



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • **Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman**
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES

The Nevada Board of Certification for Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators held a public meeting on **Thursday, November 08, 2018** in the PEBP’s Multi-Purpose Room of the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection located at 901 S Stewart Street in Carson City, Nevada. In compliance with the contract between the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection and the Nevada Water Environment Association, the Notice of Public Meeting and Agenda were posted before 09:00 AM at least three (3) working days prior to the meeting.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Edwards called the meeting to order at 09:40 AM.

2. Roll Call and Introduction of Guests

Board Position	Name	Present	Absent
Chairman	Adrian Edwards	X	
Vice Chairman	Joe Crim		X
Secretary	LeAnna Risso	X	
Member	Joseph Carter		X
Member	Michael Drinkwater	X	
Member	Brian Oswalt	X	
Member	John Solvie		X
Program Administrator	Ashley Jacobson	X	

Guest	Representing
Katrina Pasqual	Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
Jennifer Lopez	Nevada Water Environment Association; Executive Board
Linh Kieu	NDEP; Bureau of Safe Drinking Water
Max Sosa	NDEP; Bureau of Safe Drinking Water
Jake Jacobson	Public



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • **Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman**
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

3. Public Comment (Current Agenda Items)

Jake Jacobson noted that the Board was doing a great job.

Jennifer Lopez read a statement into the record regarding the regulatory changes that took effect on May 16, 2018 for the regulatory program. Her statement was provided for inclusion in the record.

“I would like to make a comment on the experience requirement on the NAC regulation changes that have taken effect on May 16, 2018. As president of the NWEA Executive Board, I have been approached by multiple operators at networking events and conferences on their concerns with the strict experience requirements in order to qualify to take an exam higher than their plant’s classification. Their concerns include a halt in their career goals into leadership positions, not wanting to move to other facilities in order to meet experience criteria, and/or cannot find open positions at higher classification facilities.

I am asking the Board to develop an alternative method to meet the experience requirement for the wastewater operator certification exams for those who want to have the passion to continue their education. Some amendments to the regulations could include: cross-training opportunities, extra post-secondary/college courses, and/or experience in a leadership role as experience counted. Here are some other reasons to add alternative methods to meet experience criteria:

- With new regulatory requirements on the rise, higher levels of treatment are required in order to maintain compliance on state-issued permits. Understanding new advancements, technologies and equipment to meet these parameters require a strong knowledge and understanding of treatment processes and control practices.
- In the future, leadership roles at smaller facilities may encounter regulatory changes to their permits, which will present a challenge. Why must we prevent smaller plants from preparing to test their ability for advanced technologies and management skills that they can implement at their own facility? Why must facilities have to lower their certification standard when higher facilities can restrict their criteria?
- It is difficult to recruit qualified professionals because of the lack of recognition and no incentive towards growth within the position. Opening the avenue to allow operators to qualify for higher certifications will bring back personal advancement and set a defined career path for employees.

Some benefits to the added amendments include:

- More income to the Board for taking examinations
- Bring back the drive and incentive to our water professionals
- Prevents shortage of certified professionals to fill leadership positions in the future.

I respectfully request the Board to take into high consideration the importance of correcting the experience criteria for the wastewater operator examination.”



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

4. Approval of Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Member Drinkwater and seconded by Member Oswalt. Chairman Edwards called for a vote. Motion carried.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes from July 26, 2018

A motion to approve the meeting minutes from July 26, 2018 was made by Member Oswalt and seconded by Member Drinkwater. Chairman Edwards called for a vote. Motion carried.

6. Program Administrator’s (PA’s) Report

6.1. Budget Review

Program Administrator (PA) Jacobson emailed packets for the budget review and asked if there were any questions. She noted that we are under budget currently. She noted that year to date income is \$18,028 and expenses are \$18,873. She noted that the income from NDEP is about one month behind our actual budget so these numbers will tighten up.

