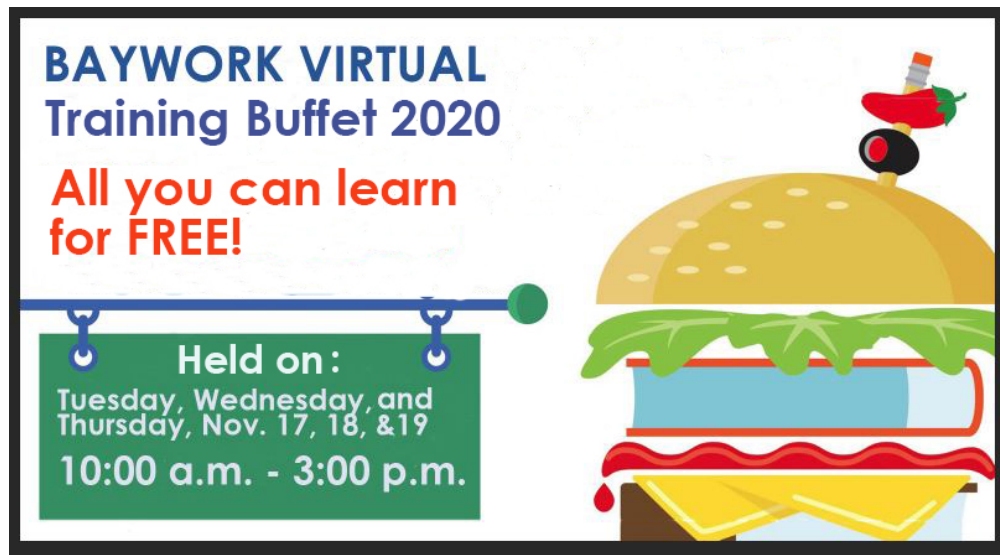




BAYWORK's First Virtual Training Buffet 2020 Draws Largest Attendance Ever

by Kory Loucks-Powell

More than 200 participants, instructors, and BAYWORK staff attended our first virtual BAYWORK Training Buffet, with many joining multiple sessions, drawing a total of 450 over three days in November - far more participation than BAYWORK has ever had at our in-person events.

Since 2015 BAYWORK has offered our "All You Can Learn" BAYWORK Training Buffet – a smorgasbord of water and wastewater trainings, many of which qualify for the coveted California Water Environmental Association (CWEA) and State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) contact hour certificates.

The 12 sessions offered a wide variety of classes including an "Overview of Anaerobic Digestion," with Monte Hamamoto with Silicon Valley Clean Water; "Why Operators Care about Capital Planning," by Lydia Rossiter with Valley Water; "Water Treatment Operator t-3 and T-4 Exam Prep Class," with Dan Gill from East Bay Municipal Utility District; "HR During the Time of Covid-19 Panel," with panelists Michelle Gallardo from Dublin San Ramon Services District, Linda Charfauros from the City of San Jose, and Teji O'Malley with Central San; "Wastewater Surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 Genetic Material with Ryan Batjiaka from SFPUC; "Why Should Operators Care About Capital Planning" with Lydia Rossiter at Valley Water, "The Hayward Winton Pipe Project with Bert Weiss at the City of Hayward, "LNU Lightning Fire Impact" with Sue Murphy at Solano Irrigation District, and "Electrical Safety, and the Racial Equity in Our Industry"

with Dennis Parle from Valley Water. As with all BAYWORK events, all sessions were free.

As always, the instructors were all volunteers from Bay Region water and wastewater agencies who offered their time, energy, and enthusiasm to share their skills and knowledge with others. Whereas, in previous years the one-day conference was held at the East Bay Municipal Utility District's Oakland headquarters, this year it was all online on November 17, 18, and 19. As with anything new, there were many advantages to the online platform and many lessons learned.

The survey feedback information from attendees is a great opportunity to learn what the participants enjoyed and recommendations for future Training Buffets and workshops. Heidi Birdsell with Dublin San Ramon Services District said she liked the workshop on "Working Styles: How to be a More Effective Leader," given by Karoline Terrazas with Union Sanitary District, commenting that the session provided "great information about improving work relationships and communication." Heidi Beneson with East Bay Municipal Utility District agreed, saying that Terrazas "was personable, vested, and shared meaningful information that we can apply with our teams."

Kallie Kull with Marin County was moved, as many who attended were, by the panel session on "Racial Equity in Our Industry: It's Time to Talk about It," with panelists Derry Moten from EBMUD, Masood Ordikhani with SFPUC, Linda Nguyen with Valley Water, Sonja Stanchina with Contra Costa Water District, Ryan Pedrotti with Sonoma Water, and Stephanie Orosco with San Jose Water. Kull said, "Thank you for this simulating panel - I took away several ideas that will help me see and understand embedded inequities in both my work-place and life." Mary Reynolds with Central San observed, "the topic and discussion was outstanding. It's not comfortable to sit and speak about racial inclusion but it is a discussion that MUST be had in order to heal and move forward."

A timely and informative class on the "The Digitalization of the Workplace," presented by BAYWORK President Catherine Curtis with the SPUC, drew insightful comments. Desmond Barca, also with the SFPUC, said that he liked the presentation, adding that he is interested in more workshops on this topic, including "workshops for developing free tools for doing a better job of managing change, and identifying when, where, why, who, and how to train."

BAYWORK will continue to present classes that matter to water and wastewater agency staff, including the Training Buffet, webinars, and a workshop in the spring continuing the discussion on “Digitalization of the Workforce.” This event’s presentations will soon be available on our website. For more information about BAYWORK, go to www.baywork.org.