

The Clarifier

SEPTEMBER 2007

Contents of This Issue

Increase in Renewal Fee	Page 1
New Website Items	Page 1
Exam Schedule	Page 1
Renewal News and Reminders	Page 2
What to Know About Sewers	Page 3
Wilson NC Receives EPA Recognition	Page 4
Presentation of Awards	Page 4
The Best Plan to Pass the Certification Exam	Page 5
Applying for the Exam	Page 6
TACU Staff & Consultants	Page 7



The North Carolina General Assembly approved and Governor Easley signed the new budget bill on July 31, 2007. The bill, which is effective August 1, 2007, includes an increase in wastewater treatment system operators annual renewal fee from \$35.00 to \$50.00. This increase in fees is the first since 1999 and reflects inflationary pressure over that time period.

**BE SURE TO INCLUDE
CORRECT AMOUNT WITH YOUR RENEWAL.**

Exam Schedule

December 13	<i>(postmark deadline November 13)</i>
March 13	<i>(postmark deadline February 12)</i>
June 12	<i>(postmark deadline May 13)</i>
September 11	<i>(postmark deadline August 12)</i>
November 13	<i>(postmark deadline October 14)</i>

TACU Website changes include new items!

The Technical Assistance & Certification Unit (TACU) website contains the following new items:

Manuals— includes “Needs to Know” for many of the certification programs

Publications— current and back issues of the *Applicator* (animal) and the *Clarifier* (wastewater) newsletters

Math Formulas for all certifications— download and study prior to the exam!

Exam application— there’s a NEW form being used and it is available for download.

Maps to exam sites!

Annual Renewal Info



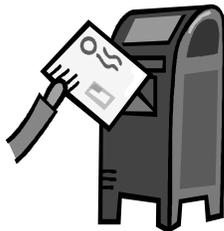
RENEWAL NEWS AND REMINDERS

In order to maintain a VALID certificate, you must renew your certificate annually. Invoices are generated and mailed to each valid operator in mid October. **Failure to receive a renewal invoice does not relieve the operator of the responsibility to renew their certification annually.** If you have a change of address, you are required to provide this information (in writing) to our office within 30 calendar days of the change. Submitting these changes to our office will help prevent the return of correspondence that are incorrectly addressed.

If your certification is INVALID an invoice will not be generated. Once payment for previous year and proof of continuing education are received, processed and your certification is reinstated, an invoice will be generated. Your invoice will be mailed, faxed or emailed to you. If your certificate has been INVALID for more than two years you must complete the basic training and successfully pass the examination of the same type and grade as your former certification.

Submittal of incorrect amount of fees, failure to include renewal invoice, or copies of certificate of training (if required—*will be noted on invoice*) may result in return of payment requiring re-submittal of correct payment and all supporting documents. *If submitting payment for multiple invoices, please note that invoices requiring proof of continuing education are not immediately processed due to verification and data entry of training.*

There are over 9,000 certified operators in the state of NC. In an effort to provide courteous and efficient customer service, our office works diligently to process all payments and the printing and mailing of wallet cards as quickly as possible.



POINTS TO REMEMBER

MAIL EARLY



THEN YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY

- It is your responsibility to renew your certification annually.
- An invoice will not be generated for an INVALID operator.
- Contact the TACU office if you have not received a renewal invoice by November 30.
- Submit invoice with check or money order. We are unable to process credit card payments at this time.
- If sending payment overnight, send to physical address not the mail service center address.
- If required, include certificate of training.
- Submit Application for Approval of Continuing Ed prior to October.
- Verify and update the following information on your invoice:
 - If you have moved and have not provided change of address to our office, include new address on renewal invoice.
 - Verify telephone numbers and correct if necessary.
- Include \$50.00 late fee if payment is submitted after December 31, 2007.

- **Do not** send payment without current renewal invoice.
- **Do not** use invoice from previous year.
- **Do not** use the invoice of another operator. Invoice numbers are printed on each invoice for scanning and process of payment.
- **Do not send payment overnight to the mail service center address.**

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT SEWERS? TALK TO HIM.

