

Summary of MPCA's 2021 Virtual Wastewater and Collections Conference Evaluations

The Annual Wastewater and Collection Systems Conference got a new look this year as it went virtual for the first time. The conference was held online via the conference hosting platform Pheedloop. Over 500 people were in attendance, including operators, vendors, consultants, and MPCA staff.

Along with the major shift in venue, there were some other notable changes to this year's conference. The Wastewater and Collections conferences were combined into one event, and the conference was shortened to two days, down from the typical week-long conference. Attendees of the conference also have the opportunity to explore the conference until April 30th, and watch sessions they missed for up to an additional 4 contact hours. Due to the conference being held virtually, evaluations were completed online with a Mentimeter survey.

The overall conference attendance was lower than in previous years. However, we received more responses to our evaluation survey than at the 2019 in-person conference. We received a total of 165 responses to the Mentimeter Survey. This was approximately a 33% rate of return. In comparison, the 2019 conference had a total of 109 survey responses, for a 14% rate of return. This feedback will help the Certification and Training Unit structure the program and future conferences to best fit operator's wants and needs. As always, this conference wouldn't have been possible without the time and hard work volunteered by many industry professionals, and we are grateful for their help.

Within this report you will find appendices with specific comments categorized by topic. These are direct from the surveys. Many comments were complimentary, some critical, and some constructive. There are a number of takeaways and suggestions that will help guide our program forward, especially regarding virtual training moving forward. They include:

- Nearly 90% of responders want the MPCA to continue offering virtual training opportunities of some kind moving forward
- Only 15% want to see an "all-virtual" conference in the future, while over 25% of respondents stated they want to return to the all in-person format. The vast majority of respondents have asked for a hybrid model for future conferences

The Certification and Training Unit looks forward to working, planning, and delivering the 2022 conferences.

Appendix A: Demographics

How many years of experience do you have working at your current job?

- 0 – 5 Years 10%
- 6 – 10 Years 13%
- 11 – 15 Years 19%
- 16 – 20 Years 18%
- 21-25 Years 13%
- 26-30 Years 9%
- >30 Years 17%

How many years of experience do you have working in the wastewater/collections industry?

- 0 – 5 Years 6%
- 6 – 10 Years 14%
- 11 – 15 Years 18%
- 16 – 20 Years 19%
- 21-25 Years 15%
- 26-30 Years 8%
- >30 Years 19%

Which types of wastewater treatment facilities have you worked at?

- Stabilization Pond (x36)
- Standard Activated Sludge (x66)
- Trickling Filter (x24)
- LSTS (x5)
- Oxidation Ditch (x24)
- MBR/SBR (x20)
- None of the above (x75)

Appendix B: Future Topics

- **What other topics would you like to see in the future?**
 - The variety this year was good (x10+)
 - New Technologies (x10+)
 - More collection systems (x10+)
 - Real World Problem/Solutions from operators (x8)
 - Nutrient removal (x8)
 - Maintenance and Repair (x5)
 - Safety (x5)
 - Contaminants of emerging concern (x4)
 - DMR/Compliance trainings (x4)
 - Regulatory Updates (x4)
 - More lab sessions (x3)
 - SBRs (x2)
 - Trading successes (x2)
 - Industrial WW (x2)
 - Activated Sludge (x2)
 - PFAS (x2)
 - Recruiting/PR (x2)
 - Retirement (x2)
 - MBRs (x2)
 - Acid Management
 - Leadership
 - I&I reduction
 - Mobile Data Collections
 - Maintenance tracking software
 - Environmental
 - Exam refresher
 - Stabilization Ponds
 - Hydrogen Sulfide corrosion
 - Continued rollout of Watershed Framework
 - Pump Maintenance
 - Disinfection
 - Tours
 - WWTP Design

