



## State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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### **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection State Well Drillers and Pump Installers Examining and Advisory Board Meeting Minutes for May 15, 2025**

*Approved by the Board on June 19, 2025*

**Board Members Participating Via Telephone/Microsoft Teams:** Art Becker (Chairman), Gary Poppe (Vice-Chairman), Dave Lyman, Joe Yost, Steve Domber, Alexandra Carone, and Mike Klaser

**Board Members Absent:** Gordon Craig and Richard Dalton

**Board Legal Representative Present:** Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Brian Velzy, NJ Division of Law

**NJDEP Water Supply (Bureau of Water Allocation and Well Permitting) Staff Present:** Steve Reya, Mark Miller, Michael Schumacher, Mark Ortega, Steve Vargo, and Gina Fernandes

**Other NJDEP Staff Present:** Don Hirsch, Northern Water Compliance and Enforcement

**Members of the Public:** Brian McGuire, MB Drilling LLC/New Jersey Ground Water Association (NJGWA); Don Colaluce, Colaluce Well and Pump Service

#### **1. Call to Order and Introductions-**

The meeting was called to order at 9:33 am with a quorum present via Microsoft Teams and telephone. Notice of the meeting and instructions on how to participate by video or phone were listed on the Board's website.

#### **2. Review and Certification of April 17, 2025, Meeting Minutes-**

A. Becker asked if anyone had any comments on the draft minutes from the April 17, 2025 Board meeting. No comments were made.

**A motion to approve the draft minutes from April 17, 2025 was made by G. Poppe and seconded by D. Lyman. All were in favor except for S. Domber, who abstained due to being absent for the April meeting.**

### 3. Chair and Vice-Chair Elections-

S. Reya explained that the Board's bylaws dictate that elections for Chair and Vice-Chair be held in the month of May each year. M. Ortega said that in recent years, the Board has nominated A. Becker and G. Poppe and motions were made for each person. A. Becker invited other Board members to step up if they wanted an opportunity to be the Board's Chair. G. Poppe said that A. Becker has been doing an excellent job leading the Board and nominated him to continue serving as the Board's Chairman. A. Becker added that he is willing to continue to serve in this role.

**A motion to nominate A. Becker for Board Chairman was made by G. Poppe, seconded by S. Domber, and approved unanimously.**

A. Becker stated that G. Poppe is the current Vice-Chairman. He praised G. Poppe for helping out during the NJGWA membership meetings by giving updates on Board meetings to the attendees and nominated G. Poppe for Vice-Chairman.

**A motion to nominate G. Poppe for Board Vice-Chairman was made by A. Becker, seconded by J. Yost, and approved unanimously.**

### 4. Review of License Applicants-

A. Becker summarized the list of license applications provided by the Department. He stated that three Environmental Resource & Geotechnical (ERG) and one Vertical Closed Loop Geothermal (VCLG) license applications, which were approved by the Department, were on the list. He asked if anyone had any comments on the license applications. No comments were made.

**A motion to approve the license applicants was made by G. Poppe, seconded by M. Klaser, and approved unanimously.**

Below is a list of license applicants approved for licensure:

License Type	Applicant Name	Employer
ERG	Joshua W. Sigler	Cascade Drilling LLC
ERG	Logan C. Mitten	Summit Drilling LLC
ERG	Trevor J. Reiman	Cascade Drilling LLC
VCLG	Anthony Stiltner	Dandelion Energy

### 5. Review of Continuing Education Applications-

A. Becker read the list of four course applications to the Board. Course applications that were submitted by course providers were from New Jersey Ground Water Association (NJGWA), Duff Co., and the South Atlantic Well Drillers. An application was also submitted by a licensed well driller for the upcoming Florida Ground Water Association (FGWA) 2025 Convention.

#### *NJGWA*

A. Becker introduced the course and asked if there was any discussion needed. NJGWA requested two continuing education points (CEP)s. No discussion was needed for this course.

**A motion to approve the NJGWA June 2025 Membership Meeting with Principles of Sonic Drilling was made by G. Poppe, seconded by D. Lyman, and approved unanimously.**

*Duff Co.*

A. Becker introduced the Duff Co. 2025 Pump and Water Treatment Seminar. This seminar has seven one-hour courses. No discussion was needed.

