



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Board Information

- **Board of Directors**

Organization, Personnel and Effectiveness

5/13/2025 Board Meeting

9-3

Subject

Recurrent Category E Employment Work Schedule Pilot Program Status Update and Next Steps

Executive Summary

For over 40 years, Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Assistants have been employed on an as-needed basis to maintain Metropolitan's desert infrastructure. Often referred to as "recurrent employees," O&M Assistants provide as-needed services, including lodging and dining services, at remote Metropolitan facilities. Currently, recurrent employees are not permanent Metropolitan employees.

Over the last several years, challenges have arisen surrounding the stability of work hours and scheduling for recurrent employees. In 2022, Metropolitan, in conjunction with impacted recurrent employees and their bargaining unit, began a pilot program where potential reforms were explored and trialed. The pilot program has been a success.

This item provides the Committee with an overview of the challenges addressed in the pilot program, successes of the program, and the development of a forthcoming recommendation to convert recurrent employees based at the Gene Pumping Plant from on-call/as-needed to permanent, regular part-time employees.

Fiscal Impact

Approval of this pilot program on a permanent basis will enhance management's ability to forecast program costs and resource requirements. It will also result in wage stabilization for the employees through standardized scheduled hours. Staff will seek board approval to increase the number of permanent positions by up to 17 (8.5 Full-Time Equivalent positions) with a corresponding reduction in recurrent positions. The annual budgeted cost of converting the recurrent positions to permanent part-time status is approximately \$296,000 in Fiscal Year 2024/25, which will be managed through existing appropriations in the current budget cycle. The cost of the new program will be fully incorporated into the next biennium budget.

Applicable Policy

Administrative Code 6200

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (MOU) and Side Letter on Recurrent Pilot Program

Related Board Action(s)/Future Action(s)

At a future meeting, staff will seek board approval to increase the number of permanent positions by up to 17 (8.5 Full-Time Equivalent positions) with a corresponding reduction in recurrent positions.

Details and Background

Background

In the winter of 2022, the Office of the General Manager collaborated with Human Resources, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Water Supply Operations, Equal Employment Opportunity, and AFSCME Local 1902 to identify potential solutions to the stability of work hours and scheduling for the recurrents.

On June 7, 2023, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) side letter was entered into between Metropolitan and AFSCME Local 1902 to initiate a pilot program to assess potential program reforms. The voluntary pilot program was the result of multiple employee town hall meetings with O&M Assistants, individual and group interviews throughout the Water System Operations chain of command, including the Assistant General Manager, and input from union representatives. In all, over forty employees and managers provided input in developing the pilot program. Under the pilot program, voluntary participants (Category E employees) were guaranteed at least two (2) working days per week, with shifts being 10 hours in duration (20 hours per work week) with called-out worksite assignments.

The pilot program has been in operation for eighteen months and allowed management to more accurately forecast and address future business needs based on new data collection methods (utilization of new scheduling application using MS Shifts) and to test variable scenarios to meet changing business needs. As a result of multiple benefits identified in the pilot (outlined below), staff will be creating a report to recommend conversion from the pilot program to a regular part-time team structure. The program has demonstrated significant success, with employee complaints related to the administration of the program being reduced by over ninety percent. At the same time, the program has earned broad-based support among management.

Key Findings

Scheduling and Work Hours:

Newly established work schedules of twenty hours per week guarantee hours for employees, allow managers greater ability to address and optimize tasks, increase ability to forecast potential labor shortages, and to cross-train employees. This new scheduling format also addressed employee concerns for scheduling school, second jobs, childcare, and home life.

Worksite Assignments:

The new scheduling of the pilot program provided management the opportunity to reconstitute more of the duties listed in the classification, providing for much-needed additional resources to support Desert Operations at the pump plants, warehouse, aqueduct maintenance and shutdowns. These additional duties also provide more opportunities for cross-training and career development for the recurrent employees.

Positive Feedback:


Complaints were reduced by ninety percent, including concerns regarding recurrent employees working outside of their job classification and fairness. Managers now have a centralized scheduling system to review and approve work assignments.

Service Demand:

The pilot program addressed unmet service requests from plant managers by reestablishing a complete list of work duties in concurrence with standing job descriptions, previously scaled back during the COVID-19 pandemic. New data collection allowed managers to spot demand trends and emerging business needs with enough time to adjust resources.

Recommendation:

Staff is developing a recommendation to convert recurrent O&M Assistant positions based at Gene Pumping Plant from recurrent status to regular part-time status. This recommendation will also include two regular part-time Chief Cook positions. Salary grades, base salary, and management would remain at current levels. A complete analysis will be presented to the Board for consideration at a future meeting.



JR Rhoads
Conveyance and Distribution Group
Manager

5/7/2025

Date



Deven Upadhyay
General Manager

5/7/2025

Date

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