

CAPSULE

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www.capsscientists.org
caps@capsscientists.org



@capsscientists



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MEET CAPS 2021-23 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Fourteen volunteer committees do much of the heavy lifting for our union, from overseeing CAPS' overall operations and advocating for better workplace conditions to deciding which state political candidates deserve our support. This list details the membership and duties of four more committees that do important work on behalf of all CAPS members.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Acts on behalf of the full Board in certain circumstances as appropriate and necessary.



President
Margarita Gordus
 CDFW – Fresno
 Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)

Exercises direct supervision and direction of the organization's business and affairs. Appoints Committee Chairpersons and generally supervises them (except for the Budget Committee). Nominates the Bargaining Committee Chair (subject to Board approval). Approves Board meeting agendas and facilitates Board meetings.



Vice President
Daniel Ellis
 SWRCB – Sacramento
 Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)

Closely works with the President and assumes the duties of the President in the President's absence.



Secretary
Justin D. Garcia
 CDFW – W. Sacramento
 Environmental Scientist

Responsible for issuing notice of member meetings and Board meetings. Responsible for keeping a current book of meeting minutes. Maintains current official copies of CAPS' Articles of Incorporation and CAPS' Bylaws.



Treasurer
Kris Weise
 CDFW – Ontario
 Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)

Disburses Association funds in the manner prescribed by the Board. Responsible for correct preparation of financial reports and budgets. Submits financial records to an annual independent audit. Serves as the Budget Committee Chair.

COMMITTEES



Chair
Mia Roberts
 Environmental Scientist
 CDFW – West Sacramento

Workplace Bullying Committee (Ad Hoc)

Meets as necessary to address Unit 10 workplace bullying concerns.

Members

Alice Nash
 Environmental Scientist CDFW, Los Alamitos
Itzia Rivera
 Environmental Scientist CWC, Sacramento

Political Action Committee

Directs CAPS' political action funds for the purpose of furthering CAPS' legislative objectives.

Chair

Kris Weise (photo above)

Members

Kelley Aubushon
 Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisor)
Justin D. Garcia (see above)
Monty Larson
 Environmental Scientist CDFW, Fortuna
David Miller
 Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) DTSC, Sacramento

Representation Committee

Establishes and supervises CAPS' representation policy. Decides whether CAPS seeks arbitration or unfair labor practice charges.

Chair

Justin D. Garcia (photo above)

Members

Daniel Ellis (see above)
Mia Roberts (see above)
Itzia Rivera (see Workplace Bullying Committee)
David Miller (see Political Action Committee)

CAPS AND STATE REPRESENTATIVES MEET OVER TELEWORK

The recently formed Joint Labor/Management Committee on Telework convened for the first time in December to address CAPS members' concerns about telework. The Committee, established in a [September 29 Side Letter Agreement](#), includes President Margarita Gordus, Vice President Daniel Ellis, and staff members Staff Director, Bianca Petzold and Labor Relations Consultant, Nadia Compton from CAPS, with Department of Human Resources' (CalHR) Unit 10 Labor Relations Officer Candace Murch, Telework Subject Matter Expert Brian Lin-Walsh, and note taker Rosemarie Speth. The issues CAPS brought forward at the meeting included:

Difficulties securing updated or new telework agreements to define whether a member is considered "remote-centered" or "office-centered."

Some CAPS members have reported supervisors are waiting for directions to accept telework agreements or have received instruction not to accept new or differing agreements.

Under terms of another Side Letter Agreement reached between CAPS and the State, management must formalize telework agreements with employees that designate "office-centered" or "remote-centered" status based on how much time is spent in each location. The monthly stipend for "office-centered" employees is \$25, and \$50 for "remote-centered" staff. The payments, intended to offset expenses incurred from working remotely, are retroactive to October 1, 2021. (For more details about State telework, please see the [DGS Statewide Telework Policy](#).)

The State's Committee representatives agreed that departments should track work hours by location and formalize telework agreements. In addition, CalHR expressed a willingness to reach out to non-compliant departments. They also suggested employees email their supervisors to start a documented conversation about their work status in the meantime. Since the new telework rules launched in October, CAPS has encouraged members to do the same.

Whether fieldwork would be considered remote or office work for purposes of stipend consideration.

CAPS and the State also discussed whether fieldwork constitutes remote work. CAPS reminded State officials that fieldwork is the oldest instance of "working remotely" and asserted members should continue to be accepted as remote workers under the telework system. The State said fieldwork designations for stipends will be handled case-by-case.

Concerns about "hoteling," i.e., sharing office workstations.

With the State bringing more shared workspaces online to cut office operations costs, CAPS stressed that departments must thoroughly clean workstations between employee shifts to reduce the spread of COVID and other diseases and to control allergens. The State expects hoteling will become common as departments seek to cut leasing costs, more employees opt-in to the arrangement, and new employees are hired into remote work positions.