Chairman Edwards noted that the contract renewal has passed (October) and NDEP is working on getting the RFP out for the new contract. In the meantime, there is still some money left in the current contract so he has received an authorization letter from Katrin Pasqual (NDEP) to extend the date of the contract to July 30, 2019. Current estimates show that we have enough funds to get up to and possibly through April 2019. Katrina noted that the RFP should go out in February to ensure the contract is in place prior to the expiration. She noted that if the contracted funds start to run out before the new contract is in place, she will work to address the issue as it gets closer. Chairman Edwards noted that the ABC Membership dues are \$1,500 per year and that bill may come due before the new contract is in place. If so, it could deplete current funds prior to April. Katrina told the Chairman to watch the balance and let her know before funds are close to running out so that additional funds can be secured.

PA Jacobson asked if the Certification Board can pay the Mail Chimp fees. She noted that since NWEA moved to the new website, a new third-party provider for the email function has been secured for emailing the certified community. The cost is \$30 per month. Minor discussion resulted in the conclusion that this was a de minimus operating expense.

A motion to approve the Certification Board Paying the Mail Chimp fees was made by Member Drinkwater and seconded by Member Oswalt. Chairman Edwards called for a vote. Motion carried.



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

PA Jacobson noted that current fees and expenses for attending the ABC Conference in Savannah, Georgia are running about \$1,876. She noted that if she attends the workshop, which she would like to do, the cost increase to about \$2,262. She noted that we have about \$5,000 in our travel budget. She noted that we typically send the PA and one two other people; one being Member Solvie. Secretary Risso noted that Member Solvie’s attendance is typically paid by ABC because of his role as Commission Chair so there is no budgetary impact to the Certification Board. Secretary Risso noted that Joe McClary of IACET was plugged in the conference last year as a speaker during the workshop due to the flight delays caused by the airport shooting in Florida. She noted that the overwhelming response in the post-conference survey was to bring Joe back for a one day workshop where he could touch base on topics such as continuing education, competent courses, train the trainer topics, credentialing and certification (normally a 2-day workshop by IACET that costs well over \$1,500). Secretary Risso noted she was very interested in seeing the IACET presentation.

A motion to send PA Jacobson and Secretary Risso to the ABC Conference was made by Member Drinkwater and seconded by Member Oswalt. Chairman Edwards called for a vote. Motion carried.

6.2. Certification Examination Update

PA Jacobson noted that she provides a summary of the exams each month and she and Chairman Edwards have been discussing the problems with the very low passing rate on the Grade I exam. She noted that the past month, there were 19 candidates who attempted the exam. While 8 individuals passed the exam, three of them were after multiple attempts. Chairman Edwards noted that many of the failing scores were not even close; many are at or below 50%. PA Jacobson noted that the Grade I does not require any experience nor education to take so they have been discussing ways to improve that passing rate. She would like the Board to put together a list of topics for the NWEA Continuing Education & Training Committee to put together to help these folks pass their exams. Secretary Risso asked in what categories are they having the most difficulty as she speculated math and lab were two categories. Member Oswalt stated that he heard there was a lot of lab on the exams. PA Jacobson noted she would have to look.

Secretary Risso explained that there is a very lengthy process by which the exams are created. First, a Job Task Analysis (JTA) survey is conducted where respondents are asked about tasks they perform. They indicate what tasks they perform, with what frequency, and how critical it is that they perform the task. Then, based on those responses, an Exam Blueprint is created. The Exam Blueprint proportions out the domain of the questions, things like operate equipment, evaluate waste streams, math, and lab analysis. From there, questions that fit these domains are selected and reviewed to ensure they are compatible with other questions on the exam; for example, eliminating two questions on an exam that give the answer to the other.



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • **Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman**
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

Secretary Risso noted that the current exams are more heavily weighted toward evaluating waste streams, and operating and maintaining equipment. As for lab questions, the questions are more about how to interpret results rather than performing actual lab analysis as operators must adjust equipment and processes in response to laboratory results. The exam Blue Print also limits the total number of questions that are math related. She noted that there is a whole science behind developing an exam and writing exam items. She will try to remember her writing guide and share with the Board at the next meeting.