Biology, chemistry and earth sciences all at end of city sewer pipe

By BRUCE HENDERSON (reprinted with permission from the author) bhenderson@charlotteobserver.com

You can imagine the giggle potential when a bunch of seventh-graders visited the Sugar Creek sewage plant Thursday.

But no 13-year-old can top plant manager Roy Purgason, Charlotte's unofficial professor of poop. After 33 years at Sugar Creek and hundreds of tours, Purgason's heard it all -- much of it from his own mouth. He's a hero to local science teachers for his ability to draw students into the inner sanctum of a stinky business.

"The trip just creates an amazing platform for learning about biology, chemistry, earth science, business," said Robert Corbin, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' earth science academic content coach. He's taken students and teachers there for 15 years. "He treats every kid graciously and he's always entertaining. I told him he missed his calling, he should have been a teacher."

The Charlotte Latin students on tour Thursday are a willing audience.

"Anybody want a rock?" Purgason yells, pausing by a basin of stones once used in the treatment process.

Everybody wants a rock.

Then it's on to the good stuff -- the machinery that screens out non-fecal discards washing into the plant.

Bowling balls and 2-by-4s, Purgason recites in his rapid patter. Dead cats and live ones. Rose bushes, drug gear, cell phones, dollar bills and rubber lizards.

A kid asks about body parts, prompting Purgason's story of the apparent brain that turned out to be a dried-up grapefruit. He dismisses a scene from the horror movie "Crocodile."

"That's bogus, because they showed body parts in the aeration system," he says. "They'd catch that in the bar screens."

The students -- who will be tested today -- ask smart questions about disinfection and discharge limits.

They peer into the bubbling brown scum in aeration basins and watch treated effluent cascade into Little Sugar Creek -- drinking water for somebody downstream, Purgason notes.

The students don blue lab gloves (or inflate them) as he positions a microscope slide crawling with sewage-chomping microbes. "Is that cool or what?" Purgason asks. Magnified on a projector screen, a six-foot worm moves in for a bite.

"Ew!" the girls cry.

"Hoo-ra!" one boy exults.

Purgason, 55, was a discharged Marine when family ties brought him to Sugar Creek. His grandfather poured concrete for the plant, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities' oldest, in the 1920s. His former father-in-law worked there for 20 years. Purgason's son Keith works at the McAlpine plant.

"This is my home," he tells the kids. "This is my little baby."

He likes the variety and challenge of the job, and has twice won N.C. industry operator or educator of the year awards.

The departing students give Purgason thumbs-up.

"He was really funny and he, like, made jokes and stuff," says Tyler Cooney.

"He made the learning pretty exciting," adds Griffy Dulskis. "He didn't make it seem, like, boring and stuff."

And the kids line up for autographs on their rocks.

Roy Purgason

WILSON, NORTH CAROLINA ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENTS RECOGNIZED BY EPA

Press Contact: Dawn Harris-Young, (404) 562-8421, harris-young.dawn@epa.gov

(ATLANTA - February 2, 2007) The City of Wilson, North Carolina was presented with the 2006 Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Pisces Award for success in environmental performance, innovation and creation. The CWSRF finances innovative projects that increase the sustainability of wastewater infrastructure across the nation. For the first time, the 2006 Pisces Awards provide recognition of CWSRF borrowers that achieved significant environmental and economic benefits with innovative projects. The nominees had to demonstrate leadership and innovation in financing, project implementation, partnerships or sustainable infrastructure.

Wilson utilized several funding sources including \$32.3 million in CWSRF loans to improve the city's solids processing and create a water reclamation system as part of overall strategy to improve water quality in the Neuse River Basin. The increase in quality of the residual from the solids processing reduced land application costs by 30% and provides \$60,000 in natural gas savings for the system. When constructing the 6.0 MGD water reclamation facility, an abandoned polishing pond was reused as a storage pond to conserve funds. The city created a fee program that gives an incentive to use reclaimed water thus conserving water resources and increasing nutrient removal.