CAPS COMMITTEE REOPENS GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR TRAVEL EVENTS

The CAPS Member Benefits Committee recently resumed considering Professional Development Grant applications for in-person events. The decision by Committee Chair Monty Larson ended a policy prompted in 2020 by COVID-19 public-health concerns that restricted professional travel and forced conferences and other face-to-face scientific gatherings to cancel, reschedule, or shift to online platforms.

Those concerns have recently lessened to some degree. CAPS Board convened its first pandemic-era face-to-face meeting (with masks) in November, and professional-event organizers are again scheduling in-person meetings for 2022. Hence, the Committee will again include conferences and related expenses when considering member applications for quarterly \$400 Professional Development Grants.

As always, awards will continue for outside research projects, publication of scientific works, purchase of research equipment and supplies, and other expenses for professional advancement that the State does not fully cover.

CAPS strongly urges everyone to take appropriate, science-based measures to protect their health during the pandemic. The Benefits Committee reserves the option to again impose grant restrictions as shifting public-health concerns warrant. For more information about the members-only Professional Development Grant program and how to apply, please click [here](#).

Member Spotlight: CAPS MEMBER FEATURED IN DROUGHT REPORT

One of CAPS' ongoing efforts promotes positive media coverage of members and their critical work. For example, CalMatters' recent story, "[Winged warning: Migrating birds hit hard by California's drought](#)," featured CAPS member Melanie Weaver, Waterfowl Coordinator for the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The piece points out that years of extremely dry weather "eliminated many flyway rest stops in California — particularly in the far north Klamath region — forcing ducks, geese, eagles, herons, and other traveling birds to stay aloft and keep looking for water." As a result, bird populations are cratering. Melanie's expert observation punctuates the sobering story: "I'm concerned that we are not going to see the populations come back. This drought is bad. The odds are against us."

California needs State Scientists to continue speaking truthfully about the environmental challenges confronting all of us. And CAPS needs members who can handle the spotlight to reflect well on our union and our scientific professions. CAPS thanks Melanie for lending her expertise and voice to this important story.

President's Column Margarita Gordus

IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS ...

In last month's *CAPSule*, I looked back at our union's accomplishments over the last two challenging years. For this month's column, let's look ahead to some of the things CAPS will do in the next two years.

However, before we launch into this list, we must acknowledge some unknowns. For example, what will happen with COVID-19? And while the non-partisan Legislative Analyst's Office predicts State Budget surpluses for the next few years (see the back page of this issue for more details), how might inflation complicate State Budget politics or bargaining? How will actions in Washington, D.C., impact programs run by California State Scientists? And what state political developments will require CAPS' attention?

What absolutely will not change: CAPS' commitment as the sole representative of Unit 10 State Scientists to advocate for better pay, to protect pensions, to maintain benefits, to protect jobs, and to deliver top-notch workplace representation for members. Everything CAPS does pushes those goals forward. That is why our union exists.

That said, here is my look into CAPS' future over the next two years:

We will continue to support the CAPS Bargaining Team's (CAPS Team) efforts to reach a successor Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that provides competitive salaries. Over the last two years, we have carefully, clearly, and forcefully advocated at the bargaining table for appropriate wages. The CAPS Team, now led by CAPS District IV Director David Rist, will return to the table early next year to pick up bargaining where it ended in September. I am optimistic they will break new ground to reach a fair and equitable agreement.

Of course, CAPS' power at the bargaining table is enhanced when we band together to speak with one voice. Solidarity in large numbers is key to our success. Because of this, I anticipate CAPS will continue to boost efforts to add State Scientists to our ranks and reaching out to retain existing members.

California billionaire Tim Draper is trying to put a statewide measure before voters to end collective bargaining for state employees. Draper comes from a long line of wealthy anti-union interests who seek to boost their business profits by weakening – and ultimately destroying – unions. Their strategy is to strangle workers' collective power to negotiate salaries, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment under the guise of promoting a "right to work," which is really nothing more than union busting. Should Draper collect enough signatures to put the proposal on the November 2022 ballot – and it appears he will – CAPS will fight it vigorously, allied with every other public-employee union in California.

The pandemic prompted some changes that CAPS will continue as we go forward. For example, virtual pre-board worksite meetings allow members across the state time to talk directly with their elected Board members. The quarterly worksite meetings are here to stay to ensure even those members in the farthest reaches of the State are afforded the opportunity to connect with CAPS leaders.

These help keep leaders and staff attuned to members' concerns. The virtual get-togethers also allow members to learn about CAPS' work in government affairs, political action, our legal work, and representation in the statehouse and the workplace. It's easy for bargaining to overshadow everything else CAPS does, and virtual worksite meetings are an excellent venue for learning about all the benefits of CAPS membership.

CAPS has constantly monitored and influenced statewide and departmental policies that affect our members and their work. Now we are fully engaged in keeping track of telework policy, which is the most significant change to state working conditions in decades. This month, CAPS and State officials convened the first Joint Labor-Management Committee, and already it has brought about state actions to benefit members. You can read more about the Committee's first meeting on page 2.

