

Inter Tribal Council of Arizona Describes its Tribal Water Systems Program

Deborah Patton – Inter Tribal Council of Arizona

Program Scope

The Tribal Water Operator Certification Program (TWOCP), of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA), was developed in the early 1990's in a partnership with the Indian Health Service, Phoenix Area Office. The program was designed to meet the needs of the Water and Wastewater Operator on Tribal Lands. This one-of-a-kind program in the United States provides training and certification to tribal operators in Indian Country, and continues to develop programs to provide training and information to increase tribal operating capacity and expertise in developing and maintaining water and wastewater treatment facilities.

Project Description

The goals of the project are to assist Tribal Utilities, to increase the capability and expertise of plant operators, and to maintain affordable, adequate and safe drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities.

The TWOCP was established after tribal water operators expressed interest in a certification program that would better meet the needs of small systems operators on tribal lands and provide an alternative to the state process. These requests resulted in the creation of the TWOCP, with the purpose of protecting the health and safety of the public by providing a voluntary training and examination program for tribal water and wastewater operators. Funding and technical assistance for the TWOCP has been provided by the Department of Health and Human Service, Office of Community Services and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 9. The primary technical and training assistance has been provided by the Indian Health Service (IHS), Phoenix Area Office. A Technical Assistance/Circuit Rider position has been funded by the USDA - Rural Development Program.

Training and examination for certification at Level One is provided through a modular format with operators completing the General Module and one additional module from the following technically specific areas: Water Distribution, Water Treatment, Wastewater Collection and Small Wastewater Treatment Lagoon. Level Two certification is now offered in drinking water treatment and distribution certification. Wastewater certifications at Level Two are currently under development.

The ITCA membership in the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) provides the opportunity for the TWOCP to be part of a nationally recognized organization that sets standards for professional development for environmental work-force certification. Membership also provides a uniform program for reciprocity between state and provincial certifying authorities, assists in the creation of TWOCP customized exams, and empowers the ITCA to be the certifying authority and administrator for the TWOCP.

ITCA is also responsible for the coordination and facilitation of two workgroups composed of tribal water operators and utility directors, IHS, EPA, and the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Water Operator Certification Program staff. The first workgroup, The Certification Program Advisory Work Group, provides recommendations for the products of the TWOCP. The second workgroup, The Tribal Water Systems Operator Work Group, promotes a forum for tribal operators and

utility directors to provide input regarding the certification program and addresses tribal issues common to water and wastewater problem solving.

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Inter Tribal Council of Arizona Helping Tribes Protect Groundwater from Pesticide Contamination

The Pesticide Program of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA) is providing training and operating funds (through cooperative agreements with the Environmental Protection Agency) to develop and implement pesticide regulatory programs on tribal lands where significant amounts of pesticides are used. Currently, four Arizona tribes are involved with the Pesticide Program: the Cocopah, Quechan, Fort Mojave, and Colorado River Indian Tribes. Primary objectives of the program are to conduct vulnerability assessments, including baseline sampling of groundwater to determine the absence or presence of pesticides, and to conduct public outreach and provide awareness of the potential contamination of groundwater from pesticides. The tribes have established their own pesticide standards and monitoring programs, which are at least as stringent as EPA standards.

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Isotope Analysis

²H ¹³C ¹⁴C ¹⁵N ¹⁸O ³⁴S ³⁷Cl

¹⁵N of NO₃⁻, Inorganic ³⁷Cl, ²H + ¹⁸O in Groundwater
²H, ¹³C, ¹⁴C, ³⁴S of crude, Petroleum Fuels & Gases

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