AWARDS PRESENTED FOR SERVICE PROVIDED TO OPERATORS

Jerry Rimmer, supervisor of the Technical Assistance and Certification Unit in Raleigh and Tom Tharrington the wastewater consultant from the Wilmington Regional Office joined the James Sprunt Community College Board of Trustees Meeting on the evening of January 16, 2007 to present an award. This award from the Water Pollution Control System Operators Certification Commission honors James Sprunt Community College for participating in the certification of wastewater operators over the years. The college provides the Monk Auditorium for the certification exams to be administered in as well as additional meeting rooms for exam reviews and other uses. The college, located just off of I-40 near Kenansville in Duplin County provides an ideal central location for operators from southeastern North Carolina. Over 400 certification exams have been offered annually at this location and the WPCSOCC hopes to maintain this fine relationship with James Sprunt Community College for years to come.

Roger Edwards, supervisor, and Don Price, consultant, from the Asheville Regional Office presented an award to the City of Morganton's Recreation Commission on March 13. The award was presented to the Commission in appreciation for the use of the Recreation Center as a testing facility. For over ten years the basement of the Recreation Center has been set up as a testing site for wastewater operators. As a courtesy to the operators, all ball playing is suspended during testing eliminating possible outside distractions.

An award was presented to Martin Community College by Kristin Jarman from the Washington Regional Office in appreciation for the use of the College as a testing facility. Martin Community has allowed the facility to be used for many years to administer exams to wastewater operators.

Marc Stokes from the Winston-Salem Regional Office presented an award to Salisbury Parks and Recreation for the use of their facility as a testing site for wastewater operators. Use of the facility has been provided by Salisbury Parks and Recreation for several years.

The Water Pollution Control System Operators Certification Commission appreciates and commends each facility for the service they are providing to the wastewater operators of North Carolina and look forward to a continued relationship for many years to come.

THE BEST PLAN TO PASS THE CERTIFICATION EXAM

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The date of the wastewater certification exam is getting very close, are you prepared for it? Finding the right answers to one hundred multiple-choice questions can be very exhausting, especially when you are given four or five possible answers for every question. This means that you have to read four to five hundred possible answers and choose at least seventy correct answers, (passing score is 70). This can be difficult. Even if you know your subject very well, multiple-choice questions can be very tricky unless you have a plan.

The first step in the plan is to practice solving as many multiple choice questions as possible before the test. The purpose of this is not to make you go over the test as fast as possible, but to help you recognize the right answer even when more than one answer seems right. Actually, the slower you read the question and understand it, the more obvious the right answer will be.

The second step is not to panic if you did not know the answer to the first question on the test. Write the number of the question on your scratch paper and go on to the next question. Sometimes it takes a while for your brain to warm up, and some of the questions that you cannot answer at the beginning of the test, you will be able to answer after you go over more questions. It is very important whenever you come across a question that you cannot initially answer that you write the question number on the scratch paper and go on to the next question.

Answer only the questions that you know the answers for sure and mark the answers on your answering sheet in front of the right question number. After you answer all the questions that you are sure of, go back to the questions that you listed in your scratch paper. (These were the questions that you did not know the answers or were not sure). It does not matter how many questions you have listed on your scratch paper, twenty, thirty or even fifty. Go back throughout the list and follow the same pattern you used when you started the test. You will find that you can recognize the answers to many of the questions that you could not confidently answer the first time. On your scratch paper, scratch out the numbers of the questions that you can answer and leave the ones that you are still not sure about. Repeat the process until you exhaust all your knowledge. If you do this successfully, you can leave the exam site knowing your score. You will be able to tell how many questions you did not know or were not sure about.

