

**STATE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT OPERATOR  
APPRENTICESHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2015**

Moraine Park Technical College  
Fond Du Lac, WI

**Approved Minutes**

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Employer/Organization</b>
Bartel, Bruce	Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District
Bartels, Mark	Village of Cassville
Wilson, Paul	Walworth County Sewage District
Zimmer, Kelly	MSA Professional Services

<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Employer/Organization</b>
Dierker, Marty	M&M Environmental and Educational Services
Freber, Kevin	City of Watertown Wastewater Treatment Plant

<b>Consultant &amp; Guests</b>	<b>Employer/Organization</b>
Bushby, Lisa	WI Department of Natural Resources
Faulkner, Dean	Village of Mukwonago
Horvath, Stephen	Moraine Park Technical College
Martin, Sandy	Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards -
Pagan, Nicci	Gateway Technical College
Saltes, Jack	WI Department of Natural Resources
Schmidt, Mark	Moraine Park Technical College
Smith, Owen	Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards - Madison

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1. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Co-Chair Paul Wilson in conformance with the Wisconsin Open Meeting laws.
  2. Attendees introduced themselves. Mr. Owen Smith explained the seating protocol for guests.
  3. The minutes of the September 16, 2014 meeting were approved as written.

#### 4. **Old Business**

##### **a. Review follow-up items from previous meeting.**

Owen Smith reported on the follow-up items from the 2014 fall meeting:

Mr. Mark Bartels, operator from the Village of Cassville, will serve a three-year term as an employer member. Mr. Bartels replaces Ms. Sharon Theiszen.

Members of the committee and the Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards staffed a booth on the wastewater treatment plant operator apprenticeship program at the 2014 annual conference of the Wisconsin Wastewater Operators Association. The volunteers agreed that many conference participants visited the booth.

As directed by the state committee, the Bureau removed from the state standards the requirement that treatment plants must have a daily flow rate of at least 1 MGD in order to sponsor an apprentice. In addition, the Bureau made minor revisions to the Exhibit A in order to align it identically with the Job Book.

The outreach focus groups for the website and brochure did not meet due to end-of-year scheduling conflicts. The Bureau will convene the focus groups in early summer. Mr. Smith asked the committee if it would grant the outreach focus group the authority to make final changes to the website so it could be published prior to the fall meeting.

***Action:** The committee agreed to allow the focus group to determine when the website is ready to publish. Once published, the committee will review the content on an ongoing basis.*

The data discrepancy identified at the 2014 fall meeting has been corrected. Three apprentices and three sponsors are currently active in the program; a fourth apprentice and sponsor, the Village of Mukwonago, are currently pending. The apprentice will attend related instruction at Gateway Technical College.

##### **b. Review the roster.**

Members reviewed the current roster. Mr. Smith pointed out that the terms of several members will expire at the end of the calendar year. He noted that state committee members should represent organizations that actively sponsor apprentices, but due to the recent implementation of this committee, half of its membership represents organizations that do not sponsor apprentices. Therefore, as members' terms expire, the Bureau will consider inviting new sponsors, such as the Village of Mukwonago, to join.

##### **c. Outreach material and strategies, including a list of municipalities by county.**

Mr. Smith reviewed the excerpt from the minutes of the previous meeting that stated the DNR had expressed concern that they receive many calls from individuals interested in the apprenticeship program but have no information on job opening to provide to them. He reviewed that this is a common occurrence with apprenticeship programs because the Bureau does not provide job opening information; rather, the apprentice is responsible for finding and securing employment.

Ms. Nicci Pagan reported that Gateway College also receives similar inquiries.

Committee members advised that job opening in the industry are often posted on the websites for the WWOA and the Rural Water Association. A list of job opening by municipality, as suggested at the previous meeting, is unnecessary.

Dean Faulkner suggested that the Bureau, technical colleges, and sponsors present to the League of Municipalities and the Wisconsin Municipal Clerk Association. He informed the committee that the WMCA will hold its annual conference August 19-21 in La Crosse. The organization's website is [www.wisclerks.org](http://www.wisclerks.org). Dean volunteered to co-present with the Bureau.

