. The yearly training calendars were nice and the backflow program was good. You get what you pay for with instructors. Hopefully they will be able to get really good instructors to come to the trainings, but they will need to be given per diem. Having this would broaden scope with instructors to offer good training. Logan commented he thinks highly of Craig and resources in Bozeman makes it a logical place to house METC. Leo said it sounded good. Amy stated that is sounds like we are all on the same page. There has been a lot of conversation regarding the METC transition. We are going in a good direction. Everyone on the council was in agreement the transition will be a good move.</p>
<p><b>Wastewater Exam Update</b></p>	<p>Greg reported that we are trying out a new wastewater exam for the class 3C. In the past years the 3C exam wasn't focused in the right direction. Jen reported that the 2020 Billings Spring School was the first and so far, only opportunity to administer the new exam. There was a 100% pass rate. The feedback received has been good. Greg also added that some of the people who just took the new 3C exam had taken the previous exam and have also been studying for the last couple of years.</p> <p>John commented that the fail rate from the recent Billings Water school as a whole seemed high and wondered if we should be concerned. Jen said the pass rate was lower than normal. Greg added that with only one school completed, it is hard to see what's really going on. Missoula review and Great Falls MRWS was cancelled. It will be hard to tell how this year will play out due to current events. John asked what the future is for holding tests. Amy stated that state offices are still closed. As we move into phase 2, there will likely be staggered shifts in the office and will push to have exams available.</p>
<p><b>2019 Fall Water School exam prep sessions – recorded</b></p> <p><b>2020 Billings Spring School Recorded and Streamed</b></p>	<p>Greg reported that the 2019 Fall Water School Exam Prep sessions were recorded, but they need to be redone. There may be new technologies moving forward. Jen reported that the Billings Water School was recorded and streamed. The sessions are now available on our YouTube channel. DEQ has received really good feedback having that available for CECs.</p>
<p><b>Renewal Update</b></p>	<p>Reta reported on the final number of Operator revokes from 2019 and the renewal invoices sent out for 2020. There was a total of 1597 renewals mailed out and 96 operators were revoked in September 2019. That number was down from the count of 119 reported at the previous meeting. Some operators retired</p>

	<p>and she didn't feel they should be revoked so she listed them as retired. There were also many payments received around June 30<sup>th</sup> last year and the fiscal department was having problems posting individuals credit card payments and the payments didn't post until later in July. She wrote off late fees and that took down the number of revokes. This year's outstanding amount that was billed is \$68,720.</p>
<p><b>CEC Proposal</b></p>	<p>John talked about what he had previously been working on with Jon D, Greg, and Reta. It was a request from vendors wanting to be able to talk about their products and allow operators to get CEC credits for them. DEQ didn't want vendors to be doing a sales talk, but talking about the technology behind products was more palatable. Jon D. and Greg talked about giving half credit for each hour. John A said he just sent Greg a plan yesterday. He had an idea of having a small area inside the vendor hall for someone to get up and give a discussion on their product and/ or technology. A moderator would need to be present. It would be like another track with scheduled presentations. John asked what would be needed? Greg said it would need to follow the same procedure that is currently followed for other presenters. This would include the speakers background, and a summary of their presentation. At the Billings school there was a pump guy who did a presentation similar to a vendor. He promoted his products, however gave a great presentation about the technology. John feels that the vendors have a lot to teach. They make the bigger conferences go. If we can keep them off giving a sales pitch, the presentations could be very valuable. Logan mentioned there was an official track for vendors at one time. He thinks it would be easier to control the setting if it is in a classroom rather than having people going in and out. Andy liked the idea of a group setting. Reta said should would be okay with offering CECs from vendors, but would need to be more structured. It couldn't be vendors just standing around talking to the operators as they are walking by. She also mentioned a concern about limited space. She's not sure there would be enough room for vendors to have their own classroom, so we may need to look into something different.</p>
<p><b>Other Issues</b></p>	<p>Logan wanted to know where we were on ABC exams. Jen said all of our exams are ABC exam except the on-site wastewater exams. The need to know packet is from ABC that we send out to operators. John mentioned that AWWA has exam materials that align well with ABC. The one drawback is that the materials can be pricey, especially if they are not a member. He also said he was able to contact AWWA and obtain a site license for the City of Bozeman so they are able to use the AWWA app for study review and not have to purchase rights for each individual operator. Logan asked the questions if all exams need to be taken at a scheduled school or a DEQ location. Jen said yes. Some states to have testing locations where people can go and take a web-based ABC exam. The web-based exams are pricier than the paper exams. Currently all testing centers are closed. States are just now starting to talk about opening the testing centers, but with tight controls. One positive to web-based testing is you would know by 8:00 the next morning if you passed or failed. John is a big fan of computer based testing.</p>

<b>Date of next meeting</b>	The next meeting is tentatively scheduled during Fall Water School. October 27 <sup>th</sup> -29 <sup>th</sup> . It will be on Wednesday, October 28 <sup>th</sup> and if needed we can do the meeting remotely. The meeting was adjourned.
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