

March 6, 2025

Board of Directors
Ventura Regional Sanitation District
Ventura, California

CONSIDER AND APPROVE OFFERING A \$50,000 INCENTIVE PAYMENT TO ENHANCE THE RECRUITMENT OF A WATER/WASTEWATER TREATMENT OPERATOR IV, WHICH IS CRITICAL TO DISTRICT OPERATIONS IN THE WATER/WASTEWATER DIVISION OF THE OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

RECOMMENDATION

Approve offering and providing a one-time incentive payment of \$50,000 for the impending recruitment of the vacant Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV position in the following manner:

\$10,000 to be paid in the first paycheck (but subject to claw-back until passing probation at six months of employment)

\$20,000 to be paid upon completing one year of satisfactory employment

\$20,000 to be paid upon completion of two years of satisfactory employment

FISCAL IMPACT

These costs will mostly occur in future fiscal years, so District staff will incorporate them into the upcoming 2-year budget cycle. The impact in the current fiscal year will be absorbed by salary savings from vacant positions, so there is no budget adjustment necessary.

BACKGROUND

The position of Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV is an important position for VRSD's Water/Wastewater Division because of the key operational role this position plays in monitoring and performing water distribution and wastewater treatment plant processes. And because this position requires the possession of a current and active Grade IV Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certificate issued by the California State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB), the filling of this position is very important to maintaining VRSD's water/wastewater presence in the Ventura County area it serves.

VRSD has had very limited success in generating interest in recent years in many positions – including the Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV position. There are a myriad of possible factors that could be contributing to this lack of interest in VRSD employment, some of which might be a general aversion to public employment stemming

from the emotional sentiments following the Great Recession, overblown concerns about VRSD's general financial viability, and the simple fact that VRSD salaries have not kept pace with inflation since they were established through the last compensation study completed in early 2016.

Irrespective of the reason, the District has been unable to conduct a successful recruitment for the position of Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV in several attempts. Because this important position requires a Grade IV Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certificate issued by the California State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB), there is a limited pool of qualified applicants statewide, and there is an even more limited pool of applicants living in close proximity to VRSD jobsites or in Ventura County.

A properly SWRCB-Grade IV certified VRSD employee is legally required for VRSD to operate certain wastewater plants for which SWRCB requires the written designation of a Chief Plant Operator (CPO). Currently, the District only has one employee who possesses the Grade IV certificate and that is the Water/Wastewater Superintendent.

VRSD management does not embrace the Water/Wastewater Superintendent to be utilized for hands-on plant operation activities nor designation as the CPO for VRSD-operated plants. Rather, the Water/Wastewater Superintendent is envisioned as a higher level management employee overseeing all district wastewater operations. And because there is only one Grade IV certified VRSD employee, VRSD has had no choice but for the Water/Wastewater Superintendent incumbent to be the CPO for certain duties and facilities at the expense of accomplishing other higher-level superintendent duties.

There is a palpable opportunity cost to the District's management capabilities which reverberates up and down the organization. Simply put, the CPO duties should be handled by the Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV. Further exacerbating staff coverage issues, the current Superintendent, who has been employed by the District for 31 years, has mentioned retiring, himself, next fiscal year.

PROPOSAL


Due to the critical nature of current and impending job vacancies in the District, staff is recommending bold and decisive action to facilitate an effective recruitment for the Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV position. This incentive pay will send a message to potential applicants that VRSD Water/Wastewater services are here to stay, and it should be sufficient to entice some potential applicants to overcome their personal switching costs or other impediments to applying for this position.

Staff recommends the Board approve the proposed incentive pay structure for the Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV recruitment to increase the District's chances of recruiting a qualified candidate.

This letter has been reviewed by Legal Counsel as to form.

If you should have any questions or need additional information, please contact me by phone at (805) 658-4600 or email at ChrisTheisen@vrsd.com.

Chris Theisen, General Manager

APPROVED FOR FISCAL IMPACT: 
Tina Rivera, Director of Finance

APPROVED FOR AGENDA: 
Chris Theisen, General Manager

Attachments: 1. Job Description for the Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV

VENTURA REGIONAL SANITATION DISTRICT
WATER/WASTEWATER TREATMENT OPERATOR IV

SALARY RANGE:
\$40.32- \$51.00 Hourly
\$3,225.60- \$4,080.00 Biweekly
\$6,988.80- \$8,840.00 Monthly
\$83,865.60- \$106,080.00 Annually

*Class specifications are only intended to present a descriptive summary of the range of duties and responsibilities associated with specified positions. Therefore, specifications **may not include all** duties performed by individuals within a classification. In addition, specifications are intended to outline the **minimum** qualifications necessary for entry into the class and do not necessarily convey the qualifications of incumbents within the position.*

DEFINITION:

Under immediate supervision and direction, incumbent monitors and performs water distribution and wastewater treatment plant processes including a variety of skilled tasks such as making repairs and adjustments to wastewater facilities and water distribution machinery and equipment, collecting and preparing samples for laboratory testing, maintaining records, logs and reports.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

The **Water and Wastewater Treatment Operator IV** is responsible for the operation of assigned facilities and resolution of the majority of routine operational problems. Assignments in this position may vary but usually include one large or several smaller plants on a regular basis. These are the advanced journey level technical class in the Water and Wastewater Treatment Operator series which provides training and direction to Water and Wastewater personnel and performs the most complex operations and maintenance activities as allowed by their certification.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED:

This position receives direct or general supervision from a designated supervisor or manager.