PA Jacobson says she gets lots of calls and questions on what they should study. She always recommends the Sacramento courses, especially the Volume 1 and Volume 2, but she isn't sure how to help them further. Secretary Risso stated that the best thing to do is point them to the ABC website – or link it on the NWEA website – because the Need to Know Criteria is on the website. She noted that the list of approved materials is daunting but she noted that, in her opinion, most of the material is coming from the “ken Kerri” manuals, especially at the Grades 1 through 3; however more stuff is coming out of the MOP 11 at the Grades 3 and 4 because the material is more relevant and current than the Sacramento manuals, which is why WEF is updating the wastewater treatment fundamentals book.

Member Drinkwater noted that his Operations Manager could help because he has just helped a bunch of new operators. He noted that there is a difference between the young kid just out of school who is still in the “study and test taking” mode versus the person who may be on a second career. Secretary Risso noted that the biggest problem for a lot of folks is that they are studying to an exam or an exam question and are not studying a more holistic approach for a concept. Katrina Pasqual noted that people learn better through different methods and some will not respond well to simply reading something with having experienced it.

Chairman Edwards cautioned that the Certification Board should not be “recommending” materials as it poses a potential conflict if someone doesn't pass a test, especially if they bought a text that was expensive. He suggested that the Board work with the NWEA Executive Board to identify someone who could help mentor folks seeking certification on what materials to study and how to study. Secretary Risso noted that we have discussed using the PWO Representative for the mentoring of folks who have attempted and failed exams multiple times and this may be another role they can embrace. Chairman Edwards noted that he will address this topic at the next NWEA Executive Board meeting.



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • **Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman**
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswald • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

6.3. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) Participation

PA Jacobson noted that a CEU review has been scheduled for every other Thursday and Secretary Risso hosts it as a Go To Meeting so people can review the same document, discuss, and vote to approve courses. She noted that it has been going really well and we make sure there are at least three (3) people on the phone besides her. The process moves fairly quickly when we have enough participants.

PA Jacobson noted that there is a struggle with the understanding what constitutes post-secondary course work. Discussion ensued on the definition of post-secondary coursework and what the Board has agreed to allow as post-secondary. PA Jacobson brought several Sacramento courses to the Board and asked for a decision on approval of courses for post-secondary. The Board agreed that several of the courses would be approved as post-secondary even if students did not enroll for academic credit.

A motion to approve the following classes for post-secondary education even if they are not taken for academic credit was made by Secretary Risso and seconded by Member Oswald.

- Wastewater Treatment Plants Volume 1
- Wastewater Treatment Plants Volume 2
- Advanced Wastewater Treatment
- Small Wastewater System Operation & Maintenance Volume 1
- Small Wastewater System Operation & Maintenance Volume 2

Chairman Edwards called for a vote. Motion carried.

Discussion was had to re-define in policy the practice of defining a post-secondary class taken for academic credit with a multiplier of 3 (as opposed to the current 1.5) to match the Sacramento State program. A motion was made to approve courses taken through a post-secondary institution for academic credit be given a multiplier of 3.0 when converting to continuing education units was made by Secretary Risso and seconded by Member Drinkwater. Chairman Edwards called for a vote. Motion carried.

PA Jacobson noted that she has a candidate who has applied to take an exam for certification. He is currently certified as a Grade I but hasn't been working in the industry for a long time. He has 10 years of experience but the experience was obtained about 20 years ago. She asked the Board for direction on eligibility for candidates wishing to certify at higher than a Grade I who are not currently, and have not recently, been employed with a wastewater facility. The Board agreed that as long as the candidate meets the education and facility experience requirements, there is no "expiration" on experience.

PA Jacobson asked the Board for help in drafting a document that would define the Board's expectation of what a course should contain and how it should be delivered if they want approval for CEUs. She would like to post it to the website so that the folks that are trying to come in with sales pitches know that they will not be approved.



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • **Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman**
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

6.4. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Update

PA Jacobson noted that she has been updating the SOPs to reflect business practice changes due to the regulation change. She noted that several folks have been trained and know how to update the website so information stays current. She noted that the “Emergency Kit” is up to date and ready to go in case anything happens.

