

Dear CalHR,

I am a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) with the Department of Water Resources' Division of Environmental Services. Like many of my colleagues, I am monitoring the bargaining process closely, because the outcome will factor into future career decisions and into the future of the State's science-based management of our natural resources. CalHR's response will show whether this administration values scientists and our work. I have also talked to my managers, who are likewise monitoring this negotiation because they recognize that its results will have implications for our entire program for years to come.

Without prompt action to address pay inequity and the impacts of teleworking to state scientists, I anticipate adverse impacts to our program in terms of hiring, morale, and retention. I urge the Newsom Administration to correct this pay disparity and address the shift of work-related costs associated with teleworking from the State to state scientists as soon as possible.

Within our program, there is no distinction between tasks assigned to the Environmental Scientist series and Engineers series. Staff from both are distributed across all teams and participate in a mix of technical and policy-based work without regard to classification. Environmental Science and Engineering staff lead workgroups with equal frequency, often providing direction to both scientists and engineers. It is frustrating for Environmental Scientists tasked with these responsibilities to earn far less than our engineer counterparts for the same work. Due to the pay inequity, some of my program's team leaders and project managers are the lowest paid staff of the teams they lead.

The Division of Environmental Services needs Environmental Scientists to successfully carry out its mandate. Environmental Scientists in the Department of Water Resources have extensive training, advanced degrees, and interdisciplinary experience, which help them complete critical research, maintain legally mandated monitoring programs and apply the results to technical regulatory and management actions.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the State of California must be competitive to attract and retain top talent that can further its mission. Scientists working for the Federal Government and for counties across California earn significantly higher salaries than those working for DWR. The maximum salary for a San Francisco County Senior Environmental Specialist is 21.4% more than the maximum for DWR's Senior ES position, and the salary for a Federal Scientist (GS-13) is 32.33% more. In addition, California's Air Resources Board (ARB) pays their scientists like engineers.

This is an opportunity for the Newsom Administration to demonstrate its commitment to those who work hard every day to ensure that California excels in scientific leadership and environmental protection. We are enthusiastic about DWR's Division of Environmental Services' many successes to date and know that more equitable compensation will help DWR attract and retain the diverse and innovative scientists needed to lead the nation in managing our critical water resources.

Sincerely,

Peter Nelson, M.S, Ph.D.
Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)
Department of Water Resources