



Linda S. Adams
Secretary for
Environmental Protection

California Regional Water Quality Control Board San Diego Region

Over 50 Years Serving San Diego, Orange, and Riverside Counties
Recipient of the 2004 Environmental Award for Outstanding Achievement from U.S. EPA



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September 21, 2007

Linda S. Adams, Secretary
California Environmental Protection Agency
P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812

WATER BOARD SCIENTISTS AND WATER QUALITY PROTECTION IN CALIFORNIA

Dear Secretary Adams:

I became aware of a recent letter to you from Carole H. Beswick, Chair, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board, regarding the significant salary inequities of our scientists and the adverse effect that is having on our work to protect water quality. I am writing on behalf of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Board to express our full support for Chair Beswick's letter and to enthusiastically echo her request that you use your leadership and authority to take concrete action addressing problems our scientists face over the pay equity and parity matters.

The Water Board's success in meeting our mandate to protect California's water resources relies heavily on the talent of our professional staff of scientists, engineers, and engineering geologists. The need for this multidisciplinary work force has never been greater to meet the growing and complex water quality and public health challenges facing California. Moreover the effective implementation of many of the Water Board's programs relies on this diverse set of scientific and engineering expertise. Because of the integrated nature of the work, most Water Board units include a mix of disciplines. Although coming from different educational disciplines and job classifications, the engineer, engineering geologist, and scientific staff perform work of comparable complexity and sensitivity. I understand there are some distinct differences in duties for specific scientific and engineering classifications; however, many tasks are shared.

As Chair Beswick points out, there are numerous examples of scientific and engineering / engineering geologist staff performing comparable duties yet receiving widely differing levels of pay. I understand that surveys repeatedly document a significant salary disparity between Water Board scientist salary scales and outside peer public sector salary scales. This disparity is further exacerbated by the substantial widening salary gap between scientists and engineers / engineering geologists resulting

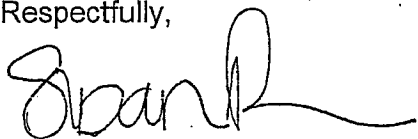
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from different collective bargaining agreements in recent years. One example of the resulting significant inequities is that scientists charged with supervisory duties are paid significantly less than some of the engineering / engineering geologist staff they supervise as well as other engineering supervisors with similar duties, unit sizes, and mix of staff disciplines. We are experiencing dissipation of the esprit de corps and morale of our scientific staff from the pay disparity as well as recruitment problems from shrinking pools of scientist candidates for our vacant positions.

We are also seeing some of our mid – career scientists leave the Water Boards for jobs in the private and public sector offering higher salaries. For example, most recently one of our top environmental scientists left her San Diego Water Board position developing standards to protect California's water quality to take employment with the San Diego County Water Authority at significantly higher pay. One of the top reasons she cited for leaving was the significant and increasing pay disparity between scientists and engineers at the Water Boards. She reported that the pay disparity significantly affected her morale and was a constant negative factor about her job that weighed on her daily. She also noted that her prospective employer, San Diego County Water Authority, had a generalized classification that included scientists and engineers. I fear further losses to our scientific expertise are imminent if the pay equity and parity matters are not corrected quickly.

I understand there are a number of proposals and studies under consideration that may address some of the pay equity and parity issues for Water Board scientists. The State Water Resources Control Board is championing one such proposal to create a single new supervisory classification for engineers, engineering geologists and scientists to establish pay parity at the supervisory level. The work to move the proposal forward and gain the requisite approval from the Department of Personnel Administration is expected to take as much as a year with the outcome far from certain. This is a great start, but all possible efforts should be brought to bear to fix this problem for our junior, mid level, and senior scientists. The situation dictates that action be taken now before our ability to recruit and retain scientists reaches a crisis point.

Respectfully,



Susan Ritschel, Chair
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

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cc: Regional Board Members
Tam Doduc, Chair, State Water Resources Control Board

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