

# Irrigator Advisory Council (IAC) Minutes

*Note: These draft meeting minutes are posted for review and comment by meeting attendees. They will be available for comment at the next meeting of the Irrigator Advisory Council at which time they will be voted on for adoption.*

Date: Thursday, February 3, 2022

Time: 9:00 am

Location: Microsoft Teams.

## Call to Order

**Charles Swanson**

Mr. Charles Swanson, IAC Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

The present members of the council introduced themselves: Mr. Charles Swanson, Mr. Robert Evans, Mr. David Moulton, Ms. Valerie Miller, Ms. Donna Starling, Mr. James Garvin, and Mr. Jimmy Burgdorf. Not in attendance were Mr. Mark Warden and Mr. Mark Peterson.

TCEQ individuals in attendance were Marilyn Gates, Mingyuan Wei, Kenny Smith, Chelsea Atkinson, Pamela Eziani, Jason Robinson, and Katherine McGlaughlin.

Mr. Charles Swanson requested that a correction be made to the November 4, 2021, IAC Meeting Minutes to correct the spelling of USFDA to USDA. A motion to approve the November 4, 2021, IAC Meeting Minutes with the correction was made by Ms. Donna Starling, seconded by David Moulton. All in attendance approved.

## TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP) Updates

**Chelsea Atkinson**

Ms. Chelsea Atkinson gave the investigation updates. Since the IAC meeting in November 2021, the TCEQ has received 9 new incidents, and has approved 20 investigations. Seven incidents have been closed. The most common complaints received pertained to allegations of individuals using another irrigator's license without his/her permission.

Ms. Atkinson also reported to the council that the TCEQ LIP is beginning to resume in-person/on-site investigations. As such, the LIP will be relying less on citizen collected evidence and more on evidence independently gathered by LIP investigators. Mr. Charles Swanson asked for clarification on independent investigations.

Mr. Kenny Smith informed the council that he has taken a new position with the TCEQ, and that Ms. Atkinson would be taking over the role of the IAC Liaison until his position is filled.

## TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program (CCCP) Updates

**Katherine McGlaughlin**

Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin, TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program Coordinator, provided an update on the activities of this program:

- The TCEQ CCCP conducted 3 Cross-Connection Control surveys since the last November 4, 2021, IAC meeting: 2 of the surveys were in the Houston region and 1 of the surveys was in the Tyler region. Ms. McGlaughlin asked council members to let the CCCP know of any recommendations on who would benefit from training.
- The TCEQ CCCP is continuing to approve of alternate backflow test and CSI forms. Ms. McGlaughlin reminded the IAC that Public Water Supplies who use an alternate form needs approval from the CCCP.
- The CCCP is reaching out to a contractor to update RG-478, including both general information and the new irrigation rules.
- The CCCP will be doing a presentation on Cross-Connection Control at the Eagle Pass Water and Wastewater Conference later in February 2022.
- The next Cross-Connection Control subcommittee meeting is scheduled for March 3, 2022.

## Occupational Licensing

**Tamara Calhoun**

Ms. Tamara Calhoun, Occupational Licensing Team Lead, provided statistics on pass fail rates and licenses issued after the IAC Meeting concluded:

### Fiscal Year 2022 Landscape Irrigator Program Results 1st Quarter (September 1, 2021 – November 30, 2021)

	New Applications Received	Renewal Applications Received	Total Applications Received	Tests Administered	Tests Passed	Percent Passed	New Licenses Issued	Renewal Licenses Issued	Total Current Licenses
Landscape Irrigation Inspector	0	2	2	2	1	50%	1	2	80
Landscape Irrigation Technician	55	97	152	87	35	40.2%	35	86	1410
Landscape Irrigator	169	202	371	273	151	55.3%	80	206	6,709
<b>Grand Totals:</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>187</b>		<b>116</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>8,199</b>

\*As of November 1, 2021, Occupational Licensing can no longer separate out Spanish versus English exams.

Ms. Calhoun reminded the council, since we deployed the Spanish exam via Computer-Based Testing (CBT) on November 1, 2021, that Occupational Licensing can no longer separate out the Spanish versus English pass rates. Ms. Calhoun explained that this is because the Spanish questions are attachments

on the English version of the exam, as demonstrated in the November 4, 2021, IAC meeting. Ms. Calhoun added that this was the only way Occupational Licensing could get the Spanish version on CBT due to limitations in the Occupational Licensing database.

#### **Discussion on work-group progress**

**Charles Swanson**

Mr. Charles Swanson asked Mr. Kenny Smith to speak to the Take Care of Texas (TCOT) Program to ask for background and how they handle topics, in order to assist the workgroup for creating outreach. Mr. Kenny Smith informed the IAC that he had issues trying to get ahold of TCOT to get assistance on those projects. Mr. Smith referred to TCOT videos for winterizing landscape irrigation systems and added that the LIP will keep the council informed on any updates from TCOT as they become available.