SUPERVISION EXERCISED:

The Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV may exercises technical and functional oversight over plant operations and lower level Water/Wastewater Operators.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

Duties may include, but are not limited to, the following examples.

- Operates several treatment facilities with varying processes including sequencing batch reactor, sand filtration, activated sludge, aerobic and anaerobic digestion, and water reclamation.
- Operates and services, lubricates, and adjusts and/or cleans pumps, plunger pump, D.O. probe, comminuting devices, sulfide oxidation process (SOP) systems, generators, pumps, digesters, boilers, oxidation ponds, biofiltration facilities, percolation beds, and activated sludge processes.
- Performs checks on pumps, motors, hydraulic lines, structures, pressure tanks and mechanical equipment for proper condition and operation; takes meter, gauge and

control panel readings and observes variations in operating conditions; interprets information to determine processing requirements; monitors and changes flows and processes within established parameters; reports readings and processing changes on operation logs and records.

- Collects and performs routine biological and chemical tests/analyses (COD, settleable solids, C12 residuals, PH, DO, MLSS) on lake/well/wastewater and by-product samples; records sampling and test results; prepares samples for testing in central laboratory; monitors use of reclaimed water in agricultural fields.
- Operates trucks, small tractors, front-end loader and other equipment in the maintenance of facilities and pump station grounds; performs routine maintenance and repair of facilities structures and grounds.
- Prepares maintenance requests and reports; assists in development and implementation of safety and operational procedure improvements.
- Performs other related duties as requested.

EDUCATION AND/OR EXPERIENCE:

Any equivalent combination of experience and education that would provide the required knowledge and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the required knowledge and abilities would be:

Experience:

Four (4) years of increasingly responsible experience as a Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator.

Education:

Equivalent to a high school diploma.

License/Certificate:

Possession of a Grade IV Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certificate issued by the California State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) or equivalent certification issued by a reciprocal state to California.

Possession of, or ability to obtain, a valid Class C California driver's license, and a driving record acceptable for insurability.

Possession of water certification from the California Department of Health Services is desirable.

Depending on assignment, a valid Class B driver's license may be required.

KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES:

The following are a representative sample of the KSA necessary to perform the essential duties of the position.

Knowledge of:

- Principles and practices of water distribution and wastewater treatment plant operations as related to primary, secondary and tertiary treatment.
- The chemical and biological processes used and expected results from various unit processes.
- Operation of treatment plant machinery and equipment.
- Sludge handling and effluent disposal requirements and practices.
- Odor control techniques.
- Basic plumbing, mathematics and chemistry.
- Reporting, sampling and testing requirements.
- Biological and chemical testing practices used in wastewater field operations.
- Safe work practices utilized in working wastewater facilities.
- Tools used in facility, building and landscape maintenance.

Ability to:

- Operate various treatment plant facilities and equipment.
- Monitor and change flows and processes.
- Check, service and perform simple and routine repair to mechanical and electrical equipment.
- Perform routine maintenance and repair of plant structures, building and landscape.
- Collect and perform routine biological and chemical tests on a variety of samples.
- Monitor use of reclaimed water.
- Identify and analyze operational problems, and take corrective actions.
- Make decisions and independent judgments.
- Collect and analyze data to draw logical conclusions and make appropriate recommendations.
- Research regulations, procedures and/or technical reference materials.
- Communicate effectively both verbally and in writing.
- Regulations and professional practices governing wastewater program services and operations.
- Train and perform acting supervisory functions as appropriate.
- Establish and maintain cooperative working relationships and customers.
- Read meters, gauges and control panels.
- Collect and account for cash.
- Make routine arithmetical calculations.
- Follow safe work practices.
- Prepare and maintain accurate logs, records, reports and documents.
- Organize and prioritize work assignments.
- Comply with safety procedures.

WORKING CONDITIONS:

Position requires sitting, standing, walking on level and slippery surfaces, reaching, twisting, turning, kneeling, bending, stooping, squatting, crouching, grasping and making repetitive hand movement in the performance of daily duties. The position also requires both near and far

Water/Wastewater Treatment Operator IV
Class Code 0913
FLSA – Non-Exempt

vision when inspecting work and operating assigned equipment. The need to lift, carry and push tools, equipment and supplies weighing 50 pounds or more is also required. Additionally, the incumbent in this outdoor position works in all weather conditions including wet, hot and cold. The incumbent may use cleaning and lubricating chemicals which may expose the employee to fumes, dust and air contaminants and work in close proximity to wastewater effluent and sewer influent. The nature of the work also requires the incumbent to climb ladders, use power and noise producing tools and equipment, drive motorized vehicles and heavy equipment, may work in heavy vehicle traffic conditions and often work with constant interruptions; incumbent may be required to enter confined spaces which involves wearing self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). Operators may work alone or with others, depending on assignment and work site needs.

Pursuant to California Government Code Section 3100, all public employees are required to serve as disaster service workers subject to such disaster service activities as may be assigned to them by their superiors or by law.

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