6.5. Water Spot Update

PA Jacobson noted that the latest version of the magazine is ready for publication. She noted that there was discussion on whether the magazine was being sent to everyone or only members. Jennifer Lopez noted that there wouldn’t be an additional charge to send the magazine to subscribers (non-members) and members. She believes the advertising is covering the cost of the publication and mailing so at this time, there is no plan to exclude subscribers.

6.6. Website Update

PA Jacobson noted that the website is up to date. They are working on a membership portal where operators can upload their certificates for CEUs. There was discussion on the intent of the membership subscription. She said they are looking for feedback for website improvements.

6.7. Exam Results Summary & Analysis

PA Jacobson noted that the summary is sent out every month and this is where she and Chairman Edwards have noted the issues with the Grade I examinees. Discussion was had on the local job descriptions requiring or giving preference to potential hiring candidates who are already certified. Chairman Edwards noted that the excel spreadsheet flags examinees who have statistically significant jumps in exam scores over repeat examinations.

7. Policies and Procedures

Secretary Risso noted that she has been working on revising these since the regulations were submitted. She is revisiting the regulatory program information and pulling it across for the voluntary programs but feels that the Board needs to look at the draft as a lot of items have come up in discussion and resolution has not been determined.

Chairman Edwards discussed the issue with one operator who has paid renewal fees “in advance” and with the regulations changing and requirements for CEUs, what is the Board’s obligation to this operator. Secretary Risso noted that the new regulations don’t allow for renewal more than three months in advance of the certification expiring. Member Drinkwater asked if there is more than one person in this position. PA Jacobson noted that she will review the files and identify anyone in this status. A motion directing the Chairman to send notice and appropriate refunds to operators who have paid in advance for their renewals that due to the regulation change, new requirements are in place that must be met before renewing was made by Member Drinkwater and seconded by Secretary Risso. Chairman Edwards called for a vote. Motion carried.



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

8. Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) Updates

Secretary Risso noted that exam development for new exams is underway but the latest hot topic has been sunseting some low participation programs such as Biosolids and even Laboratory. There has been a lot of angst from member associations who use ABC as a one stop shop for all their exams needs and how to fulfill those needs if ABC sunsets these programs. There has been work in the background to develop partnerships to continue those exams through other providers.

Secretary Risso noted that Bruce Holmgren mentioned at the last meeting some potential revival of the industrial programs. As a Board we agreed to hold off on removing these from our offerings until we knew more about the plans and actions of NDEP. Katrina Pasqual noted that the only certifications currently required or recognized through permits or permitting processes is the wastewater treatment plant operator.

PA Jacobson also noted that there are several states not using the current standardized exams. She noted that this is making reciprocity decisions more difficult.

9. Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) Update / Regulatory Update

Linh Kieu noted that the drinking water program has not moved forward with the new exams because the regulatory questions have been removed. He asked if the wastewater program has any plans to address that component since they have already switched to the new exams. PA Jacobson noted that Bruce Holmgren and Joe Maez were supportive of candidates being required to take a 1 hour regulatory class as part of their CEUs for certification renewal.

Chairman Edwards followed up with summarizing historical discussions regarding the regulatory questions being removed from the exams. He noted that the biggest push is the ability to standardize the exams. Regulations for wastewater have federal components but get very unique at regional and state levels which make it almost impossible to create a standardized exam. Lack of standardization is a barrier to reciprocity. He also noted that even in a 100 question exam, you may only get a few questions on regulations. Theoretically, you could miss every regulatory question and still pass the exam so is the exam really an accurate measure of an operators' knowledge of regulations? He also noted that regulations change frequently and if someone takes a test today and never takes another certification exam, are they really knowledgeable with regard to regulations and regulation changes? Chairman Edwards noted that many programs and the Board are leaning towards requiring the mandatory class each renewal cycle to ensure that aspect of knowledge and education is captured.