**A motion to approve the Duff Co. 2025 Pump and Water Treatment Seminar was made by G. Poppe, seconded by A. Carone, and approved unanimously.**

*FGWA*

A course application for the 2025 FGWA Convention was submitted by a licensee who is attending the convention at the end of May. A. Becker asked if there was any discussion needed for the course offerings. A. Becker pointed out three courses that he believed should not count for New Jersey licensed well drillers and pump installers: Preparing for the Water Well Contractor Exam, FGWA Annual Membership Meeting, and Water Management District Panel Discussion. The Board agreed that these courses should not be approved. M. Klaser asked the Board for their opinion on the DOT course and A. Becker explained why the Board has historically approved DOT courses.

**A motion to approve all the FGWA 2025 Convention courses except for Preparing for the Water Well Contractor Exam, FGWA Annual Membership Meeting, and Water Management District Panel Discussion was made by G. Poppe. This motion was seconded by J. Yost and approved unanimously.**

The following courses were approved: Franklin Electric VFD Lab, Sonic Drilling/Sampling, Chlorine, the Most Misunderstood Chemical in the Ground Water Industry, Seeing in Dirty Water with a Down Hole Video Camera, Trade Show, Solar Water Solutions, Drilling Fluid and Cement Management Requirements When Constructing Monitor Wells, and DOT Regulations.

*South Atlantic Jubilee*

A. Becker and M. Ortega went over the list of courses with the Board. A. Becker noted that he had concerns about a couple of the courses on the list. The Board stopped to discuss three courses. First, the Board discussed After the Well – Training and Educating the Water Operators of Public Water Supplies in MN. Some Board members suggested denying this course because it is specific to another state, however, J. Yost pointed out that the rules and technical aspects of operating public water systems should be similar from state to state. The rest of the Board agreed with J. Yost.

The Board also discussed the 2025 State of the US Water Well Industry and the Keynote speech and ultimately decided that those two courses would not be approved. Additionally, the Board asked the Department to request additional information for the course, How to Work Smarter and Get More Done with Less Effort, as the course description was not thorough enough to determine if the course content is related to the industry.

**A motion to approve 23 courses was made by G. Poppe, seconded by D. Lyman, and approved unanimously.**

**A motion to deny 2025 State of the US Water Well Industry and the Keynote speech was made by G. Poppe, seconded by J. Yost, and approved unanimously.**

**A motion to have the Department request more information for How to Work Smarter and Get More Done with Less Effort was made by S. Domber, seconded by A. Carone, and approved unanimously.**

Below is a list of the 23 courses that were approved:

Course Name	CEPs
Are you getting paid enough? Are you giving your customer enough info?	1 Technical
Casing Advancement Ring Bit Systems: Is it for you?	1 Technical
After the Well - Training and Educating the Water Operators of Public Water Supplies in MN	1 Technical
Franklin Electric VFD Lab - Hands on Large Drive Training	1 Technical
Understanding Stray Voltage and Safety	1 Safety
Elevate Your Well Drilling Business with NGWA Business Pro	1 Technical
Electrical Basics and the Use and Understanding of Meters	1 Technical
Motor Testing with Meters	1 Technical
Solar Basics and Opportunities (S-Line Products)	1 Technical
Can I Afford to Buy New or Used Equipment? Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid when Financing with Banks	1 Technical
Residential Pressure Boosting	1 Technical
A Primer on Mandatory Hookup	1 Technical
Maximizing the Life of a Water System	1 Technical
PFAS Contamination	1 Technical
Know Before You Flow: Testing and Treating Water for Safety	1 Technical
Grouting & Sealing	1 Technical
Equipment Financing Basics	1 Technical
Understanding VFD's and Their Applications	1 Technical
Water Wells & Geothermal Boreholes - The Similarities and Differences	1 Technical
Problematic Projects & Solutions	1 Technical
Who Wants to Be a Driller	1 Technical
Submersible Pump Basics	1 Technical
Responding to Flooded Wells	1 Technical