The third step in order to get the highest score possible is this: When you are done with the test, close your booklet, sit-back, and tell yourself it is over. Usually there is still plenty of time left. When your brain rests and the test pressure is relieved, your brain becomes sharper. Have you ever taken this type of test and soon after you turned in your answer sheet and are not even to your car yet, you remember the right answer to a question that you answered wrong? Then you drove a few miles down the road, and suddenly you remembered the right answer to another question that you answered wrong. This time you were so mad, you hit your head on the steering wheel. Typically this takes place within twenty minutes after turning in your answer sheet. Let us assume that you can relax after you are done with the test. You know it is over, and give yourself ten or fifteen minutes before you turn in your answer sheet. This is a good way to add a point or two to your score, and sometimes that is all that you need to pass the test. Try it, would you?

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Phone: 1-800-631-9747 or 317-215-7104
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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT APPLYING FOR AN EXAMINATION

For those of you who are new to the process of certification (and for some who have been in the process for a while), here's a short list of things to check before you submit that application to take an exam.

- Did you complete all the information requested?
 - *Any missing information could result in your application being denied.*
- Did you include your Certificate of Completion from the required training school?
 - **Do not** submit application without Certificates of Completion. *There is generally plenty of time after the completion of a school for the application to be completed, the certificate attached and the package postmarked by the deadline.*
- Did you sign the application?
- Did your supervisor review the application and sign it?
 - *Your supervisor is required to verify your eligibility and to sign the application.*
- Did you fill in the details of your operation experience:
 - *Actual operational experience should be detailed, including dates of employment, employer name and the specific duties you performed that would qualify you to take the exam. If your experience is not appropriate for the Grade of Certificate that you applied for, you may be denied or you may be granted to sit for an Operator in Training exam.*
- Did you include the necessary fees in the form of a check or money order?
 - *The current exam fee is \$85.00. Please see the exam application for other required fees for Temporary Certificates and Conversions.*
- Did you meet the postmark deadline date?
 - *Exam application must be postmarked no later than 30 days prior to the date of the exam. Consult the website for exam deadlines for postmark.*

Failure to complete the application may result in your form being returned for completion or you may be denied the chance to take the exam. Make sure you take your time and complete the application in it's entirety and that all supporting documents are enclosed. If you have questions, consult the TACU website (<http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/tacu/index.html>) or call 919-733-0026.

LINK TO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CERTIFICATION UNIT STAFF
PHONE NUMBER—919-733-0026

JERRY RIMMER EXT 309—*SUPERVISOR*

GAIL WINLEY EXT 301—*OFFICE ASSISTANT III*

BETH BUFFINGTON EXT 313—*ENVIRONMENTAL SENIOR SPECIALIST*

JUDY RHODES EXT 312—*INFORMATION PROCESSING ASSISTANT I*

SANDY HAYWOOD EXT 308—*OFFICE ASSISTANT IV*

JAMES PUGH EXT 341—*EXTENSION EDUCATION & TRAINING SPECIALIST III*

STEVE REID EXT 314—*EXTENSION EDUCATION & TRAINING SPECIALIST II*

There are 5 Regional Office Consultants, available for technical support to wastewater and collection systems. All consultants are Grade 4 WW certificate holders and have numerous years experience in operation and maintenance of treatment plants. Their services are offered free of charge and staff can respond rapidly to your needs. Contact them directly or call Jerry Rimmer at 919-733-0026 ext 309 to get in touch with a consultant in your area.

REGIONAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT CONSULTANTS

DON PRICE—ASHEVILLE REGIONAL OFFICE—828-296-4500

DON REGISTER—FAYETTEVILLE REGIONAL OFFICE—910-433-3300

KRISTIN JARMAN—WASHINGTON REGIONAL OFFICE—252-946-6481

TOM THARRINGTON—WILMINGTON REGIONAL OFFICE—910-796-7215

MARC STOKES—WINSTON-SALEM REGIONAL OFFICE—336-771-5000



Want to share some inside info on one of your operators who happens to be particularly clever or do you have a story about a unique way of handling a tough situation at your plant? Drop an email to steve.reid@ncmail.net and we'll try to get it printed in the next edition.



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