Secretary Risso expounded on the programs developed by Ohio and Illinois and noted that regulatory content would probably best be developed by NDEP as they know what they want the operators to know. Max Sosa noted that it makes sense since someone may not have issues with arsenic in Florida and we aren't going to have issues with saltwater intrusion in Nevada. Chairman Edwards noted that NDEP could develop the content and then the materials could be presented by NWEA through "train the trainer" activities. This would relieve the burden on NDEP staff to provide all the training.



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

Katrina Pasqual noted that the regulations are posted online and there is a requirement in one year to complete and assessment of how the changes have impacted the program. Discussion was had on when and what the assessment would look like. Katrina noted that the compliance portion needing some updates as they have discovered some discrepancies in how the two programs address these issues.

PA Jacobson noted that in our policy, reciprocity is given at one grade lower and wants to know if we can award at equivalent grades. Katrina noted that reciprocity is in the regulation but specifics would be defined in policy. Secretary Risso noted that the regulations allow for reciprocity at equivalent grade levels so long as the certification was obtained through an equivalent exam. She noted that “equivalent exam” would have to be defined in policy such as “2017 ABC exams”. Chairman Edwards also noted that candidates would have to meet the eligibility requirements. He noted that if they meet the eligibility requirements and we define the equivalent exam, reciprocity can be awarded as equivalent rather than one grade lower.

10. Water & Wastewater Operator Forum Updates

Linh Kieu noted that Nevada Rural Water sent out a Survey Monkey asking about CEUs and accessibility. He was not sure what email distribution list was used. Several people on the Board and in the room noted that they had not been polled. Katrina Pasqual noted that she sent the representative to contact PA Jacobson for her list. PA Jacobson noted that he contacted her but did not respond to her follow up regarding approval for the list so he was not sent the full contact list. PA Jacobson will follow up with him so that we do not duplicate efforts.

Max Sosa noted that the meeting minutes for the last meeting are not out yet and the date for the next meeting in December has not been set. He noted that the big topic of discussion has been the small systems certification and that John Solvie attended a meeting and addressed a lot of the questions.

Linh Kieu noted that the Forum has become very drinking water centric and appears to be heavily weighted to the north. He is trying to come up with ways to get a better balance and thought that having their third quarter meeting at Tri-State might help engage more wastewater operators especially in the south. Jake Jacobson noted that if the forum firms up dates for a meeting, Tri-State is supportive of the Member Associations and can coordinate accommodations. Linh wants to get CEU approval and asked if attendees would have to register for Tri-State to earn them. Secretary Risso noted that if CEUs were to be awarded, attendees would have to register. However, informational meetings do not meet the intent of continuing education and would not be awarded CEUs. If drinking water wants and will approve CEUs then it needs to be a paid class. If it is just an informational session, anyone can attend and there would be no charge.

11. NWEA Continuing Education & Training (CE&T) Committee Update

Secretary Risso noted that this has been slow to take off because of other commitments. She is hoping to get things back on track by January.



Adrian J. Edwards, Chairman • Joe Crim, Jr., Vice Chairman
Joseph Carter • Michael Drinkwater • Brian Oswalt • LeAnna Risso • John Solvie

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

12. Public Comment

No public comment was heard.

13. New Business

Member Oswalt discussed small plant contract operators and wanted to know what NDEP considered “operating”. Katrina Pasqual noted that if they are making changes or adjusting anything, they need to be certified. Member Oswalt noted that he contracts with a facility and they have a maintenance person who does not operate but is told to call when he sees a problem. He asked if NDEP needed a copy of the training or guidance documents for this employee. Katrina noted that as long as the person is not “operating” they do not need to be certified. She noted that there are several plants that have a contract operator on record but there are “maintenance workers” who are “operating” the plant. She noted that this is prohibited in the regulation.

14. Next Board Meeting

The next Board meeting will be March 07, 2019 in Las Vegas.

15. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Secretary Risso and seconded by Member Drinkwater. Chairman Edwards called for a vote. Motion carried. Meeting was adjourned at 12:01 PM.