#### 6. Well Construction Requirements Discussion with Donald Colaluca-

S. Reya explained that Mr. Donald Colaluca asked to speak with the Board regarding construction requirements of wells constructed in bedrock geology. At N.J.A.C. 7:9D-2.3(d)2i, the construction requirements for typical Category 1 and 2 wells in consolidated formations (bedrock) are described. In 2018, the Department added a provision to the rule to allow for a specific type of well construction methodology when drillers do not encounter competent rock by 80 feet. S. Reya explained that in certain areas of the state, mainly glacial areas where competent rock is very deep, setting a rock socket comprised of the casing being set and grouted a minimum of 20 ft. into bedrock is very challenging. According to this alternate method detailed at N.J.A.C. 7:9D-2.3(d)2ii, if competent rock is not encountered by 80 feet, then the driller can fill the borehole with bentonite grout and then switch to drill and drive until rock is encountered. This step would then be followed by lowering a bit inside the casing and proceeding the open hole portion of the well until a sufficient quantity of water is encountered.

Mr. Colaluca requested to speak with the Board because the Department recently sent compliance advisory letters to several drillers who were constructing these wells differently and not explicitly complying with the rule. The main difference between the construction methods is that instead of

filling the borehole with bentonite prior to drilling and driving, some drillers are instead waiting until the inner casing is set at the top of rock before grouting it with cement grout. S. Reya explained that filling the borehole with bentonite allows bentonite to be pulled down alongside the casing as it is being advanced to the top of rock, which of course could not be done if the annular space is sealed with cement. S. Reya provided a copy of the advisory letter to the Board.

Mr. Colaluce explained that he does not believe that the bentonite is being pulled down with the casing. He explained that they have a diverter on their inner casing which prevents cuttings from falling into the well, which he believed was also the concern that led to the rule requiring that the casing be grouted prior to driving it, as that would ensure that it is grouted to the base of the oversized borehole, and it could not fill in with cuttings generated during drilling. D. Lyman agreed with Mr. Colaluce about his construction methods. A. Becker said that he believes that both methods should be acceptable. He added that no one knows if bentonite is being pulled down with the driven casing.

S. Domber asked if there is a risk of surface water entering the well if it takes a few days to drill. Mr. Colaluce said that they typically have a 10-inch casing that sits about a foot above grade to prevent surface water from entering the open borehole.

A. Becker reaffirmed that he would not have any issues with either method of construction. S. Reya noted that the rule contains multiple acceptable methods to construct a well in rock, and well drillers would need a deviation if they wanted to use the method that is not currently written in the rule. The method described is not explicitly allowed for in the rule. The Department is currently in the early stages of rule revisions and will consider this change.

Mr. Colaluce inquired if any Department staff knew where using bentonite originated from. S. Reya said that he read a Bureau newsletter article from the 1990's where this was discussed. The language in the rule is believed to have been pulled from there. D. Lyman said that he believes that ODEX and other similar casing advancement systems are the reason for this language.

S. Reya asked Mr. Colaluce approximately how many times per year his company drills these kinds of wells. Mr. Colaluce said that he sees them about five to 10 times per year.

Mr. Colaluce thanked the Board for allowing him to speak. The Board thanked Mr. Colaluce for bringing this to their attention. Mr. Colaluce departed the meeting.

## **7. Well Drilling Inspection Guidebook-**

S. Reya and G. Fernandes introduced Well Permitting's Health Inspector Guidebook to the Board. S. Reya explained that Well Permitting staff have been working on this project periodically for about ten years and expressed his thanks to G. Fernandes for creating the final product. G. Fernandes explained to the Board that this guidebook is meant to provide local and county Health Departments with some information about well inspections. This guidebook can be used out in the field by inspectors. G. Fernandes shared her computer screen and went through the guidebook with the Board.

G. Fernandes said that she is still working on a second version for well drillers and office staff at drilling companies. A. Becker said that this has been needed for a long time and that the guidebook is very comprehensive. He noted that he would give this guidebook to well driller license applicants to assist them with their studies.

