

CAPSULE



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WHAT'S INSIDE?

CAPS Resumes Bargaining
SWRCB Scientists Becomes
Media Go-To Microplastics
Expert

Use or Lose Your Professional
Development Days by June 30

President's Column

CAPS Scholarship Program



CAPS RESUMES BARGAINING

In early April, the CAPS Bargaining Team (CAPS Team) resumed bargaining with the State's Team for a successor Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Unit 10. The CAPS Team presented a review of the last three years of bargaining with the State and core objectives for this round of negotiations: protecting California's future, avoiding collapse, stabilizing California's state scientific workforce, ensuring agencies can complete their missions, and turning the State of California into the employer of choice for scientists.

The CAPS Team also presented their agenda for future talks, including Competitive and Equitable Salaries, Recognizing Scientific Education and Experience, Workforce and Program Stability, Mitigation/Reduction of Climate Impact, and Paid Family Leave and Support for Working Parents. Finally, the CAPS Team closed the presentation by providing summary data from the most recent survey.

After the presentation, the State Team's only question was how many scientists were included in the examples from the newest survey data. The CAPS Team said that the survey is not yet closed, but that even so, the number of participants already exceeds the number of members who participated in the Tentative Agreement (TA) ratification vote earlier this year.

Before closing the meeting, the CAPS Team mentioned that there are at least 51 sections of the previously agreed-to TA that they would like to continue to update or improve.

The State's Team has presented your CAPS Team with "ground rules" to set expectations for conduct at the table. While ground rules would be a first in the talks between CAPS and the State during negotiations for a successor to the 2018-2020 MOU, they are a routine part of the traditional bargaining process. (CAPS and the State have left behind the Interest-Based Bargaining method used in earlier discussions for this post-Total Tentative Agreement Rejection round of negotiations – thus, ground rules are being contemplated.)

Ground rules can be either written or verbal. The State of California typically requests written ground rules. These guidelines can cover almost every conceivable subject but usually focus on actions intended to facilitate the bargaining process. For example, ground rules can help establish important procedural protocols such as how proposals are presented and passed, how tentative agreements are signed, and who calls the official time for passing. Ground rules also set clear expectations for both parties, like meeting dates, times, and who receives release time. These logistical issues may seem trivial, but they set the table for the remainder of the negotiations.

The rules themselves became a topic of negotiation which, as of this writing in mid-April, had not been settled. However, it seemed likely a ground rules agreement would be reached so that the real work of bargaining for a successor MOU could start with the next meeting, scheduled for April 25.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



SWRCB SCIENTIST BECOMES MEDIA GO-TO MICRO-PLASTICS EXPERT

CAPS member **Dr. Scott Coffin**, a Research Scientist III (Chemical Sciences) for the Water Resources Control Board, has become a scientific celebrity regarding microplastics. He's been quoted in stories by [CalMatters](#), [Scientific American](#), and [National Geographic](#) – and that was just last year.

Now Dr. Coffin is back in the news again with a new report that he has co-authored, "[A growing plastic smog, now estimated to be over 170 trillion plastic particles afloat in the world's oceans — Urgent solutions required.](#)"

The study has gained widespread media attention from Forbes, The Guardian, and Yahoo News, among others. Several outlets have extensively quoted the doctor, including [Wired](#) and San Francisco's public TV outlet, [KQED](#). Streaming media has also been interested. The Stereo Chemistry podcast episode, "Microplastics pollute our drinking water: What are the risks?" features a lengthy interview. You can listen to the podcast or read its searchable transcript at <https://bit.ly/3Js7g4z>.

USE OR LOSE YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS BY JUNE 30



As the warmer weather arrives, many people consider taking some well-deserved time off. It's also a good time to make sure you have taken your Professional Development Days (PDD) for this year before they expire.

Article 15.10 of the Unit 10 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated by CAPS provides every rank-and-file State Scientist with two PDD per fiscal year for activities defined by the employee. You request the time off and receive approval in the same manner as vacation/annual leave. You can use PDD in 15-minute increments.

Unlike vacation/annual leave, however, PDD time does not roll over from year to year, nor can it be cashed out. So PDD for 2022-23 must be used by the June 30 end of the 2022-23 fiscal year, or it is lost. On July 1, the PDD calendar starts over.

Note: State pay warrants show PDD hours used, not remaining hours available. So, if you haven't taken PDD this fiscal year, your warrant will show zero (0.0) for that line item. If your latest warrant shows fewer than 16.0 hours of PDD leave used, arrange to take that time off before July 1.

