

## SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Loch Dreizler, General Manager  
**DATE:** February 18, 2026

**SUBJECT:** This Board Memorandum will provide the Santa Ynez Community Services District Board of Directors with an opportunity to discuss the requirements and, if appropriate, offer additional learning assistance to Collection System Operators-In-Training (O.I.T.) regarding obtaining CWEA Collection System Maintenance Grade 1 certification within 2 years of hire, consistent with the existing job description (dated July 1, 2012).

**No Motion Required:** If necessary, additional staff direction and consultation with legal counsel may be warranted, and a future agenda item may be appropriate.

**Staff Recommendation:** Enhance the existing incentive and support framework by providing additional educational resources.

### **Purpose**

This memorandum summarizes informal discussions about the proposal to require operations employees to obtain CWEA Collection System Maintenance (CSM) Grade 1 certification within a defined period of employment. It incorporates the existing financial incentive; see the attached Collection System Operator I job description (dated July 1, 2012), as well as the key implementation considerations. Staff recommends a supportive, forward-looking approach that builds upon current practices while minimizing legal risks.

### **Background**

- The District currently offers financial incentives for operations employees who obtain a CWEA Grade 1 certification.
- The attached job description for Collection System Operator I includes this requirement: "Pass test and receive a Grade I Collection Operator certificate within 2 years of hire". It also lists related essential skills and functions. This has been in place since at least 2012 and applies to new hires. However, there is rightfully no punitive measure if the certification is not achieved.

## **Workforce and Operational Impacts**

- **Recruitment:** The 2-year timeline in the job description is realistic and standard; it has not hindered any hiring practices.
- **Morale and Retention:** Strong support increases pass rates and buy-in. Grade 1 is entry-level (no prior experience required to test, though ~1 year of knowledge is assumed). Pass rates are achievable with preparation.
- **Benefits:** Certified staff enhances safety, compliance, and professionalism.

**Recommended Path Forward:** Staff supports the goal of a more certified, professional workforce and recommends enhancing the existing incentive and support framework rather than implementing punitive measures.

- **Retain and Strengthen Financial Incentives:** Keep the current financial incentives that essentially consider pay differentials for certified staff.
- **Provide Robust Study Support:**
  - Allow some responsible study time at work, internal study groups/mentorship, and practice exams.
- **Advance/Targeted Support for Employees Who May Struggle:** Consider offering one-on-one coaching, accommodation (e.g., for test anxiety or scheduling), and flexible timelines/extensions on a case-by-case basis. Celebrate successes publicly to build momentum.

This approach will likely achieve higher certification rates through positive reinforcement and position the District as an employer that invests in its team.

## **Attached:**

1. Summary of Other Considerations
2. Job Description 2012

## **Summary of Other Key Considerations:**

### **1. No State Mandate Applies**

Unlike wastewater treatment roles (which require State Water Resources Control Board certification and Operators in Training provisions with time limits), collection system work has no state-mandated certification. CWEA Grade 1 is a voluntary, professional credential from the California Water Environment Association. It is widely respected in the industry for demonstrating competency in areas such as line maintenance, pump stations, safety, and SSO prevention, but the enforcement of any timeline or consequences is an internal District policy matter.

### **2. Any Retroactive Application to Current Employees**

Imposing a new mandatory timeline and potential penalties (e.g., reassignment or termination) on existing staff would be retroactive and carry notable risks, especially in a non-union environment:

- Public employment policies and case law emphasize fairness and due process for significant changes to job descriptions.
- It could be viewed as altering implied terms of employment, potentially leading to claims of arbitrary action or constructive discharge.

### **3. Risk of Union Interest**

A shift from a voluntary incentive to a mandatory requirement with consequences could be perceived as increasing job insecurity, especially in physically demanding field roles. This has, in similar California collection agencies, prompted employee discussions about union representation. A supportive approach minimizes this risk.

**SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT  
JOB DESCRIPTION**

COLLECTION SYSTEM OPERATOR I

This is not an individualized job description for any particular employee. It defines the general character and scope of responsibilities. It is not intended to describe and does not necessarily list every duty for a position.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Under the direction of the Operations Supervisor and Collection System Operator II, perform semi-skilled labor in the maintenance, operation, repair and related service activities for the District collection system; and perform a variety of related duties as assigned.

EXAMPLES OF DUTIES

Maintain collection system lines and pump stations.

Participate in the operation of line locating, line cleaning and video inspection equipment.

Perform preventative maintenance on trucks and other related equipment.

Order supplies, materials, and equipment.

Read meters daily and record.

Understand and practice safe work practices and requirements, including chemical handling, confined space work, and construction of underground requirements of OSHA.

Regularly monitor system through reading gauges, meters, and control panels.

Daily visual inspection of collection system.

Mark for underground alerts and work with construction personnel.

Comply with District's employment policies as set forth in the Employee Handbook.

Work cooperatively with others and readily accept instructions and directions from a supervisors or the General Manager.

Maintain cordial working relationships with other District employees; work easily in a setting that may include distractions and noise.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Understand and employ materials and equipment used in construction, general mechanical and electrical operations, maintenance and repair.

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Collection System Operator I

Understand and employ safe work practices.

Skills necessary to learn the operation and maintenance of a variety of collection system/wastewater equipment.

Skills necessary to learn to read meters and gauges correctly and to act quickly and competently.

Skills necessary to learn to make routine adjustments and minor repairs to motors, pumps, and other equipment.

Ability to work in confined space.

Periodically wear breathing apparatus as required for confined space entry.

Carry a cell phone while on standby duty, which is a 14-day 24 hour rotation.

Respond to a call-out within 30 minutes of the call, while on standby duty.

Personal schedule permitting working weekends, holidays, various shifts, as assigned.

Maintain the Grease Trap Program.

Skills necessary to pass the test and receive a Collection System Operator I certification, within 2 years.

#### WORKING CONDITIONS

Work in wastewater collection system, wastewater treatment plant environments; some exposure to wastewater, water, chemicals, hazardous materials, and noise; heavy lifting/moving, standing, climbing. May work at heights, in confined spaces, and in inclement weather conditions.

#### PHYSICAL DEMANDS

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to use hands to finger, handle, feel or operate objects, tools, or control and reach with hands and arms. The employee frequently is required to stand, sit, walk, push, pull, kneel, stoop, bend, and squat. The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 25 lbs and infrequently up to 50 lbs. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus. Each of these physical tasks is an essential function of the position.

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Collection System Operator I

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Must possess a valid California, Class C driver's license, have a satisfactory driving record and be insurable by the District to operate District vehicles.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Any combination of experience and training that would likely provide the required knowledge and abilities is qualifying. Equivalent to completion of the twelfth grade. Experience in sewer operations is desirable. Pass test and receive a Grade I Collection Operator certificate within 2 years of hire.

This is to acknowledge that I have received a copy of this job description and understand its contents.

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Employee Signature

July 1, 2012