J. Yost asked a question about some of the text in the document regarding in kind screen replacements. S. Reya explained that the language in the guidebook is taken from N.J.A.C. 7:9D and

added that well permits are not needed when only replacing the well screen. He added that this is rarely used and mostly applies to domestic wells with K-packers. Primarily when working on a municipal-type public supply well in which a maintenance casing and screen section are present, changing out the screen would result in various modifications to the construction of a well, thus triggering the need to obtain an individual well permit to conduct the work. G. Poppe agreed with S. Reya. S. Reya added that this is something that can be revisited during the next round of rule revisions.

D. Lyman asked if the guidebook had already been distributed. Department staff informed him that the guidebook has been distributed, and the Department has received positive feedback. D. Lyman recommended sending the guidebook to Mr. George Cruz if it was not already sent to him as he and the NJ Water Association had previously expressed interest in it for a training initiative. It was noted that the Bureau had already provided them with a copy.

The Board thanked G. Fernandes for her work on this document.

#### **8. Enforcement and Field Work Update-**

S. Vargo started off by discussing field work conducted by Well Permitting staff. He detailed four inspections that were performed. Notably, he discussed a project where Well Permitting discovered dewatering wells without permits in Brick Township. S. Vargo conducted this field visit and discovered a construction crew actively attempting to decommission these wells.

S. Vargo informed the Board that Well Permitting issued eight Notices of Non-Compliance (NONC)s during the month of April and 11 NONCs in May. S. Vargo detailed the reasonings behind the NONCs, including six for wells that were drilled before well permits were issued and five for improper well sealing practices. S. Vargo also noted that Well Permitting had issued 17 advisory letters to licensees since the last meeting. Most of these letters were a result of well drilling contractors failing to adhere to the Department's permit condition to provide three days' notice prior to drilling. M. Miller informed the Board that Well Permitting has also been following up with well drillers who have been delinquent at submitting well records for review.

S. Reya discussed a court case with which he was recently involved. He provided some background on the well that the hearing was based on. The well was constructed in 2018 in Cape May County. The well permit had conditions to double case and to use saltwater resistant grout to prevent cross contamination of the saline waters into a lower aquifer. The Department's review of the well record showed that insufficient grout was used to seal this well. This well record was sent back to the well driller to review and was certified and resubmitted to the Department. S. Reya added that the judge filed her initial decision with Commissioner LaTourette on April 19, 2025, which affirmed the determination of DEP's Administrative Order and Penalty Assessment and ordered that the driller decommission the well in accordance with the DEP rules and regulations. The Penalty assessment was modified from \$6,500 to \$5,500. The recommended decision may be adopted, modified or rejected by the Commissioner, who by law is authorized to make a final decision. If the Commissioner does not adopt, modify or reject the initial decision within 45 days of the initial decision (unless such time limit is extended), the initial decision shall become a final decision.

S. Reya said that one of the issues with this case was that the well driller claimed that someone certified the well record on his behalf and was not responsible for any errors on the certified well record documents. The Board discussed how this is currently a big issue.

A. Becker inquired about license renewals. Specifically, he asked if the Department will be able to withhold license renewals to individuals who have outstanding NONCs for the upcoming 2026 renewal. S. Reya explained that DAG J. Denyes previously stated that the well rule does not allow the Department to withhold renewals to well drillers or pump installers. He explained that the only way to withhold a license is to pursue license sanctions. S. Reya added that Well Permitting staff will investigate this further as they work on rule revisions.

**9. Program Updates-**

S. Reya discussed some staffing updates with the Board. He announced that G. Fernandes recently accepted a promotion to the Water Supply and Geoscience Director's Office. The Board and Department staff thanked G. Fernandes for her hard work and wished her well in her new role. S. Reya advised the Board that the Well Permitting Section will encounter a staffing shortage over the summer. He recommended submitting permits as soon as possible to allow extra review time.

S. Reya provided a brief update on the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) study of Type 1L cement. S. Reya put NJIT in touch with a well driller located in Sussex County to collect field samples of the grout and they are out there collecting the grout samples today. Once the report on Type 1L cement is complete and final, it will be shared with the Board.

**10. New Business/Public Comments-**

N/A

**11. Adjournment-**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 19, 2025.

**A motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 am was made by S. Domber, seconded by G. Poppe and approved unanimously.**