

# Building the Next Generation of Water Professionals

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## Seventeen Apprentices Graduate from the Evergreen Rural Water of Washington Apprenticeship Program

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Clean water rarely makes headlines, yet it is one of the most critical services supporting public health and thriving communities. Behind every reliable drinking water system and well operated wastewater facility are trained professionals responsible for protecting both people and the environment. This year, Evergreen Rural Water of Washington proudly celebrates seventeen apprentices who have completed the ERWoW Water and Wastewater Apprenticeship Program and are stepping forward as part of the next generation of water professionals in Washington State.

Water and wastewater operators play a vital role in protecting public health, safeguarding the environment, and ensuring reliable service to homes and businesses across the state. Through the ERWoW Apprenticeship Program, participants develop the knowledge and practical skills necessary to manage treatment processes, maintain complex infrastructure, and respond to operational challenges in real time.

Over the course of the two-year program, apprentices complete extensive on the job training while also participating in structured classroom instruction. The program requires 4,000 hours of on the job training and 288 hours of classroom instruction, creating a strong balance of hands-on experience and technical education. Apprentices participate in one of three tracks within the program: water distribution, water treatment, or wastewater treatment. Coursework and field experience focus on system operations, safety practices, regulatory compliance, treatment processes, and troubleshooting specific to each discipline.

Completing the program requires determination and persistence. Participants balance full time responsibilities at their utilities while attending classes, documenting training hours, and preparing for certification exams. Many are also active members of their communities, raising families and managing responsibilities outside of work. Most live within the very service areas their utilities support, meaning the quality of their work is not just a professional obligation but a personal source of pride. The systems they operate provide or treat water for their own homes, neighbors, and families, creating a strong sense of ownership and commitment to doing the job well. Successfully completing the program while managing these responsibilities reflects the dedication and resilience that define the water and wastewater profession.

### Voices from the Graduates

*"The apprenticeship strengthened my understanding of water systems, safety practices, and operational standards, preparing me to serve my community in a critical and meaningful way."* - Aaron Christman, North Beach Water District

*"The real-world experience and hands on training gave us knowledge that simply cannot be gained by learning on your own and applying it later on the job."* - Jeremiah Pace, City of Langley

*"It is great to know that I now have a network of operators across the state that I will continue to cross paths with throughout my career."* - Joshua Rees, City of Sequim

A key component of the program’s success is the mentorship provided by experienced operators. Mentors work closely with apprentices throughout the program, sharing practical knowledge, guiding problem solving, and helping apprentices build the confidence needed to manage complex water and wastewater systems.

The graduation of this cohort comes at a meaningful time as the water sector continues to highlight the importance of workforce development through apprenticeship programs. Each year, [National Apprenticeship Week](https://www.apprenticeship.gov/national-apprenticeship-week) (<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/national-apprenticeship-week>) is recognized across the country to celebrate the role apprenticeships play in building a skilled workforce and creating strong career pathways. This year, National Apprenticeship Week will be observed in April, offering an opportunity to recognize the apprentices, mentors, utilities, and training partners who make programs like this possible.

ERWoW is currently accepting applications for the next apprenticeship cohort beginning in February 2027. Utilities interested in developing their workforce and individuals seeking a career in the water and wastewater industry are encouraged to [apply](https://www.erwow.org/about_the_program.php) ([https://www.erwow.org/about\\_the\\_program.php](https://www.erwow.org/about_the_program.php)).

### 2026 Apprenticeship Graduates

<b>Graduate</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>Caden Baker</b>	City of Buckley
<b>Aaron Christman</b>	North Beach Water District
<b>Samuel Cushman</b>	City of Bingen
<b>Justin Curtis</b>	Boistfort Water
<b>David Cunningham</b>	City of Ilwaco
<b>Nicholas Jones</b>	Washington State Department of Corrections
<b>Jim Karnoff</b>	City of Bingen
<b>Dustin Krestel</b>	Silver Lake Water and Sewer District
<b>Jesse Liller</b>	Lake Cushman Maintenance Company
<b>Michael Madison</b>	City of Sequim
<b>Moses McDonald</b>	City of Sequim
<b>Michael Miller</b>	City of Chehalis
<b>Sandra Parks</b>	Port of Grays Harbor (Satsop)
<b>Frank Pawlowski</b>	City of Woodland
<b>Jeremiah Pace</b>	City of Langley
<b>Joshua Rees</b>	City of Sequim
<b>Jason Tibbitt</b>	Naselle Youth Camp



## Program Snapshot

Program Length: 2 Years

On the Job Training: 4,000 Hours

Classroom Instruction: 288 Hours

Focus Areas: Water treatment, wastewater treatment, system operations, safety, regulatory compliance, troubleshooting