

# Compensation Adjustment for Environmental Scientist Series

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**Background:** In 1985, when Bargaining Unit 10 was created, salary ranges established for Environmental Scientists (Scientists) and engineers in Bargaining Unit 9 at the Department of Toxic Substances Control, State Water Resources Control, and Department of Water Resources (Engineers) were nearly identical. A Scientist or an Engineer at these departments manage projects involving permitting, enforcement, site mitigation and grant management, making it clear that both classifications have comparable duties and responsibilities. As salaries increased over the next twenty years, the salaries for Scientists and Engineers remained in lockstep. In fact, there was a time when the salaries for the Scientist series were higher than the Engineer series. In 2005, Engineers were provided with a substantial salary adjustment, but Scientists were not, breaking the long-standing precedent of maintaining parity between the two classification series. It was understood that Scientists were in line for an equivalent salary increase, since in many cases, they performed the same duties as Engineers. However, the Administration was recalled, leaving Scientists without an equivalent salary adjustment which resulted in a large pay disparity that has escalated to a difference of 44%.

The 2008 Like Pay for Like Work (LPLW) lawsuit examined the pay disparity between Supervising environmental Engineers and Supervising Scientists classifications. The lawsuit concluded the scientific and engineering supervisory classifications have overlapping duties and responsibilities, and the court decided a salary adjustment for supervising Scientists was required. Rank-and-file Scientist salaries have not been adjusted, even though Environmental Scientists and environmental Engineers at the staff level have comparable duties and responsibilities.

Fifteen years later, nothing has changed. Environmental Scientists and environmental Engineers still have interchangeable duties within the same programs. The continuing salary disparity affects scientists throughout the state and is particularly acute in the departments that employ Scientists and Engineers.

Rationale: California Government Code Section 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.”

The “Internal Salary Relationship” statements on the California Human Resources (CalHR) [website](#) makes it clear that CalHR considers the relationship between classifications doing comparable work and attempts to ensure those classifications are paid in a like manner. The CalHR website states: “When establishing a salary for a new class or adjusting the salary of an existing class, CalHR pays particular attention to the salaries of similar civil service classes. If a class salary is too low in comparison with related classes, agencies will have difficulty recruiting qualified personnel.” When the pay for classifications doing similar or the same work is not compensated comparably,

problems inevitably arise, such as morale, productivity issues, and staff turnover. Because Scientists at these departments tackle complex issues, pay equity issues can ultimately result in departments struggling to meet its mission to protect public health and the environment.

Salaries were previously adjusted for BU 10 supervisors and managers in 2014 following the LPLW lawsuit. The LPLW lawsuit concluded that Supervising Environmental Scientists and Engineers conduct comparable duties and responsibilities and that the salaries of Supervising Scientists must be adjusted. With the understanding that rank-and-file Scientists and Engineers have comparable duties and responsibilities, it follows that the salaries of rank-and-file Scientists also need to be adjusted.