Ms. Starling informed the IAC that the Outreach workgroup has not made any progress as they were waiting on the TCOT program before beginning to create outreach initiatives.

A brief discussion was held on how to help homeowners who were uncertain on who is responsible for irrigation services and who should be given the irrigation plan. Mr. Charles Swanson stated that the irrigator is responsible for providing the irrigation system plan to whoever buys the irrigation system.

#### **Discussion on most effective way to refresh irrigators on rules/rule changes**

**Kenny Smith**

Mr. Kenny Smith discussed a need to refresh landscape irrigators on the irrigation rules and added that the LIP provides information for the landscape irrigation rules in Texas on the TCEQ's LIP website. Mr. Smith asked the IAC on suggestions for effective communication on rules refreshers outside of Outreach.

Mr. Charles Swanson stated that the last few months were the part of year where most irrigation groups have their major meetings. Mr. Swanson suggested reaching out to state associations and asking them to contact their members through emails or including TCEQ messages in association newsletters. Mr. Swanson added that active members are aware of rule changes but added that inactive members in associations may not be aware of the rule changes that went into effect in 2020.

Mr. James Garvin added that local associations will be hosting two 8-hour courses: the Texas Irrigation Association (TXIA) will be hosting a course on February 24, 2022, and the San Antonio Irrigation Association (SAIA) will be hosting a course on February 26-27, 2022. Mr. Garvin added that Mr. Swanson will be speaking at SAIA.

Mr. Swanson also suggested maintaining an irrigator email database and sending announcements via the Listserv to remind individuals about the current rules on the LIP website. Mr. Swanson stated that he would be willing to look over the draft of the Listserv announcement before it is sent out.

Mr. Jimmy Burgdorf stated that the City of Fort Worth had seen questionable installs and began putting together an irrigation seminar to inform local irrigators of rules.

#### **Discussion on training/best management practices for record retention**

**Chelsea Atkinson**

Ms. Chelsea Atkinson informed the council that several investigations resulted in LIP investigators irrigation requesting records from irrigators. Ms. Atkinson asked the council if they would be willing to

discuss their best management practices for record retention, and what ways this could be communicated to irrigators.

Mr. Charles Swanson stated that some small irrigation businesses don't maintain their records as well as large corporations with more people on staff. Mr. Swanson suggested sending a reminder to training providers to request going over records retention. Mr. Swanson also suggested asking training providers to give examples of invoices, and other irrigator records during basic irrigator's courses.

Mr. James Garvin stated that record keeping is key to his business and added that his business has benefitted from good record keeping. Mr. Swanson added that there are many ways to capture information for your records, such as using a cell phone to take a photo of a signed contract and then later using that photo to add the contract to the company's records. Mr. Swanson stressed the importance of setting aside time to maintain records.

Ms. Marilyn Gates, TCEQ Program Support Section Manager, stated that the LIP encounters most of the issues occur with sole proprietors: most irrigators are great at installing and maintaining irrigation systems, but they may not have the business knowledge to maintain records.

Mr. Swanson asked Ms. Gates to get with occupational licensing to have them broaden their approach to CEU approvals, specifically citing records keeping and business management practices. Ms. Gates stated the LIP will begin including rules on the business aspect of irrigation when the LIP performs future outreach efforts.

#### **New Business: Advertising Requirements**

**Chelsea Atkinson**

Ms. Atkinson reminded that the LIP would like to remind irrigators that signs, business cards, invoices, and online advertisements, must have the irrigator's license number. Most irrigation complaints the LIP received and completed over the last few years had an advertising component to them.

Mr. Kenny Smith and Mr. Charles Swanson suggested emailing the Irrigator Listserv to inform irrigators on where to find rules pertaining to this. Mr. Swanson added that he felt the LIP should find ways to expand information on Landscape Irrigation rules and suggested sending out physical mailouts to the public.

#### **New Business: Education and Outreach Opportunities:**

**Kenny Smith**

Mr. Kenny Smith stated that the LIP requires at least 90 days to prepare to education presentations and to attend outreach opportunities. Mr. Swanson asked whether TCEQ could reach out to council members in case the LIP is not able to go to a training. Ms. Marilyn Gates expanded upon the need for 90 days, stating that the paperwork and approvals to attend an expo or conference require a lot of processes, and added that having the council share their knowledge at local events would be beneficial in events where the TCEQ does not have enough advanced notice before an event.

Mr. Swanson asked the council if they would be interested in attending local events if the TCEQ asked council members to attend and share their personal knowledge on the irrigation industry to event attendees. Mr. David Moulton, Ms. Donna Starling, and Mr. James Garvin expressed they would be interested in assisting with this.

**Individuals Wishing to Address the Council**

Ms. Tammy Swor, executive director for the TXIA, stated she would be glad to include information on rules and rule changes in the TXIA's newsletter.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Robert Evans made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Donna Starling seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM.