

SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Loch A. Dreizler, General Manager (Frank Redfern, Board President)
DATE: April 16, 2025
SUBJECT: Wastewater Collection Operations Staffing and Supervision

Proposed Motion or Recommendation

Discuss the Board President's concepts about the District supervisor and review the current staffing adequacy and operator development planning.

Policy Implications

- **Organizational Structure:** The current organizational chart includes a dedicated supervisor position but does not include a fourth operator. Creating a new position would require board approval to amend the organizational chart, affecting the budget.
- **Employee Development:** Investing in current staff aligns with District policy to foster internal growth and retain skilled employees.

Fiscal Implications

- **Current Budget:** The District's budget is balanced with existing staffing levels. Salaries, benefits, and training for three operators are accounted for in the 2025–26 fiscal year.
- **Cost of Additional Hire:** Hiring a supervisor (estimated at \$100,000–\$125,000 annually, including benefits) would alter a small agency's budget, potentially requiring a reallocation of funds or a future rate increase. The current financial plan does not support this addition without significant adjustments.
- **Training Investment:** Ongoing training for existing operators is already budgeted and represents a cost-effective approach to building leadership capacity.

Alternatives Considered

1. **Maintain Current Staffing:** Allow operators to continue developing while monitoring operational needs, preserving fiscal stability, and supporting internal growth.
2. **Hire a New Supervisor:** This may address the board president's concern immediately, but it would exceed the budget, require a modification of the organizational chart, and, most importantly, demotivate existing operators and bypass internal promotion opportunities.
3. **Designate an Existing Operator as Supervisor:** One operator could be promoted now, with additional training to fill gaps. However, the General Manager believes all three operators would benefit from further development before one assumes this role permanently.

Discussion

General Manager is currently addressing the supervisory administrative gaps, and our wastewater treatment plant operator, with many years of experience in treatment and collections, is filling in the supervisory technical gaps and serving as the supervisor for the operators.

The General Manager acknowledges the board president's concern regarding strong leadership in wastewater operations to ensure reliable service. However, the District's three operators are actively growing into their roles through ongoing training, certifications, and hands-on experience. Each operator is committed to professional development and is expected to be ready to assume leadership responsibilities within the next 6–12 months.

The existing team effectively manages the District's current infrastructure. Operational metrics suggest adequate staffing levels, including compliance with regulatory standards and timely responses to service issues. Introducing a supervisor position would require either creating a new role or reallocating duties, which could disrupt the team's cohesion and development trajectory.

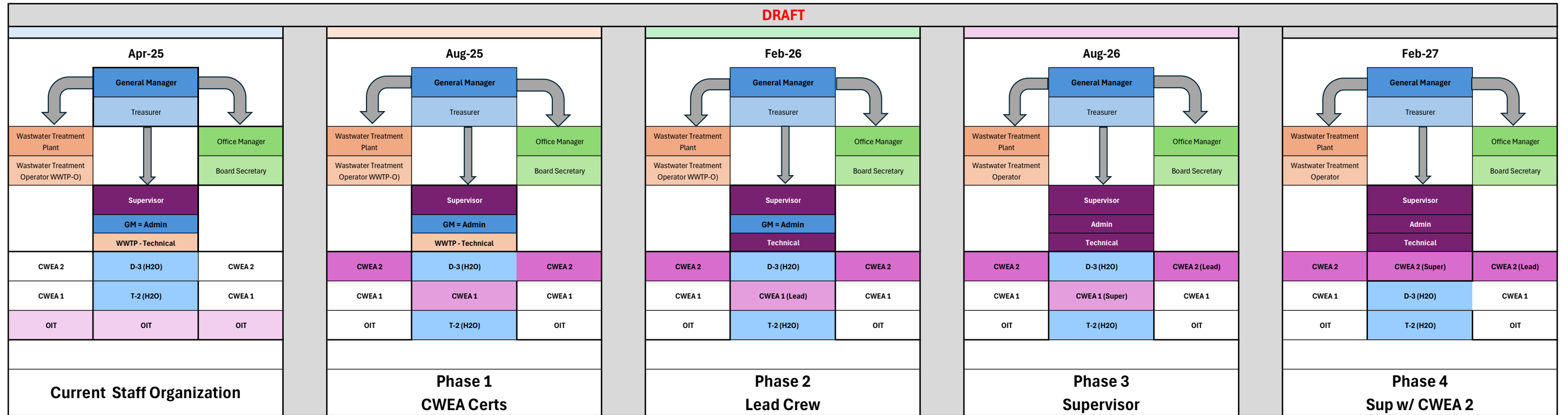
Conclusion: The General Manager appreciates the board president's focus on ensuring robust leadership in wastewater operations. The current team of three operators is well-positioned to meet the District's needs, with adequate capacity to manage existing infrastructure. By investing in their development, the District can build leadership capabilities internally without fiscal or organizational strain.

Attachments:

- Operator Training Plan Overview
- Commonalities between the water and wastewater industries
- Graphic illustrating an overview of District stakeholder responsibilities

Santa Ynez CSD Staff Specific Organizational Chart

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SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE WATER AND WASTEWATER INDUSTRIES

1. **Water as the Core Resource:** Both industries revolve around water, whether sourcing and treating it for use (water industry) or managing it after use (wastewater industry). The water cycle ties them together, as wastewater treatment often returns water to the environment or reintroduces it into the supply chain.
2. **Infrastructure Dependency:** Both rely on extensive networks of pipes, pumps, valves, and treatment facilities. For example, water distribution and wastewater collection systems (sewers) share similar engineering principles and materials.
3. **Workforce Skills:** Engineers, chemists, environmentalists, and operators are key personnel in both sectors, requiring similar technical expertise in hydraulics, chemistry (sampling), and system management.
4. **Public Health:** Both industries aim to protect public health. The water industry ensures safe drinking water, while the wastewater industry prevents contamination and disease by treating sewage and industrial effluents.
5. **Regulatory Oversight:** Both are heavily regulated by government agencies (e.g., the EPA in the U.S., or similar bodies globally) to ensure compliance with environmental and safety standards.
6. **Treatment Processes:** Both industries employ physical, chemical, and biological treatment methods. For instance, filtration, sedimentation, and disinfection are used in water purification and wastewater treatment.
7. **Environmental Impact:** Sustainability and minimizing ecological harm are shared priorities. The water industry manages resource extraction responsibly, while the wastewater ensures treated water doesn't pollute ecosystems.
8. **Technological Innovation:** Advances like smart metering, automation, and membrane filtration benefit both industries, improving efficiency and monitoring.
9. **Energy Consumption:** Both are energy-intensive, with pumping and treatment processes accounting for significant operational costs.
10. **Climate Change Adaptation:** Droughts, floods, demand, and shifting water availability affect both industries, necessitating discussion and considering adaptive strategies.

SEE THE OTHER SIDE FOR DIFFERENCES

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WATER AND WASTEWATER INDUSTRIES

1. **Direction of Flow:** The water industry moves water **to** consumers, while the wastewater industry moves it **away** from them.
2. **Contaminant Load:** Raw water in the water industry typically has lower and more predictable contamination levels than the highly variable and complex mix of pollutants in wastewater.
3. **End Goal:** The water industry produces a consumable product, while the wastewater industry focuses on waste management and environmental protection.
4. **Reuse Potential:** Wastewater has growing potential for direct reuse (e.g., reclaimed water), whereas the water industry focuses on initial sourcing and treatment.

INTERCONNECTIONS

1. **Water Reuse:** Treated wastewater is increasingly reused as a water source, blurring the lines between the two industries.
2. **Shared Facilities:** In some regions, water and wastewater treatment plants are co-located or managed by the same utility (e.g., municipal water authorities).
3. **Resource Recovery:** Both industries are exploring resource recovery—water utilities extract energy from hydropower, while wastewater plants generate biogas from sludge.

CONCLUSION

The water and wastewater industries share at least 10 significant commonalities, rooted in their mutual focus on water management, public health, and environmental stewardship. While their objectives differ—provision versus disposal—their operations, technologies, and challenges are similar.

A Public Agency's Cycle of Responsibility

