



# CAPS UNITE

## MOU RATIFIED!

Rank-and-File CAPS members on October 11 ratified the proposed two-year Memorandum of Understanding between CAPS and the Brown Administration. This MOU is retroactive to July 1, 2018 and will remain in full force and effect through July 1, 2020. CAPS has the right to resume negotiations with the next Governor during January 2020— just under 16 months from now.

**The official count was 802 in favor of ratification (70%), and 339 against (30%). The return was 50.5% of eligible voters. Balloting was conducted by MK Elections, formerly TrueBallot.**

CAPS Bargaining Chair Stephanie Lewis had this to say upon seeing the results: *“This is another contract that we can build on. It has several first-ever benefits for some members like education pay that we can work to expand in the future. This makes five consecutive years of five percent raises.”*

This MOU expires July 1, 2020. That’s just under two years from now. Bargaining commences during Spring 2020 with negotiators for the next Governor, either Gavin Newsome or John Cox.

The New CAPS MOU includes the following major elements:

- **Salaries:** A 5% General Salary Increase July 1, 2019, and another 5% GSI July 1, 2020.
- **Educational Pay Differential:** A 3% differential for a required Ph.D. or greater; 2% for a required Master’s Degree. This differential will not be considered compensation for purposes of retirement contributions.
- **Diving Pay:** CDFW divers (approximately 28), will have their diving pay stipend increased from \$12 per hour to \$25 per hour.
- **Recruitment and Retention Differential-State Prisons:** A \$200 increase in this monthly differential will apply to State Scientists in eight state prisons including Avenal, Ironwood, Calipatria, Centinela, Chuckawalla Valley, Pelican Bay, California Correctional Center and High Desert Prisons.
- **Emergency Pay for Veterinarians and Staff Toxicologists:** Enables licensed Veterinarians and Staff Toxicologists at the Departments of Food and Agriculture, and Fish and Wildlife, to earn overtime during declared emergencies.
- **Health, Dental, Vision:** Preserves the “80/80” employer contribution formula, and eliminates the vesting schedule for new hires. New hires will no longer wait one year for the full employer contribution for their health benefits.
- **Retiree Dental Benefit Vesting:** Currently, Unit 10 members must work 15 years to receive half of the state retiree health benefit and 25 years to receive the full benefit. Under the proposed agreement, beginning in 2019, this vesting schedule also would apply to retirement dental benefits for new hires.
- **Business and Travel Reimbursements:** Reimbursement rates will be increased consistent with other bargaining units. Future increases adopted in CalHR policy statewide will automatically apply to all State Scientists.
- **Uniform Replacement Allowance:** Increases the uniform replacement allowance for Scientists required to wear uniforms, from \$450 to \$670 annually for full-time employees; from \$190 to \$335 annually for part-timers. Applies to Scientists at Fish and Wildlife, Forestry and Fire Protection, and Parks and Recreation.
- **Safety Footwear:** Reimbursement for required safety footwear increases from \$200 to \$275 every two years.
- **Retirement Increase Cost Sharing:** In both 2019-20 and 2020-21, the agreement potentially increases employee pension contributions by up to 1 percent of pay, depending on the CalPERS determination of normal costs. The employee contribution would return to current levels in 2021-22.
- **Changes to Retiree Health Benefit Prefunding:** In 2020-21, if the actuarially determined normal costs to prefund retiree health benefits increase or decrease by more than 0.5 percent, the employer and employee contributions to prefund these benefits would be adjusted so that each pays one-half of total normal costs, up to 0.5% per year. The employee contribution would return to previous levels in 2021-22.
- **Maintenance of Membership:** Requires the state to continue to deduct voluntary membership dues from payroll. Allows members to cancel membership, but only during 30 days prior to expiration of the MOU, June 2020.

# CAPS HAPPENINGS

## CAPS Website Revamp

The CAPS website recently got a complete makeover. The new website features a sleeker look, easier accessibility, and should be easier to navigate. Take a look for yourself: [www.capsscientists.org](http://www.capsscientists.org), and let us know what you think: [caps@capsscientists.org](mailto:caps@capsscientists.org)

## Refugio Verdict Favors OSPR

On September 7 the jury in the Refugio Beach oil spill criminal trial found the defendant and responsible party, Plains All-American Pipeline Company, guilty of one felony count of failing to properly maintain its pipeline and eight other misdemeanor charges. The case was heard in Santa Barbara County Superior Court, near the site of this environmentally disastrous spill. The decision came about after years of hard work by CDFW employees, including many State Scientists. According to the Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response, this trial was the first step in putting this environmental disaster to rest. With the criminal trial over, OSPR will be able to use evidence collected by the prosecution to further enhance civil restitution and natural resources damage recovery as well as fully implementing the many lessons that we learned in this significant response.

## Media Program Continues

CAPS media staff continues to suggest news stories to reporters that will bring the important work of members into public view. Three journalists in the last week have expressed interest in covering California's efforts to document and warn the public about toxic algal blooms – a topic that has become national news after the poisonous plants devastated the Florida coast. CAPS media staff will continue to work with departments employing State Scientists to find material that media outlets will find newsworthy. Have a story worth promoting? Contact CAPS!: [caps@capsscientists.org](mailto:caps@capsscientists.org)

## CDFW Sacramento Scientist Awarded Backpay

CAPS helped a CDFW Environmental Scientist submit a Merit Issue Complaint back in June. With just one day left to respond before a deadline, the Department granted her complaint. As a result, her appointment will be adjusted to Range C and backdated to her date of hire. A check for back pay is coming. The member responded to CAPS: *"I'm about to cry, thank you so much!"*



Finalists Amaya Bechler, Nina Patel, and Chloe Kim pose with their awards.



