

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
STATE BOARD FOR CERTIFICATION OF
WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS OPERATORS**

**Board Meeting Minutes
August 13, 2013
10th Floor Conference Room
Conference Call Meeting**

Board Members Present

Joseph Swanderski, Chairman
Michael Kyle
Mary Roland
John Schombert
Curt Steffy
Phil Consonery, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (BSDW)
Cheri Sansoni, Board Secretary, BSDW

Board Members Absent

No DEP Legal Counsel present

Non Board Members Present

Scott Noldy, BSDW
Julianne Burke, BSDW
No Policy Office representative present

Joe Swanderski called the meeting of the State Board for Certification of Water and Wastewater System Operators (Board) to order at 10:04 AM.

Criminal History Report

There were no Criminal History Reports to present to the Board.

Approval of June 18, 2013 Minutes

Michael Kyle motioned to approve the June 18, 2013 minutes as written. Curt Steffy seconded.

Cheri Sansoni asked for clarification of the Board's new policy regarding the application of Certificate Program educational experience in one industry toward job experience requirements in the opposite industry so that it can be accurately reflected in the June minutes. The Board reiterated that it would grant 50% credit from a Certificate Program toward experience in the opposite industry, i.e., using a wastewater certificate program toward a water license. As an example, if an operator submits a wastewater certificate program and is applying for a water class A license, he will only receive one year educational credit toward the water license instead of two years.

Michael Kyle motioned to amend the original motion and table the minutes, pending revision to reflect the new policy. Curt Steffy seconded. The vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Approval of New and Upgrade Applications

The new and upgrade applications were presented to the Board for approval. Joe Swanderski motioned to issue licenses for all new and upgrade applications on the Evaluation Summary Report. Mary Roland seconded. The vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Reciprocity Requests

The following wastewater reciprocity applications were presented to the Board:

Perry Payne – Holds a S2 Public Wastewater and C2 Collections certificate in New Jersey that expires 9/30/13. He has 8 years, 7 months working at Washington Borough WWTP, which is a class A system using WW1 Activated Sludge and WWE4 Collections. He did not submit a Criminal History Report (CHR) or application fee.

The Department's recommendation was to conditionally approve a WWAE 1,4 license, pending receipt and evaluation of his CHR and application fee. Joe Swanderski motioned to conditionally approve the WWAE 1,4 license request, pending the CHR and fee requirements. Curt Steffy seconded. The vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Tod Schench – Holds a temporary (OIT) wastewater certificate in Maryland that expires 7/1/15 but does not hold a permanent certified operator license. He has 5 years, 9 months working at Conowingo WWTP, Elk Neck State Park WWTP and Muddy Run WWTP, which are class D systems using WW1 Activated Sludge and WWE4 Collections.

The Department's recommendation was to deny the license because Mr. Schench does not hold a valid certified operator license. Joe Swanderski motioned to deny the license request and inform Mr. Schench of the requirement to hold a valid certified operator license. Curt Steffy seconded. The vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

The following water reciprocity applications were presented to the Board:

Edward Rapciwicz - Holds a water certificate in Delaware that he obtained through Reciprocity with New Jersey and which expires 5/12/15. He has 5 years of experience working at Tidewater Utilities in Dover, which is a class A system using subclasses 1, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13. He has one year experience at United Water Delaware, which is a class A facility using subclasses 6,7,8,12 and WE Distribution.

The Department's recommendation was to issue a WAE 1,6,7,8,9,12,13 license. Curt Steffy motioned to issue the WAE 1,6,7,8,9,12,13 license. Joe Swanderski seconded. The vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Frederick Costanzo – Holds a T2 Water treatment license in New Jersey that expires 9/30/13. He has 5 years, 3 months working at Erie Water works, which is a class A system using subclasses 1, 6,7,8,11,12 and WE Distribution. He also worked at many other facilities in NJ.

The Department's recommendation was to issue a WAE 1,6,7,8,11,12 license. Michael Kyle motioned to issue the WAE 1,6,7,8,11,12 license. Mary Roland seconded. The vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Tod Schench – Holds a permanent T2 water operator certificate in Maryland that expires 7/1/15. He has 5 years, 9 months working at Darlington WTP, Campus Hills WTP and Muddy Run WTP, which are class D systems using subclasses 7,8,12 and WE Distribution.

