

One-hundred-sixty-eighth meeting
 Water and Wastewater Advisory Council
 Monday, October 26, 2020
 Zoom Meeting, Montana

CALL TO ORDER The meeting was held via Zoom and began at 2:02 p.m. Council members present: John Alston, Amy Steinmetz, Logan McInnis, Andy Loudermilk, Craig Woolard, and Ron Edwards.

Department personnel attending all or portions of the meeting: Greg Olsen, Operator Certification Program Supervisor and Jen VandenBos, Operator Certification Technician.

Minutes Approved	John Alston called the meeting to order and the previous meeting minutes were approved as written.
Advisory Council Member Update	John stated we have two new members to the Advisory Council. Dr. Craig Woolard, Montana State University – Bozeman and Ron Edwards with Big Sky Water and Sewer District. No one had any changes to the contact member list provided by Jen.
Montana Water Operator’s Initiative Update	Craig Woolard gave an update on Montana Water Operator Initiative (MWOI). They have submitted a proposal to help coordinate operator training opportunities throughout the state with the various training providers. The plan to put on the required schools, one in the fall and one in the spring along with smaller training opportunities to help fill in the gaps while working with the other training providers. There has been a virtual fall water school scheduled tentatively for December 9 th and 10 th online. They are thinking 4 – 5 hours per day and designating one day for drinking water CECs and one day for wastewater CECs. Craig said he has been in contact with AWWA to assist with training. They plan on doing an overview of MWOI for an introduction and include resiliency trainings. Logan asked if the training in December will include exam prep as well as CECs. Craig said it will only be for CECs. He has also been working with the publication team on the MSU campus to put together the training calendar. The training calendar will be a wall calendar. Ron asked if there will be a cost associated with the virtual school. Craig said the cost will be between \$50 to \$100 dollars. He’s hoping the lower cost will get more people to attend and get comfortable with online training.
Discussion on Testing, Testing Review, and Virtual Options	John mentioned that Amy and he had spoken about exam testing in the previous months. He wanted to know what the plan is for DEQ and offering exam testing for operators since there are no schools and DEQ offices are currently closed. Amy said DEQ is currently offering in office exams by appointment only. The staff proctoring exams are following COVID protocol, disinfecting the testing areas before and after, following social-distancing, and requiring masks for all in the building. Jen added that we are scheduling at our Billings, Kalispell, Missoula, and Helena offices. Jen gave an update on exams

	<p>stats. The stats were broken down by each year from 2020 to 2017. Within in each year of stats they were broken down further by each exam classification and scoring group. Jen mentioned by looking at the stats we are able to see where training is needed. John said he was really concerned about the Class 1A and 1C exam pass rate. He is wondering what DEQ's plan is to address the low pass rate. Amy mentioned DEQ is getting a new online platform called Moodle. Greg said we could break the exam stats down further by topic to see where training is needed. Training could be broken down to offer more in-depth and exam level specific training. Have targeted training modules. Ron was curious what caused the jump in the pass rate for the 3C exam. Greg said at the beginning of the year the exam was updated with a different exam from ABC. The newer exam was a better fit with our 3C exam classification. There were 5- 6 training providers that took the exam to see if it would fit our classifications. It is more applicable to lagoon systems.</p>
<p>Update on Operator Revokes from 2020 Renewals</p>	<p>Jen gave an update on operator revokes that will be taking place from the 2020 operator license renewals. Currently there are approximately 150 operators that might get revoked due to non – payment. Jen said they expect that number to go down. The financial services is behind due to be short staffed, so they are still working on getting everything applied correctly.</p>
<p>Other Issues</p>	<p>Amy asked members if they have any suggestions or requests for training. John said to make it cost affordable. Money is everything to small systems. There were no other issues brought up.</p>
<p>Future Meeting Dates</p>	<p>Jen mentioned that the council usually meets every six months. Amy asked if the members felt that two meeting a year were enough? The members agreed it was sufficient. Logan asked Craig if they had plans for a spring school yet. Craig said he has not thought that far ahead and was going to get through the first fall school first. He is hoping they will be able to meet in person next year and hopes to use various MSU facilities for the venues. He would like to get feedback from the fall school before planning the spring school. Feedback would be helpful even if they do a virtual spring school or in person event. The council could possibly have a meeting in January after the fall school to discuss how it went. John commented he doesn't sound like anyone will be doing large in person trainings in 2021. He wouldn't feel comfortable sending his operators.</p> <p>Amy pulled up her calendar and the group decided Monday, May 10, 2020 for the next meeting. Jen will send a meeting invite to the members. Meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.</p>