

Wastewater Operator Certification Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
November 1, 2006

Meeting called to order at 10:10 in Lakewood at the Chambers Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Attendees: William Breshears, Cheryl Bergener, Todd Carlson, Russ Glaser, Judy Jones, Tim Pelton, DeAnna Windh, Melinda Wilson, and Poppy Carre

Poppy introduced Melinda Wilson, the new operator certification assistant coordinator. She informed the group that Melinda is working as a project employee, but the program is in the process of making the position permanent. Melinda works part-time and her main focus has been entering professional growth documents into the database. Melinda started her project in June. Since she's been assisting the operator certification program, over 350 professional growth met letters have been mailed.

Minutes of previous meeting were reviewed and accepted for posting on the OpCert website.

Poppy gave a program update. Currently there are 1937 active operators. The current professional growth period ends in 2006. Of the operators who's growth is due in 2006 875 operators have met their professional growth, 334 operators have some CEUs, and 432 operators have no CEUs. 1,171 renewal letters will go out to operators that have met their growth for 2006 and all operator's who's growth is due in 2009 and 766 pg not met letters will go out. These numbers will change once the exam results are entered into the database and the remaining professional growth documents are entered.

Poppy showed the committee the *Frequently Asked Questions* publication that will go out with the operator renewals and to municipalities. There was concern that numbers were not given on the publication and that it was too formal. Willy suggested it should have been written more like a marketing paper instead of in the long drawn out form. The group didn't want the operators to get ambushed with huge increases to their fees. They think Ecology should get some numbers together so we can start preparing the operators and municipalities. They also asked how Ecology is going to figure the fees. Is the program going to be totally fee based or is there going to be a charge to the municipalities? Poppy told them that Ecology was working on a few different scenarios 1) Operators pay all fees, 2) operators and municipalities split fees, and 3) charge the municipalities a fee based on size.

The committee reviewed a letter of interest and resume for Thomas Holmes. They pointed out that there wasn't a letter of support from his supervisor and asked Poppy to request one. If his supervisor supports his membership commitment, the committee recommends that he becomes a member.

Poppy asked for committee guidance on several issues. The first was their thoughts on adding a section on the application for the applicant's supervisor to sign verifying the applicant's job duties. Poppy brought examples from neighboring states and Cheryl pointed out that Health uses an affidavit in their application. She said that it has helped with determining an operator's experience and amount of time doing a particular job. The committee thought this was a good idea and that having something similar in the wastewater application will cut down on the amount of time Poppy spends calling supervisors to verify an applicant's experience. Cheryl is going to send a copy of their affidavit to Poppy.

Poppy asked the committee members to read a description of job duties and give their opinion on whether or not it should be considered enough time spent on the job. The committee agreed that, although it was not a lot of time, as long as the person routinely did the duties for one year it would qualify for the experience requirement. Poppy then asked the operators to review a letter from the operator's supervisor, stating that he hadn't done the work. They came to the conclusion that the person stating he did the work needs to provide documented proof showing that he did the work, in addition to the description of job duties. Poppy told the group she requested that from the individual and he said that there wasn't a log book at the plant. Then Poppy told the group she had copies of log entries from January '06 through October '06 and the pages that she had looked at didn't show that the individual had done any work at the plant. They said that the main operator at the plant is usually the one to fill out the log books and that he might not have noted when the other person worked at the plant.

Poppy told the group that the individual's supervisor held the position of public works coordinator and that in June the position had been split into two. The plant operator was now the public works coordinator of sewers and the individual became the public works coordinator of streets. Poppy gave one more bit of information to the group, which was that the person who verified that the individual routinely worked on-site at the treatment plant was his wife. That was a concern to the group; they said that is a conflict of interest and that verification of job duties should have been made by his supervisor or the mayor. Their final recommendation was to have the individual send proof of working at the plant. If he could not provide proof they recommended requesting a notarized affidavit from the mayor stating that the individual routinely worked on-site at the treatment plant and for how long. If proof was provided they recommended that the time be from September '05 to June '06 – 9 months. If proof is not provided they recommend that Ecology treat this as a revocation and the individual has to gain the proper experience and wait a year to apply for and take the exam.

The last item Poppy had for committee guidance was about reading exams. Poppy had explained that a request was made to have the exam read. There are no particular guidelines in the RCW or WAC and the Wastewater Operator Certification Policy states that the applicant needs to submit the request in writing and a determination will be made. She handed out a couple of documents with information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for the committee to review. The unanimous decision was that if the request meets the requirements of the ADA and the requestor submits a letter from

their doctor verifying the disability, Ecology should grant the request. Cheryl said that ABC has a form they include with their applications for ADA and Health was going to start using it and suggested that Ecology do the same. Todd seconded the motion and the committee agreed that the ADA form should be added to the application.

The committee started reviewing the CEU Guidance List from Iowa. Cheryl told the committee that ABC had defined relevancy and was in the process of finalizing the ABC Relevancy Criteria. The group decided to table the topic until the next meeting, by then ABC's Relevancy Criteria should be finalized.

Roundtable was held and Poppy asked if members were getting the ABC newsletter. If members wanted to continue getting that they need to send an email to Poppy with their mailing address. Poppy will send an email to the members requesting the information. Russ passed along a job announcement for a Group II water treatment plant operator. Willy requested that we hold the meetings in a more central location. Tim brought up past experiences and commented that the participation would diminish if we did that. The decision was made to continue holding one meeting in Eastern Washington and one meeting in Western Washington.

The next meeting was discussed and will be April 4, 2007 in Yakima, Willy Breshears will host. Russ Glaser volunteered to host the November 7, 2007 meeting in Vancouver.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.