

Compensation for Senior Environmental Scientists (Specialists)

PREPARED AND SHARED BY CAPS MEMBERS IN THE SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST (SPECIALIST) CLASSIFICATION

Background: In July of 1981, two Senior-Level Environmental Scientist classifications were established in Unit 10, the “Supervising” Environmental Scientist and the “Staff” Environmental Scientist. These classifications were subsequently merged to create the “Senior” Environmental Scientist (Senior ES) classification during the reclassification and consolidation project in June 2013. The merger resulted in the creation of two parentheticals, a (Supervisor) and a (Specialist), with the Supervisor focused primarily on employee supervision, and the Specialist focused on technical responsibilities and programmatic leadership roles.

Both of those classifications maintained the same level of responsibility and received nearly the same compensation both *prior to* and *after* being merged into the Senior ES classification. In 2013, salaries were set for both parentheticals, with the Supervisor making 0.61 percent more than the Specialist.

Minimum Qualifications for entry into the Senior ES classification are the same for both the Supervisor and Specialist. In addition to having the same minimum qualifications, both parentheticals have the same reporting relationship to the Environmental Program Manager (EPM) classification, the next level up in the Environmental Scientist series.

The Senior ES classification provides employees moving up through the ranks with the option of two different career “tracks”, one primarily focused on administrative duties and the other on programmatic and technical responsibilities. Employees working in either the Supervisor or Specialist parenthetical meet the minimum qualifications to advance to the Environmental Program Manager 1 classification, which also has two parentheticals, (Supervisor) and (Manager).

The 2008 Like Pay for Like Work (LPLW) case - brought on behalf of Unit 10 supervisors and managers only - resulted in a decision that supervising scientists and engineers shall receive equal or nearly equally salary rates. The pay letter issued by CalHR in 2014 adjusted the Senior ES (Supervisor) salary range but failed to make the same adjustment for the Senior ES (Specialist) parenthetical. This resulted in the disruption of the long-standing pay relationship within the Senior ES classification that existed for thirty-three years.

The previous administration recognized the issues created by not adjusting all Unit 10 salaries in 2014 and began taking steps to correct it in subsequent contracts. However, those small first steps were insufficient and left in place the considerable compensation gap between supervisors/managers and rank-and-file employees that still exists today.

Rationale: California Government Code 19826 (a) states that: “The department shall establish and adjust salary ranges for each class of position in the state civil service subject to any merit limits contained in Article VII of the California Constitution. The salary range shall be based on the principle that like salaries shall be paid for comparable duties and responsibilities. In establishing or changing these ranges, consideration shall be given to the prevailing rates for comparable service in other public employment and in private business.”

Pursuant to the LPLW decision, salaries were previously adjusted for one-half of the Senior ES classification in 2014, the Supervisor parenthetical. This effectively disrupted the peer compensation relationship between the two parentheticals in the Senior ES classification. All other specifications and duties for both parentheticals remain unchanged, including minimum qualifications, probationary periods, reporting relationships, and roles and responsibilities.

An examination of the current State of California Pay Scales, last updated on 11/14/2020, resulted in the identification of fifty-one classifications comprised of both a Supervisor and Specialist parenthetical. The compensation for each classification parenthetical varied slightly and remained within a relatively narrow range, with the exception of the Senior ES classification. The following is a summary of the difference in compensation for the fifty-one classifications with a Supervisor/Specialist parenthetical relationship:

- Six classifications compensated the Specialist at a greater rate than the Supervisor, with a maximum difference of **1.91%**.
- Eleven classifications compensated both parentheticals with a difference of **0.0%**.
- Thirty-three classifications compensated the Supervisor at a greater rate than the Specialist (excluding the Senior ES classification) with a maximum difference of **8.33%**.
- The average difference in compensation for all of the classifications with a Supervisor and Specialist parenthetical is **2.65%**.
- The difference in compensation for the two Senior ES parentheticals is **35.89%**.

With the exception of the Senior ES classification, the salary rates that have been established and maintained for classifications with a Supervisor and Specialist parenthetical is a clear indication of how the State views them. The parenthetical classes are peers, share an equal level of responsibility, and consistently recognized as such through a very similar or identical salary rate.

The authors understand that any increase to employee salaries must be budgeted, however, it is our opinion that cost should not be a deciding factor when evaluating this proposal. As the Senior ES classification is comprised of two parentheticals, both parentheticals should have been adjusted simultaneously in 2014. The State has appropriately maintained the salary rates for all other classifications with a Supervisor/Specialist parenthetical and we believe that the Senior ES classification warrants the same treatment.

Currently, approximately 550 employees are in the Senior ES (Specialist) parenthetical.