

Water and Wastewater Operators' Advisory Council

Purpose: The Water and Wastewater Operators' Advisory Council provides stakeholder review and recommendations for the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) implementation of the Water and Wastewater Operator Certification Program. The council is appointed by the Governor and is composed of seven members.

The Water and Wastewater Advisory Council provides direct input to the Department on the operation and direction of the Operator Certification Program. The Council functions as a sounding board and advisory panel to provide guidance on issues such as classification of operator categories, administrative rule changes, examination requirements, operator performance issues, continuing education training requirements, program budgetary concerns such as fees for certification renewals, and general program direction. The Council meets at least twice annually, the first meeting in the spring and the second meeting takes place at the Annual Fall Water School in Bozeman.

History: The Water and Wastewater Advisory Council in its current form was created by statute (2-15-2105, MCA) in 1967. Governor Babcock appointed the first Council members at that time. In 1997, at the 64th Annual Water School and the 30th Anniversary of the Montana Operator Certification Law, former Governor Babcock stated . . . *"Thirty years ago, I signed into law legislation that accomplished three goals. First, it acknowledged that we who live and work in Montana have an obligation to protect our environment and the public health. Second, because a few do not have the same respect for our environment that the majority of us do, a certain degree of regulation is necessary. Third, and most important, it recognized the competency of the individual to steward our natural resources in a manner and within the framework of reasonable guidelines and modern technology. . . . Simply stated, the Wastewater Operators Certification Law requires the operator of water supply and wastewater systems to pass an extensive examination and be certified by the state of Montana."*

Membership: The Water and Wastewater Advisory Council provides direct input to the Department on the operation and direction of the Operator Certification Program. The members are: water and wastewater operators from different system types and sizes; a representative of a municipality; a faculty member of a university, and a department representative, each of which has a vested interest in assuring and maintaining the professionalism of certified operators.

Status: Currently, there are two vacant positions on the Council. One is the University position, which has been vacant since September 2011. The Department has attempted to raise interest in the position by contacting key university professors that have been involved in the Council in the past and sent a letter to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education with the requirements needed for the position. The Department is not aware of any applications for this position being received by the Governor's Office. The second vacant position has had a few interested applicants, which are under review.