I also hope we'll be able to bring back CAPS' signature outreach programs, including Outstanding Young Scientist and State Scientist Day at the Capitol – assuming public health concerns allow it. These events annually highlight CAPS' commitment to STEM education through fun and competition that develops the next generation of scientists.

This list is not exhaustive, nor can it anticipate the unexpected challenges that will undoubtedly surface during the next two years. But whatever lies ahead, I know we are better off facing the future together instead of alone.

Choose Unity! Choose strength! Choose CAPS!

STATE ANALYST FORECASTS BUDGET \$31B SURPLUS FOR FY 2022-23

California's State Budget will run a \$31 billion surplus next year, according to a recent forecast by the non-partisan Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), and revenues will exceed expenses for several years to come.

Despite the pandemic, the LAO reported last month that "... revenues are growing at historic rates, and we estimate the State will have a \$31 billion surplus (resources in excess of current law commitments) to allocate in 2022-23." Furthermore, the State's fiscal condition will remain buoyant, with up to \$8 billion in surpluses anticipated for at least three more years beginning in FY 2023-24.

The upbeat forecast is contained in LAO's Fiscal Outlook report, which predicts California's financial circumstances for the coming fiscal year, which begins July 1, and frames planning for the State Budget. Last year, the LAO predicted a one-time \$26 billion surplus in FY 2021-22 (the current fiscal year), followed by serial revenue shortfalls that would plunge the State into budget deficits for several years.

Although the latest LAO financial forecast is much more optimistic, the State Constitution would carve out a sizeable portion of any surplus for specific programs and purposes. For example, [Proposition 98](#) would direct \$11 billion to K-12 schools and community colleges, and up to \$5 billion would go into the State's "rainy day fund."

And depending on several budgetary factors, the State may be restricted in how it spends tens of billions of additional surplus

dollars by the State Appropriation Limit, or "Gann Limit," which voters approved in 1979. The Gann Limit restricts spending in any given year based on what was spent in previous years. So, when revenues increase at the rate the LAO predicts, the Gann Limit obligates the State to reduce or rebate taxes, spend surplus revenue on capital investments such as infrastructure, or direct the money to schools and community colleges. You can expect to hear a lot more about the Gann Limit's impact on State spending in the months to come.

Ultimately, the LAO's Fiscal Outlook provides a best estimate of State fiscal conditions, not a guarantee. It acknowledges a wide range of uncertainties that could affect the budget, from federal funding and the pandemic to economic conditions in California and globally. To read the LAO's Fiscal Outlook, please click [here](#).

The Legislature's serious financial deliberations get underway with the Governor's proposed FY 2022-23 budget release in early January. The Governor will issue a revised budget plan in mid-May. State law gives the Legislature until June 15 to pass a budget for Newsom's signature.

Regardless of State budget surpluses or deficits, CAPS will continue advocating for Unit 10 priorities, including bargaining a Memorandum of Understanding that includes pay parity. Please look for *CAPS Update* emails and *CAPSule* newsletter reports for information and analysis on the State's fiscal condition in the months ahead.

CAPS PREPARES BARGAIN. HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP.

The CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team) is preparing to resume talks for a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Newsom Administration in early 2022. You can support their efforts to achieve pay parity in several ways:

Write a letter

The CAPS Team has shared with CalHR many members' personal letters describing how inadequate Unit 10 salaries have impacted everything from State programs, recruiting and retention, to family decisions and personal finances. The CAPS Team will continue sharing letters in upcoming bargaining sessions, so please consider adding your experiences to the record. The more State Scientist classifications represented by these letters, the better. Read examples and find out how to submit a letter by clicking [here](#).

Follow CAPS on Social Media

CAPS is on Twitter ([@capsscientists](#)) and Instagram ([capsscientists](#)), where our accounts are followed by hundreds of members, politicians, policymakers, department officials, and stakeholder groups. By joining, you can find out what they are saying about Unit 10 issues and catch CAPS social media

messages in support of pay parity. Click [here](#) to join Twitter or use this [link](#) to join Instagram. Both apps are free.

Recruit a colleague to join CAPS

Union power comes from solidarity, and solidarity comes through strong membership. The higher the percentage of Unit 10 employees who are CAPS members, the more strength CAPS has at the bargaining table, in the Legislature, and in the workplace to advocate for issues such as pay, benefits, pensions, and job protections.

While solidarity is a collective force, membership occurs just one person at a time. So if you know a colleague who has not yet added their strength to CAPS, consider asking them to become a member immediately. You can direct them to this [webpage](#), which details the many benefits of membership. And if they join on or before December 31 and put your name in the "referred by" field on the [form](#), you will receive a \$100 incentive bonus from CAPS. (The bonus returns to its usual \$50 on January 1.)

Choose Unity! Choose Strength! Choose CAPS!

CONTACT US

SACRAMENTO

455 Capitol Mall, Suite 500
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 441-2629

LOS ANGELES

215 N. Marengo Avenue, Suite 185
Pasadena, CA 91101
(818) 246-0629

SAN FRANCISCO

100 Pine Street, Suite 750
San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 861-6343

CAPS INSURANCE

(415) 958-1344