The Department's recommendation was to issue a WDE 7,8,12 license. Curt Steffy motioned to issue the WDE 7,8,12 license. Mary Roland seconded. The vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Denials of Applications for Certification Renewal

There were no denials to present to the Board.

Update on Online Certification Exams

Phil Consonery reported on behalf of Bill McNamara regarding the success of the Alpha test of the online exam program, which was given to DEP employees on July 11, 2013. The technical aspects of exam registration, security, log in, exam result delivery to the examinees and transfer to the Certification Section went smoothly. Constructive feedback was received from the examinees but overall feedback was positive, particularly regarding the user friendliness of the exam software.

A Beta exam for operators will be held on October 10, 2013. Online exams will be scheduled for 2014, with the potential for 200 online exams to be given at the DEP regional offices and a steady increase in number every year thereafter.

Annual Status Update of the Operator Certification Program

Phil Consonery offered program statistics for the year to date and stated that he would be giving future updates at the beginning of each calendar year so that complete statistics for the previous year can be given.

The projection for the number of licenses issued and exams offered in 2013 exceeds the output of each of the previous 6 years, indicating that the program is functioning at greater efficiency and better meeting the needs of the regulated community. The cumulative total of approved training courses was also noted as being at a historic high.

Michael Kyle and Joe Swanderski expressed interest in publishing bar graphs of these statistics on the operator website at the end of the year.

Mr. Consonery also offered a report comparing the pass rate for each exam in 2012 with the pass rates for the previous 4 years. He reported that an analysis of P values (pass rates) for each individual exam question answered in 2012 was also conducted. The analysis revealed that some questions were either consistently too difficult or consistently too easy for examinees to answer correctly. The goal for each individual question is for at least 30% of examinees to answer correctly ($p = 0.3$) but no more than 90%.

For exams where a greater number of questions had P values below the 0.3 threshold (such as Non-gaseous Chemical Disinfection and Ultraviolet Disinfection), Mr. Consonery suggested lowering the overall cut score for passing the exam. He also expressed the intention to rotate out questions that have low P values two years in a row and make questions that are consistently too easy more difficult.

Regarding the drinking water training modules, Mr. Consonery reported that substantial edits had been made to the Non-Gaseous Disinfection and Chemical Addition modules. Trial usage of the modules with a small training group prior to testing increased their overall pass rate significantly. These modules are scheduled to be incorporated into Penn State's Certification Academy in late August, and other training providers will receive the modules in the fall. Additionally, the Training Section plans to revise more modules. The Inorganics Removal, Corrosion Control and Gas Chlorination modules are scheduled next for revision.

Regarding the wastewater training modules, Mr. Consonery reported that the Training Section is currently finishing revision of the Activated Sludge modules, and a revision of the General Exam modules is planned due to low pass rates in recent years.

Joe Swanderski asked if DEP could provide problem exam questions to training providers so that the providers can target their training to those exam questions with low P values. Mr. Consonery noted that the greatest area of difficulty is with math questions, and he will consult with Bill McNamara to determine other areas of difficulty and give this information to the training providers. He will then incorporate a report of this feedback into the annual Certification Program report in January.

Board Secretary Report

Cheri Sansoni presented the following extension request:

Garry Clark had a crosswalked WWCE1-4 license that expired on 6/30/2013, and he requested a medical extension. He completed 15 of the required 30 contact hours. Joe Swanderski motioned to extend his renewal cycle to 12/31/2013 to obtain 30 hours of training. Michael Kyle seconded. The vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Ms. Sansoni also presented to the Board the Consent Order and Agreement for former wastewater operator Charles M. Vaughn. No action by the Board was necessary or taken.

Additionally, Ms. Sansoni reported that there has been no legal counsel appointed to replace Patrick Bair after his retirement; however, Mr. Bair is working part-time for the Department as an annuitant.

Old and New Business

Phil Consonery reported that the Chapter 302 fee analysis is not yet ready but he intends to distribute it to the Board 30 days prior to the next Board meeting. DEP will be presenting the analysis to the Environmental Quality Board in November.

Mary Roland motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:20 AM. Joe Swanderski seconded.