

June 15, 2015

The Honorable Jerry Brown  
Office of the Governor  
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

I am a state scientist with the Department of Fish and Wildlife – Office of Spill Prevention and Response and I recently returned from the response to the Plains All American Pipeline oil spill in Santa Barbara. In my 123 hours of work in 8 straight days, I had the honor of working with some of this state's finest scientists. During the response, it was clear to me that the work we were doing in the command post and the field was absolutely essential to the expedient and efficient response to this significant environmental incident. I am writing to you today to try and provide a clearer picture of how important your state scientists are to California and to illustrate the reality of the long documented pay disparity between state scientists and their non-state counterparts.

As I am sure you know, responding to large oil spills is extremely complex, high-stress, and difficult work. On any given day at the Incident Command Post, you will find that the lion's share of leadership positions held by state employees, are held by state scientists. The Environmental Unit Leader, who manages a staff of dozens and coordinates the interdisciplinary involvement of dozens more, is a state scientist. This position is responsible for a wide range of tasks including waste management, developing clean-up end points, forensic oil fingerprinting plans, oil trajectories, permitting issues, and protection of environmentally, culturally, and economically sensitive areas. The Wildlife Branch Director, who directs the efforts of the world's finest and most professional oiled wildlife response organization (CA's Oiled Wildlife Care Network), is a state scientist. The Natural Resource Damage Assessment Coordinator, who ensures that all the injuries to CA's natural, cultural, and recreational resources are made whole after a spill, is a state scientist. These rank-and-file scientists each supervise a staff of various federal, state, private, and local agency response personnel. And, unfortunately, the state's leaders in protecting and restoring California's environment are consistently paid significantly less than every non-state scientist working for them on the response.

During my deployment, I served as the Shoreline Clean-up and Assessment Team Coordinator and was responsible for directing multiagency teams in assessing shorelines for oil impacts,

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directing where and how to clean oiled shorelines, ensuring that cleanup operations don't cause more harm than good to California's natural, cultural, and historic resources, and certifying that shorelines meet approved cleanup levels. The products from my teams continue to be the primary briefing documents passed up to higher levels of government and the public. These products have likely been used to brief you and your own staff on the progress of the clean-up.

My teams included federal, state, and responsible party representatives each led by a California state scientist. In every case, non-state representatives made significantly more than both their state scientist lead and me, the coordinator for all the teams. As the primary provider for my family, I am consistently faced with the question of whether or not to leave state service in order to provide a better financial situation for my family. After working emergency responses like this one, it is much harder for me to convince myself that I should stay with an employer that clearly undervalues what I and my coworkers do compared to almost every other employer in my field.

It is with the utmost respect that I ask you please act quickly to correct this long-standing pay disparity between state scientists and our non-state counterparts. Correcting this disparity will ensure that your state scientists continue to bring their outstanding expertise and efforts to bear on California's most difficult and complex issues in the years to come. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Joshua R. Curtis  
Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)  
Office of Spill Prevention & Response  
CA Department of Fish and Wildlife