Margarita Gordus, Amaya Bechler, Nina Patel, Chloe Kim, Valerie Chenoweth-Brown, Kelley Aubushon, and Stephanie Lewis.

## Outstanding Young Scientists Dazzle

CAPS has long promoted scientific education to the young scientists of tomorrow. On September 14th, CAPS hosted its annual Outstanding Young Scientists Luncheon. This year, Nina Patel, a young scientist from Carmel High School was crowned the Outstanding Young Scientist of 2018. The families of three young scientist hopefuls and CAPS leaders and staff members were thoroughly impressed by her research on *Toxoplasma gondii* and its effects on humans. Nina took home a check for \$1,000 and a pair of custom-made CAPS engraved geode bookends. Two other semi-finalists, Amaya Bechler and Chloe Kim, each took home a check for \$500 and custom-made CAPS engraved geode bookends.

# Membership Ratifies MOU

*by Patty Velez, President*

I would like to thank the 1141 Rank-and-File CAPS members that voted – Thank You! I felt the MOU didn't go nearly far enough to address the many salary inequities facing State Scientists. Many of us, me included, are nearing retirement. This agreement is for many of us the last chance to correct this salary inequity and make us whole, at least during our retirement years. It does not do that. I'm extremely disappointed that Governor Brown would not fix the gross inequity between Senior ES Specialists and Senior ES Supervisors, and the even longer-standing inequity between many Environmental Scientists and State Engineers who do very similar work.

Having said that, a majority (802) of members who voted in the ratification election saw things differently. The CAPS Bargaining Team puts important questions about what proposals to make, and whether to accept a final offer - which include general salary increases, to the members. Per the members that voted, the tentative agreement offered enough over the course of the next two years to warrant approval. Here are a few issues I believe continue to warrant our immediate attention.

**Making the Case for Salary Equity.** This should continue to be a principal focus. Too many ongoing inequities foster internal and external conflicts. Jerry Brown should have fixed it but he didn't. The next Governor needs to.

**Completing the Civil Service Reform Project.** It's not just about the money. It's about modernizing and updating every

single State Scientist classification so they accurately reflect our work, so that movement among classes is easier when education and experience match up, and so that salaries are equitable across the bargaining unit. The Brown Administration dropped the ball short of the goal line. We will continue to pursue this with the next Administration as soon as it is in place.

**Increasing Membership in CAPS.** Ever since the SCOTUS decision in *Janus v AFSCME* CAPS membership has gone UP. That's because we made a concerted effort to contact every single nonmember to point out the importance of membership. CAPS can succeed only with the participation and dues support of our members. At \$59 monthly, CAPS dues remain among the lowest charged by any organization representing State Employees.

**“...I'm proud to have put my heart and soul in attempting to increase pay, improve benefits, and protect what we have earned. With membership support, we can and will achieve our goals.”**

**Enforce the MOU.** There will continue to be misunderstandings and disputes regarding the terms of the new agreement. Is the rate paid by employees for post-retirement health and retirement benefits calculated accurately? Is

every Scientist in a classification eligible to receive the new education incentive getting it? These and every question about MOU application should be forwarded to CAPS for our representation staff to address.

**Continue Image Building.** Over the past two years we have spent considerable time and money promoting a positive image of state scientists with decision makers and the public. This should continue. There are so many great examples of the interesting and important work being done by State Scientists. The public must see them and we will do everything we can to ensure that they do.

**Improving Internal Communications.** One way we can improve success in the next round of bargaining is to better organize and communicate internally. We saw that, besides Salary Equity, there are many other important issues to members such as the need for travel reimbursement rates, a geographic incentive for Scientists working in high cost areas, higher uniform and safety shoe allowances, emergency overtime pay for exempt employees, and so much more.

This was one of the most challenging and, frankly, disappointing rounds of collective bargaining in which I have ever been involved. It was lengthy, testy, challenging. Nevertheless, I'm proud to have put my heart and soul in attempting to increase pay, improve benefits, and protect what we have earned. With membership support, we can and will achieve our goals. Thank you for your support!





## CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL SCIENTISTS

455 CAPITOL MALL, SUITE 500  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

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## Fourth Quarter CAPS Grants

The CAPS Benefits Committee proudly awards FOUR \$400 professional development grants to CAPS members each quarter. Grants awarded for the fourth quarter of 2018 are listed below. ANY CAPS member can apply for a CAPS grant via the CAPS webpage: [www.capsScientists.org](http://www.capsScientists.org)

**Environmental Scientist Mike Walgren of the Department of Parks and Recreation at Hearst Castle** will use his grant to fund his participation in a prescribed fire training course, Incident Commander Type 3, a course necessary to conduct prescribed burns to manage habitats for plants and animals.

**Research Scientists IV (Chemical Science) Charlie Li of the Department of Public Health in Richmond** will use his grant to partially offset the costs of attending an international conference on Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology in London during July 2019.

**Research Scientist Supervisor I Varvara Kozyreva of Department of Public Health in Richmond** will use her grant to offset the cost of attending the meeting of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) Conference on Rapid Applied Microbial – Generation Sequencing and Bioinformatic Pipelines in Tysons, Virginia during September 2018.

**Environmental Scientist Amanda Culpepper of the Department of Fish and Wildlife in Sacramento** will use her grant to attend the Wildlife Society Sac – Shasta Chapter Wildlife and Forest Management Summit in Redding in November. Amanda's work involves a number of different agencies and the regulated public of the forestry world where she must balance Fish and Game code statute, Force Practice Rule regulations, current scientific understanding of various species and the needs of timber managers.

