

## **GOVERNOR'S WATER/WASTEWATER WORKS ADVISORY BOARD**

**Minutes of December 13-14, 2011 Meeting, held at DEC Environmental Health Lab,  
5251 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., Anchorage, Alaska.**

Attendees: Mark Buggins, Board Chairman (December 14 only)  
Mike Pollen, Board Member and Recorder  
Bruce Jones, Board Member  
Jana Littlewood, Board Member  
Paul Trissel, Board Member  
Bill Gissel, Board Member  
Bill Harvey, Board Member (December 14 only)

Absent: Daniel Hines, Board Member

DEC Staff: Carrie Bohan  
Ken Smith  
Martin Suzuki  
Galen Heffern  
Michelle Bonnet (December 13 only)  
Bill Griffith (December 13 only)

AK Dept. of Law: Judy Bockmon (December 13 only)

### **December 13, 2011, 10:45 AM**

A workshop was held to review issues for the December 14, 2011, Board meeting. Carrie Bohan provided an introductory greeting as the new Program Manager of the DEC Operations Assistance Program for the Division of Water. Carrie Bohan replaced Kerry Lindley, who retired in January 2011. Also, Michelle Bonnet, the new Director of the Division of Water, provided an introductory greeting to the Board.

Judy Bockmon, the State Ethics Attorney with the Alaska Department of Law, provided an ethics presentation to the Board.

### **December 14, 2011, 8:50 AM**

Chairman Mark Buggins called the meeting to order. The agenda for the meeting was accepted as printed in the Board packet by unanimous agreement.

## **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 26-27, 2010 BOARD MEETING**

Bruce Jones moved and Bill Harvey seconded approval of the October 26-27, 2010, Board meeting minutes. The Board approved the motion by unanimous vote.

## **PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

There was no public testimony provided.

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

**Request for Read Exam – City of White Mountain:** Ken Smith provided an update on a request from the City of White Mountain to have a “read exam” for their water system operator. The Board had a general discussion of whether the ability to read is a core competency necessary to safely and successfully operate a water or wastewater system in a manner that protects public health. The Board reiterated its position that reading is an essential, or core, competency for water and wastewater system operation. Some of the reasons that reading is a necessary capability discussed by the Board include:

- Safety in handling chemicals, identification of what chemical is being used, identifying chemical concentration, and reading and understanding MSDS information
- Ability to calibrate test instruments, read data and interpret the results (e.g. identifying the correct value of a test result with respect to decimal points, and comparing to MCL concentrations), and preparing reports to regulatory agencies
- Reading of O&M manuals for operation and both preventive maintenance and emergency repairs of the water or wastewater system equipment, identifying maintenance parts and vendors, and preparing purchase orders for supplies
- Understanding of increasingly complex regulations, understanding and preparing public notifications, regulatory agency notifications of treatment upsets, reading and understanding emergency response plans

**Reciprocity Procedure Change:** Martin Suzuki presented background on reciprocity determinations for water and wastewater certifications. Currently, DEC determines reciprocity based solely on a comparison of the requirements for that license level in Alaska and the state or territory from which the applicant is applying.

A proposed revision to the current method of determining reciprocity was presented. Under the proposed change, DEC will base reciprocity decisions on an applicant's

experience and education if the applicant's originating state uses standardized Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) certification exams. When an applicant comes from a state that does not use standardized ABC exams, DEC will base reciprocity decisions on a comparison of eligibility requirements and that state's certification exam as it has in the past.

The Board discussed the proposed concept and observed that it would help alleviate some of the more time consuming and complex issues that have been encountered with reciprocity in the past. The Board thus concurred that this was a good concept and should be pursued.

**Alternate Method of System Supervision Update:** Ken Smith provided an update on the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) AMOSS plan. The 2010 annual report from Pat DeSmet, LKSD Regulatory Compliance Officer (now retired), and the 2011 annual report from Bob Miller, the LKSD Supervising Operator in Bethel, were presented. Both reports indicate that LKSD continues their efforts to provide training opportunities for their operators, and that progress has been made in getting LKSD onsite operators certified to the correct levels.

DEC staff prepared a spreadsheet showing the compliance status of the LKSD systems as the Board requested in 2010. Mike Pollen moved and Jana Littlewood seconded that the LKSD AMOSS plan be reauthorized for another year, with the addition of the Kilbuck and Chefnak Schools to the AMOSS plan and the removal of Napakiak from the AMOSS plan due to changes in personnel certification levels. It was also discussed that DEC should approve minor changes to the AMOSS plan as necessary during the course of the year and that those changes be presented in the annual report. It was also discussed that if a change in the Supervising Operator's status occurs, the AMOSS plan would need to be reviewed by the Board. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**System Compliance/Operator Certification Project:** Carrie Bohan and Galen Heffern presented an overview of a Department evaluation of water and wastewater system compliance with the Operator Certification regulations. A workgroup that met in Fairbanks in October participated in the evaluation, which included an analysis of system compliance by type and of certification exam results. One of the data gathering mechanisms recommended by the workgroup was a certification examination exit survey. The Board discussed the content of the proposed survey and recommendations were offered to enhance the survey question set.

The evaluation resulted in a recommendation to develop a targeted, modular training program to help reduce the number of chronically noncompliant water systems (primarily WT level 1 and 2 and WD level 2 systems) and to help improve the certification exam success rate by operators who have a low success rate of passing the exams. The

development of a modular “System Specific Certification through Targeted Training and Certification Exams” would be a funded through some remaining American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant funds available to DEC.

The Board expressed general agreement that the modular training program has merit and should be pursued. It was also recognized that the training modules would necessarily precede the development of the targeted certification exams.

**Department Update:** Galen Heffern and Martin Suzuki provided an update of the following program activities:

- a. Small Water/Wastewater System Operator Reimbursement Program**
- b. Wastewater Stabilization Pond (WWSP) Certification**
- c. Online ABC Exams**
- d. Online Certificate Renewals**
- e. Next Level Higher Exams**
- f. Online Certificate Renewal Fee Change**

The Board expressed its compliments to the DEC staff for the delivery of each of these programs over this past year. An example was the high success rate of bringing the majority of WWSP systems into compliance in only one year using this new program. The Board asked that Chairman Buggins send a communication to the DEC Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner expressing the Board’s opinion of the success of these programs and the quality of their delivery by the Operations Assistance staff.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

It was moved, seconded, and approved that the meeting be adjourned at 12:35 PM. The next board meeting is tentatively scheduled for the summer of 2012.