



Linda S. Adams.
Secretary for
Environmental Protection

California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Coast Region

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Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

September 20, 2007

Linda S. Adams, Secretary
Cal/EPA
P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812

Subject: **Pay Parity Problems Affecting our Mission**

Dear Secretary Adams,

This letter is a plea to bring some parity to the growing inequity in pay for our staff. I read my fellow chair, Carole Beswick's letter and I want to add some thoughts from my perspective.

First, it's great to have recent salary increases for engineers and engineering geologists (EGs). We must remain competitive in order to attract and retain the best and the brightest from those professions. We also need to do the same for our other critically important classifications. This is especially important in this period of baby boomer demographics and our critical need for succession planning. By not dealing with the pay parity issue, we are crippling our ability to address the biggest and most complex water quality problems that face California.

We have four different types of inequities regarding drastically disparate pay: Environmental Scientist (ES) line staff, ES lead staff, ES supervisors, and managers.

My initial dealings with the Regional Water Board many years ago were as an aquaculturist whose business was affected by bacteria in the ocean. As a board member for seven years and now chair for four years, I have a completely different perception and appreciation of the complex issues that come before the regional boards and the multiple demands made of our staff. Our staff has a much more complex and diverse job than I ever realized when I was "looking in" before taking on my role as a board member as part of our organization.

I realize there are bargaining unit and budgetary constraints and other complexities that you must address. I don't claim to have an understanding of all those issues that are a part of this situation. I am simply looking at the organization from my somewhat unique role as a private sector, self-employed "volunteer" for the Administration, and from the standpoint of doing what's fair for our most valuable asset, our staff. From what I see, we have inequities that transcend Administration vs. Labor issues.

1. Line staff - To deal with our complex world of water quality, and protection of California's aquatic habitat as well as all other water uses, we need the mix of disciplines provided by

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engineers, geologists, and scientists. In addition to traditional units and unit supervisors, we use cross organizational teams for many problems because of the complex nature, and interacting dynamics of some issues. Our organization is moving in the direction of dealing more and more with non-point sources, which frequently means hundreds or even thousands of responsible parties within our region for specific issues (e.g., for a sediment TMDL covering an entire watershed, or our ag program with over 2,000 operators). Such tasks have ensuing complexities in stakeholder coordination, politics, multiple sources and type of pollutants, and organizational/logistics challenges that are frequently more demanding than a cleanup case that is typically overseen by an engineer or EG. With our demand to move in this direction, we need to attract and retain more scientists. Succession planning statistics (most of our younger technical line staff statewide are ESs), make it doubly important to attract and cultivate these staff scientists. In our region, nine advanced degrees are held among our 14 ES line staff, including a Ph.D. While our ESs do not do engineering work, their work is nevertheless just as important, and frequently as complex and demanding (sometimes more so) as that charged to our engineers and EGs. We should not have the large differences in pay that we have (33%) for such comparable line staff work.

2. ES program managers - In our region, we have two ES's managing region wide programs and acting as lead staff (for our irrigated agriculture regulatory program and for our regional monitoring program, both of which are region wide in scope and as complex as any issue before the water boards). Our regional monitoring program manager has a Masters degree and is recognized by the State Board and the USEPA, as well as countless involved professionals, as a leader in the monitoring arena. Our agriculture team that is led by an ES includes an engineer on the team. That lead ES staff has two Masters degrees (in pest management and soil science, both extremely applicable to this work) and is the best person for the job. The leader should not be paid less than those being led.

3. ES supervisors – These staff have the same challenging responsibilities of providing leadership, mentoring their employees, setting appropriate priorities in the midst of competing and sometimes overwhelming demands, following up with personnel actions when necessary, etc., as their engineer and EG supervisor counterparts. It is extremely unfair and damaging to morale to have the ES supervisor paid up to 16% less than the staff they are supervising, and up to 36% less than their supervisor colleagues with the same level of responsibility.

4. Management – Environmental Program Managers are the top classification in the ES series. For our three Section Managers (one level below Assistant Executive Officer or AEO), we have an EPM, a Supervising EG, and a Supervising Engineer. As with unit supervisors (but even more so at this higher level), our EPM has the same level of responsibility/importance/complexity as her engineering counterparts, yet she is paid 42% less. She is paid 30% less than the Senior EG and engineer she supervises, and 11% less than the EG/engineers two levels below her. Our Executive Officer (EO) is paid less than the engineering Section Manager two levels below him, and the AEO is paid 17% less than the Supervising Engineer he supervises. Principal engineers' salaries are more than AEO's and EOs in the regions (even though AEOs/EOs have a greater level and broader scope of responsibility and complexity than some of those principal engineers), and principal engineer salaries are more than State Board Members and the Executive Director. At the State Board, principal engineers are five levels down from the top (Board Member, Executive Director, Chief Deputy Director, Deputy Director, then Principal Engineer) yet principal engineer salaries are more than all of those positions above them. In many cases (such as in our region), the lesser paid AEOs and EOs, as well as State Board Deputy Directors, etc., are also engineers,



making the situation even less defensible from that standpoint. This situation obviously makes no sense and also needs to be corrected.

We have to recognize the direction our organization needs to go – towards addressing the more complex and diverse issues that impair our watersheds. Our most valuable asset in getting there is our staff, and our new direction requires a diverse mix of skills. This pay scale issue is a significant morale problem right now, and it will become a more significant problem with existing employees and potentially great employees that we may never be able to hire. We have already had some promising ES recruits turn us down due to this pay scale problem. To be an organization that treats our employees fairly, and to accomplish our mission now and into the future, we must resolve these significant pay scale and morale problems.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey S. Young, Chair
Regional Water Quality Control Board

c: Central Coast Regional Water Board Members
All Regional Board Chairs
State Water Resources Control Board Members and Executive Director

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