**Action:** *The Bureau will contact the Wisconsin League of Municipalities and the Wisconsin Municipal Clerk Association.*

**d. Apprenticeship Completion Award Program**

Mr. Smith reminded attendees that ACAP partially reimburses eligible apprentices, sponsors and employers for certain costs of related instruction. Eligible apprentices must complete either the first calendar year of their program or their entire program between June 2, 2014 and June 30, 2015. Although ACAP applies to all trades, WWTPPO apprentices will not become eligible due to their late start dates. However, the program could apply to the trade if the Legislature extends the program into the next fiscal year.

**e. American Apprenticeship Grant**

Owen reviewed that registered apprenticeship has received unprecedented national and state support within the past year, beginning with President Obama's announcement that his administration would invest \$100 million into registered apprenticeship through "American Apprenticeship Grants," which are competitive grants issued by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The Bureau will apply for the maximum award of \$5 million. The Bureau's application will focus on three key strategies for improving registered apprenticeship, which were suggested to the Bureau by multiple stakeholder focus groups:

- 1) Increase the pipeline of qualified applicants into registered apprenticeship from both the K-12 system and under and unemployed individuals.
- 2) Bridge the youth apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs, which are both sponsored by DWD.
- 3) Expand registered apprenticeship into new occupational areas, such as health care and information technology.

A general discussion followed on the value of promoting registered apprenticeship to high school juniors and seniors. The committee believes that strategy is critical. Owen clarified that efforts to link youth apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship will focus first on manufacturing occupations, because many companies sponsor both programs.

Owen added that this strategy has become so critical that the primary advisory body to the Bureau, the Wisconsin Apprenticeship Advisory Council, last year created a new subcommittee tasked solely with identifying and developing links between the two programs.

He inquired into the status of the youth apprenticeship program in wastewater treatment. The committee stated the program is operational, but no students are enrolled. If the program gains more students in the future, the committee would support exploring a crosswalk between the youth and registered apprenticeship programs.

**f. Wisconsin Apprenticeship Summit**

Another outcome of increased attention on registered apprenticeship, Owen continued, was the Wisconsin Apprenticeship Summit. To capitalize on the current widespread interest and support, DWD convened 40 thought leaders, researchers, and stakeholders to discuss how the latest research on registered apprenticeship and workforce development could inform policy and procedural changes to registered apprenticeship in Wisconsin.

Summit participants proposed an action plan across five major categories:

- 1) Marketing, advocacy and outreach
- 2) Workforce and economic development systems and resource alignments
- 3) Employer and sponsor engagement
- 4) Clear and productive career pathway from K-12 to apprenticeship
- 5) Participant recruitment and retention

DWD will continue to meet with stakeholders to determine how to best implement the action plan. Owen emphasized that the Summit clearly demonstrates the unprecedented attention registered apprenticeship is receiving.

**g. Other**

No additional topics were raised.

**5. New Business**

**a. For action: proposed revisions to State Standards**

Jack Saltes and Lisa Bushby of the Department of Natural Resources reported that each of the three current apprentices will be grandfathered into at least one of the new operator certifications that go into effect July 1, 2015, as a result of revisions to state code NR 114. The grandfathering clause, however, is not accounted for in the current state apprenticeship standards, which require that apprentices "must pass the certification exams." As a result, the apprentices will have earned the new certifications but will be required to take the new certification exams in order to complete the apprenticeship program. Therefore, Jack and Lisa propose that the committee revise the state standards to allow for the grandfathering.

A general discussion followed on whether revising the state standards was warranted, particularly because the matter would be moot for future apprentices, and if warranted, whether contract amendments would be necessary. Mark Bartels, whose plant sponsors one of the apprentices, supported revising the standards to avoid unnecessary costs of time and money for his plant and apprentice. Members agreed that the subject matter covered in the current and pending exams were equivalent, and supported revising the state standards.

