

Dear CalHR,

I am a Senior Environmental Scientist with the Department of Fish and Wildlife's (DFW) Habitat Conservation Program. I have been monitoring the bargaining process closely because the outcome will factor into my future employment decisions. CalHR's response will show whether this administration values scientists and the work we do. I have also talked to my manager, who is likewise monitoring this negotiation because they recognize that its results will have implications for our entire program for years to come. I urge the Newsom Administration to correct this pay disparity as soon as possible by taking some steps in a positive direction and showing that you appreciate the hard work your current and future scientists do for our wonderful and beautiful state.

Most state scientist, biologists, and environmental staff in general have a passion for what they do. We have chosen our profession because we are passionate about it and believe that we can make a positive difference in this world. I believe and have experienced this passion interfere with my normal work hours, in that I have always been willing to work that extra hour to complete a project, re-review that report, or to do that extra research off the clock not just because it benefited my employer, but more so because I believed, and so still do believe, it benefits the environment. I cannot say that other state classifications do not have this passion, but I think you would be hard pressed to find another group of workers that are as passionate about what they do as state scientists are. For those, like me, that worked to obtain a degree in environmental biology, knew that this profession would not make us rich. This passion and feeling that we are making a difference is something that drives us, gives us pride, and keeps our morale high. Which is why this current pay disparity is such an important issue. I feel that state scientists deserve equal pay. The facts are plain and simple that we are underpaid for the work that we do. And that is a sad thing to be a part of. Really, it is a sad thing for anyone to be shown facts and data that show they are underpaid. But this also demonstrates the strength, resilience, and pride that we have for the work that we do, and that we will continue to do, until we are shown that our hard work is appreciated and understood by cutting the disparity gap.

Facts include: scientists working for the Federal Government and for counties across California earn significantly higher salaries. The maximum salary for a San Francisco County Senior Environmental Specialist is 21.4% more than the maximum I will be making as a 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 a straightforward issue with a very simple solution. And thus far, the state has been good about recognizing this and providing state scientists with annual, albeit marginal raises. Like in so many other scenarios and facets of life, just the fact that the state is trying to bridge the gap can make all the difference. Although that is not the best case scenario, it is definitely not the worst scenario, which would involve CalHR doing nothing. Or worse, trying to justify why there is no disparity in pay. I and my colleagues understand pay equity can take time and there are many larger issues involved such as budgetary constraints and so forth. But how can such a blatant and straightforward issue not be acted upon? Can there be any reasons that justify not bridging the disparity gap? To do nothing and to try and justify doing nothing is what deflates me and my colleagues. Morale plunges, work suffers, and current employees seek opportunities outside of DFW where the pay is more competitive, among other things.

The pay inequity problem is apparent to those external to the program as well. Various NGOs have spoken about the need to fairly compensate state scientists. Any friends or family that I

explain the ongoing situation to also agree that pay equity is a logical solution. And most are baffled as to why this issue can't be resolved. Because, once again, the solution is a simple one.

I have been working for DFW since 2001 and have become a long-term, proud, and loyal employee. My plans were to retire with the state under this same capacity. But as I have aged, I have realized that the pay disparity is a reality. And some form of that gap is likely to be around for the long term. And therefore, it is in my best interest to continue to keep an open mind for other future job opportunities that can offer more competitive salaries. Would I rather remain an employee of DFW and the state? Of course, I would. Any my over 20 years of work with DFW from a part time, scientific aide to a senior scientist demonstrates the pride I have for my employer and for the job that I and all my colleagues do.

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. Please allow state scientist to continue to take pride in our work by taking positive steps for our pay equity and shows the administration understands, appreciates, and respects its state scientists.

Sincerely,

Jeff Humble

Senior Environmental Scientist

Department of Fish and Wildlife