



**City of Placerville  
MEMORANDUM**

DATE: May 8, 2007  
TO: City Council  
FROM: John Driscoll, City Manager/City Attorney  
SUBJECT: **APPROVAL OF SALARY ADJUSTMENTS / WASTE WATER  
CLASSIFICATIONS**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council adopt a resolution approving an adjustment of the salary ranges for employee classifications working at the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

**BACKGROUND**

Currently, the City has six employee classifications that are assigned to the Water Reclamation Facility, formerly known as the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WRF). Those classifications are Water Reclamation Facility Supervisor, Lab Director, Senior Maintenance Mechanic, Senior Water Reclamation Facility Operator, Water Reclamation Facility Operator II, and Water Reclamation Facility Operator I.

Waste water operations require various State certifications to operate such facilities. The certifications required depend upon the certification level of the facility. The City's WRF is a Level IV, which means that the City is required to have an Operator with a certification level of IV or higher to supervise WRF operations. The WRF supervisor holds a Class IV certification. Over the years, the City has had difficulty in maintaining authorized staff levels for the WRF. Recently, we have had operators leave to take similar jobs at other facilities. Presently, we have one operator position vacant and are currently recruiting for that position.

There is a statewide shortage of operators with the appropriate certifications. This is the product, in part, of an increased demand for operators as a result of service demands stemming from the recent significant expansion of the housing market, as well as jurisdictions hiring operators in order to upgrade their facilities to meet new State regulations. The shortage is also due to the lack of visibility of the profession and the limited frequency of the State certification testing process. The lack of certified operators has resulted in serious competition for qualified applicants amongst jurisdictions operating waste water facilities.

One of the results of the increased competition for qualified operators is that salaries have risen substantially. It is hoped that the labor shortage will eventually diminish as a result of higher

salaries, which will attract more interest in the profession as well as increase the visibility of the profession. Additionally, the State has increased its testing frequency, which will allow more applicants to become certified. However, the equilibrium between supply and demand has not yet been achieved and the labor problem continues.

Several years ago, the City attempted to address this issue with a salary adjustment for those classifications working at the WRF. Unfortunately, other jurisdictions have taken similar action and we are still "behind the curve" in competing with those jurisdictions. Staff feels that proper staffing is essential to the efficient and safe operation of the WRF. Because of the nature of the operation, there are obvious health and safety issues associated with the operation of the WRF. Continued operation of the WRF with "short staffing" exposes the City to potential liability. This is especially dangerous when employee absences are experienced in an already "short-staffed" situation.

In response to this, the City is preparing proposals for enhanced in-house training in preparation for future State testing and also increasing incentives for employees who augment the level and number of their current certifications. However, in order to attract qualified applicants so that the WRF can be adequately staffed, we are recommending salary adjustments in order to remain competitive in order local labor market. Listed below is a comparison of the Step 5 current salary for each classification at the WRF and the proposed Step 5 salary for those classifications.

Position	Current Salary Step 5	Proposed Salary Step 5
Water Reclamation Facility Supervisor	\$6,206	\$6,855
Lab Director	\$4,996	\$5,519
Senior Maintenance Mechanic	\$4,795	\$5,297
Senior Water Reclamation Facility Operator	\$4,758	\$5,255
Water Reclamation Facility Operator II	\$3,889	\$4,295
Water Reclamation Facility Operator I	\$3,642	\$4,022

Because of the urgency of this matter, we have worked with Operating Engineers Local 39, which represents our WRF personnel regarding these salary adjustments. In conjunction with Local 39, we are recommending approval of the proposed salaries to address this problem.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The proposed salary adjustments were anticipated at the time that the City increased its waste water rates. As a result, the Waste Water Enterprise Fund's operating budget includes these adjustments and will be able to absorb the salary increases.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed for fiscal impact:

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John Driscoll  
City Manager/City Attorney

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David Warren  
Finance Director