

One-hundred-seventy-second meeting
 Water and Wastewater Advisory Council
 Tuesday, November 1, 2022
 Teams Meeting, Montana

CALL TO ORDER The meeting was held via Teams and began at 10:30 a.m. Council members present Logan McInnis, Andy Loudermilk, Craig Woolard, Nick Clos, Ron Edwards, and Greg Olsen.

Department personnel attending all or portions of the meeting: Libby Murray-Henrikson, Operator Certification Program Supervisor, Jen VandenBos, Operator Certification Data Tech, and Darryl Barton, Section Supervisor

Minutes Approved	Jen called the meeting to order, and the previous meeting minutes were approved as written.
Council Member Updates	Jen said with John Alston not reapplying to be on the council after his term ended, it leaves a vacancy for the council president. Greg Olsen nominated Ron Edwards as the council president. Ron will be running the meetings and Logan will be vp and fill in as needed.
Public Water Supply Bureau Updates	Greg reported Public Water Supply is fully staffed with the newest employee starting on November 7 th in the Billings office to help Karl. There is also a new position that went out that will be a senior field inspector position as well as helping out Mike Kropp with Capacity Development. It ideally will be out of the Helena office. PWS is also trying to get another position reclassified for lead. The funding will come from SRF funding. Ron said he was curious how he has been able to fill vacant positions. Greg said they are all open to the public. Some openings are listed on LinkedIn, but for the most part they all go out through the state website. New employees have been hired right out of school and matches the pay ranges. Some are even paid relocation expenses.
Fee Increase	Greg reported on the proposed fee increase for public water supply service connection fees. He recently had a discussion with Montana Rural Water (MRWS) and two of their board members. The bill draft had 98 percent approval. Greg put a spreadsheet together that showed the increase in each fee for community systems, transient systems, and non-transient non community systems. Ron asked about adding additional fees for condominiums like in Big Sky where they have multiple residential connections that only count as 1 connection. Craig also mentioned Bozeman has high density stuff as well and you are going to be seeing a lot more of that coming up around the state. Logan asked the background on the fee increase and that Missoula would be looking at a \$50,000 increase. Greg mentioned PWS has never increased their fees. Water systems would have the ability to increase the cost to the customer to cover the fee increase. It would be thirteen cents per person. The PWS connection fees are only used for public water supplies and supporting them.

	<p>Right now there is a shortfall of about \$700,000. The fee increase from two dollars to four dollars would cover the shortfall. The shortfall causes reduced staff and we have to cut costs. Currently, PWS is trying to update the monitoring schedule, update the database, which will included an online portal for operators, and increase staff for troubled systems/ capacity development. If fees are increased, that money will go directly to the systems. If we would take money out of SRF funding, let money would go to the systems. The process to adopt the fee increase – will need to go through legislature and if passed, wouldn't go into effect until 2025. Craig mentioned that increasing fees basically eliminates the need for general fund in the future. Greg said he is expecting a general fund decrease along with other programs. Craig said PWS is being proactive. Greg said the fee increase is a need for the program. The program tried to get a fee increase back in 2018, but it was shot down. The Governor's initiative is to be all electronic. Logan asked what our share of SRF funding was compared to other states. Greg said the funding is based on size. The 1.1 million is already being utilized. Ron asked what the current fee was. Greg said currently it is two dollars for communities and we would be doubling it to four dollars. It has been approved to go in front of the final legislature. This will help the program be self-sufficient. We have never had a fee increase since the program started. Ron asked if the proposal would be adding an escalator to the proposal so you wouldn't be back in the same situation in the future. Greg said in 2026, DEQ would need to do a re-evaluation. Maybe five cents every biennium. The ladder proposal wouldn't be a bad idea.</p>
<p>Bozeman Fall Water School Attendees</p>	<p>Craig reported that he was pretty happy with how the Fall Water School went. The quality across the board was better. Right around 187 attendees. At the spring school they had 94 attendees in Miles City. Last year at fall school there were about 100 more attendees. There were enough people to let them have a variety of options. The opening session was great. Hearing about their experience flooding was great. Breakfast was a big hit. They are slowly getting it figured out. Ron said the fall water school was great. The content and presentations were great. Craig said the four-hour time blocks seem to be the longest they can go. The eight-hour classed are too long. They are trying to stay away from 1-hour sessions so they can dive in deeper. Ron agreed that longer sessions draw out more conversations and allow the operators to share their experiences. Craig said he is also not going to do a combination of online and in person together. They would do one or the other. It takes away from each experience. The spring school will take place in Kalispell, May 16-18 and that one is usually a bit smaller. Next year's fall school will be October 10-12th in Bozeman. Some suggestions for the next school would be the jar testing, that was a big hit and some have asked how to read a lab report. Greg mentioned at the next school DEQ will need some time to go over the new monitoring schedule and that would be combined with the lab report reading. Ron also suggested an opportunity with net DMR reporting.</p>

Bozeman Fall Water School Exam Attendees	<p>Jen reported that we had a total of 75 exams given at fall water school. We should have results back in a few weeks. Darryl reported that the new 1C exam version was given at fall water school. They have also been improving their review presentations as well.</p>
Update on Operator Renewals and Revokes	<p>Jen reported on the Operator renewals for the year. The total number of suspended licenses was 286 and there were 168 licenses to be revoked. The number of revokes is much higher this year. There are a lot of operators who never earned their ceccs and have decided to be done.</p>
Monitoring Schedule	<p>Libby gave an update and demo on the monitoring schedule. The programming of the old monitoring schedule was not working. The DBAs in PWS took a look at it and decided to create an all new monitoring schedule. Libby shared where the monitoring schedule is at right now. They are moving information from SDWIS and pulling it into one viewing platform with Tableau. The new monitoring schedule has the look and feel of the old monitoring schedule. It gives immediate information of when it was last renewed. As of right now it is refreshed every 30 minutes. You will be able to see how many days are left in the collection period including, FANLS, chemical schedules. It lets you know if you took your sample and when it was taken, and it will also show you the next collection period. Also, in the process of including additional information such as level one assessments, CCR information. A lot of the monitoring schedule is built, but we will need to bring in outside contractors to help push it to the finish line. Ron asked when it will be available to use. Libby said we hope to have something ready to go by spring school in May. Ron mentioned it looks good and would be nice for the monitoring schedule to be downloaded to excel. Libby said that would be an option to convert it to pdf and excel.</p>
Additional Discussion	<p>Logan asked about review training modules. Libby reported that we have been taking a look at review sessions. The Laboratory section was the first one. After spring school there was a 30 percent increase in that scoring section. We are also looking at how the information was being presented. Treatment section was the next part that we went through. The presentation was reorganized and made sure the basic information operators need to know was there and split it up into two separate classes by higher level and lower level. Presenting it in a much more organized fashion. The next one we will be taking a look at is the distribution. Logan asked when they will all be completed. Libby said by spring school we hope to have distribution one and two split and figured out.</p> <p>Logan brought up that the utility was having trouble passing the exam. Missoula has to take the 1A/ ABC class 3 exam. Their operator pay is based on being certified. The city decided to allow their employees to take the ABC class 1 exam and bump them up. Their resolution was to have their operators take the 3A exam and then have one operator be in responsible charge holding the class 1A certification. The ABC exam is a really high bar and he hopes to hear progress on the distribution modules.</p>

	Jen gave an update on the council vacancy. It has been posted on the Governor's website and will be on DEQs website.
Date of next meeting	Jen will send out a meeting poll when we get closer to May to set a meeting up. That seems to work the best. Meeting adjourned.