DEPARTMENTS DUE TO ANNOUNCE LEAVE CASH OUT PLANS



Article 3.22 of our MOU provides an opportunity for you to cash out up to 80 hours of accumulated Vacation/Annual Leave credits each year, if your employing department decides to participate in the program. Departments are supposed to let employees know by May 1.

If your department is participating, they will also advise you on the maximum number of hours you can cash out and the person or unit designated to receive your request. Requests must be submitted during the month of May. Departments will issue payments for cashed out leave during the month of June.

As staff becomes aware, CAPS will list participating departments in member emails and next month's CAPSule, but if you have any questions, please check with your department's human resources unit.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

MARGARITA GORDUS

THERE ARE TWO VERY POSITIVE PIECES OF NEWS I'M PLEASED TO REPORT, SO I'LL GET RIGHT TO IT:

New benefits for members! Of the many benefits of CAPS membership, one that sometimes escapes notice is that members are automatically enrolled in our complimentary Basic Life Insurance plan, which can benefit your family during a difficult time. This year, we increased the coverage to \$10,000 in term life insurance and \$15,000 in accidental death insurance at no additional cost.

As a member, you can also access the CAPS Group Policy with The Standard, which allows you to purchase Supplemental Life Insurance and Long Term Disability coverage. In addition, this month, we added three new insurance products:

- Accident Insurance to help cover costs that medical insurance doesn't cover if you're hurt in an accident.
- Critical Illness coverage that helps with the expenses from a serious illness that your medical insurance doesn't cover.
- Hospital Indemnity coverage for out-of-pocket expenses that your medical insurance may not cover, especially when you have a hospital stay.

CAPS is hosting an open enrollment period through May 31 for members to take advantage of the new insurance offerings and enroll in existing Supplemental Life Insurance and Long Term Disability plans. An email was sent to you with more details about the new plans and how to enroll, but if you missed it or have questions after reading through the information, please email caps@capsscientists.org.

STATE SCIENTIST DAY RETURNS!

I'm happy to announce that our biggest public event of the year, State Scientist Day (SSD), returns to the State Capitol West Lawn on Wednesday, May 3, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

An explanation is in order for the hundreds of members who have joined CAPS since our last SSD in 2019. Since 1984, CAPS has hosted SSD at the Capitol to highlight our important work and to inspire kids to take an interest in science. State Scientists volunteer their time to design, set up, and staff interactive scientific displays that teach kids about everything from seismology and toxicology to botany and entomology.

SSD has been wildly successful over the years, growing from its fairly modest origin of a few stations and a few hundred kids to dozens of education stations that served up to 5,000 students from elementary schools that bussed them to the Capitol from all over Northern California. It has also been a public-relations jackpot for our union. TV, radio, print, and internet news outlets have always flocked to the event, drawn by its iconic location, the kids, the visually captivating learning stations, and the State Scientists who enthusiastically explain to reporters how their important work serves Californians.

COVID-19 public health concerns forced us to cancel this wonderful event for the last three years. SSD will take a little time to regain its former stature because we have been offline for so long. In some ways, we are starting over. But State Scientist Day still has brand recognition with the media. The event is a unique and fun way to show our value to the State while displaying our genuine commitment to the next generation of State Scientists.

If you are near the Capitol on May 3, I hope you take the time to stop by. We would love to see you. Also, think about getting together with your colleagues and talking about how you might contribute to next year's SSD. As soon as this one ends, planning for 2024 begins.



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CAPS ACCEPTING DEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS



Award amounts and number of winners both increased for 2023!

One of the many benefits of CAPS membership is the Dependent Scholarship Program, which each year awards college scholarships to the children and other legal dependents of CAPS members.

Qualified applicants must be enrolled in an accredited university or community college (but not a vocational school) and complete a CAPS Scholarship Application. For 2023, the CAPS Member Benefits Committee, which reviews and chooses the successful applications, is pleased to announce the awards have been increased by your Board of Directors to \$750 each (up from \$500 previously) for up to 20 winners (five more than last year).

Applications automatically rollover from students who stated their intended graduation year is 2024 or later. Awards are limited to one per family per lifetime.

Be advised: The competition for scholarships is steep. Last year, approximately 1 in 5 applicants received a scholarship. The Member Benefits Committee, which selects the winning submissions, urges applicants to fill out the form carefully. Failure to complete the application (including photo attachments, proof of enrollment documentation, the 25-word statement, or student and sponsor contact information) is the leading reason applicants are dropped from consideration each year. So PLEASE fill in ALL the information to maximize your chance to win!

The rules and a link to the online application can be found at <https://capsscientists.org/members/caps-dependent-scholarships/>. (Forget your password? Contact your local CAPS office for assistance.)

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