The DNR and Bureau recommended the following revisions, which would allow for the grandfathering and not require amendments to the apprenticeship contracts:

*"In order to receive the Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship, the apprentice must pass the following WDNR certification examinations:*

1. *Basic General Wastewater, or the former "Introductory General Wastewater" and the former "Advanced General Wastewater"*
2. *"Biological Treatment: Suspend Growth" or "Biological Treatment: Attached Growth" or the former "Activated Sludge" or the former "Trickling Filters/RBCs."*
3. *Solids Separation*
4. *Biological Solids/Sludge – Handling, Processing and Results*

**Action:** *The committee approved the revisions.*

**b. BAS approved request to pursue related instruction through University of Wisconsin System.**

Owen informed members and consultants that the committee approved a request from a municipality to send its apprentice through the University of Wisconsin System for paid related instruction. The Bureau policy states that an employer can choose an independent training provider as long as a third party verifies that the courses satisfy the program requirements. The Bureau continues to support its partnerships with the Wisconsin Technical College System through outreach to employers and promoting the benefits of attending PRI at a technical college, such as lower costs, flexible delivery, etc. However, the Bureau cannot deny a request for an independent training provider solely on the grounds of existing partnerships with technical colleges. Owen concluded by stating that it is unclear if the municipality will go through with the request.

A general discussion followed on the benefits of attending a technical college and additional training options present within the industry.

**c. Other**

Sandy Martin, Apprenticeship Training Representative for Racine, shared that Bureau Director Karen Morgan would allow smaller municipalities to partner with one another to share OJT and PRI training for an apprenticeship, provided the municipalities have a written agreement between them.

Dean Faulker reported that he had reorganized the work processes into categories more useful for his plant's training purposes and daily operations. He proposed the committee review them at the fall meeting for possible adoption. Dean also suggested that an "apprenticeship user guide," or document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of a sponsor and offers technical assistance, would be helpful. Sandy and Owen stated the Bureau has several such documents, some of which were provided to the plant.

**Action:** *The Bureau will forward the proposed revisions to the work processes to the committee co-chairs for consideration for the fall meeting.*

A discussion on possible typographical errors in the Exhibit A followed, particularly the intended distinction between wastewater treatment plants and collection systems.

**Action:** *Kelly Zimmer will forward the potential errors and proposed revisions to the Bureau and the committee.*

A general discussion followed on whether collection systems was appropriate to include in the Exhibit A or whether its scope and the need for training across the state was sufficient to warrant discussing potentially developing a separate apprenticeship program.

**Action:** Bruce Bartel, Mark Bartels and Paul Wilson volunteered to review the collection systems content in the Exhibit A; and the committee voted to discuss whether a collection systems apprenticeship program is needed at the fall meeting.

**6. DNR Update**

No update.

**7. WTCS Update**

**a. Moraine Park**

Mark Schmidt reported that two apprentices are attending paid related instruction online through the college.

**b. Gateway Technical College**

Nicci Pagan, Apprenticeship Divisional Associate reviewed highlights of program and the goal of starting apprentices in Fall 2015 classroom PRI.

**8. Review program participants**

As of the date of the meeting, three apprentices and three sponsors are enrolled currently in the program.

9. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, September 16, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. at Gateway Technical College in Sturtevant.

10. The meeting adjourned at 2:12p.m.

**Follow-up Items**

As a result of the meeting, the follow actions will be taken:

- i. BAS will revise the state standards.*
- ii. BAS will convene the outreach focus groups in summer.*
- iii. BAS will forward the proposed revisions to the work processes to the co-chairs for review.*
- iv. BAS will contact the Wisconsin League of Municipalities and the WI Municipal Clerk Association.*
- v. BAS will add a collection systems apprenticeship to the fall meeting agenda.*
- vi. Kelly Zimmer will forward proposed corrections to the work processes to the Bureau and committee.*
- vii. Bruce Bartel, Mark Bartels, and Paul Wilson will review collection systems content in the Exhibit A.*

*Submitted by Owen Smith, Program and Policy Analyst.*