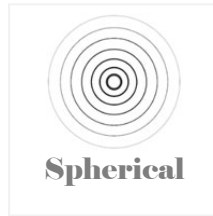




Tuolumne River TRUST



January 7, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Pay equity for California's State Scientists

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the California Institute for Biodiversity and co-signed organizations, we write with thanks for your ongoing commitment to pay equity, and to ask that you step forward with assertive leadership to address long-standing pay equity issues for California's State Scientists. Specifically, we ask you to direct CalHR and your staff to craft an agreement toward equitable compensation for Bargaining Unit 10 and our scientific workforce, with expression of this intent reflected in your proposed 2022 budget.

As Californians concerned about the future of our state and our planet, we are proud of how your leadership is inspiring the nation and the world with a clear and much-needed message: California believes in science and is using best available science to craft solutions that sustain our prosperity and save our biosphere. The bold and transformative investments in your recent state budget reflect these principles, and we thank the Governor for his visionary commitment to science-based solutions.

At the same time, we fear that glaring inequities in State Scientist compensation gives the appearance that California does not value the scientists who are most essential to realizing the vision of a resilient future driven by science.

Secretary Blumenfeld and Secretary Crowfoot expressed deep concern that low State Scientist salaries are already affecting the ability of their Agencies to perform their missions. We echo urgent concerns they expressed in letters to CalHR, and elevate this message to make sure you are aware of the need to act. As Secretaries Blumenfeld and Crowfoot make clear, unfair compensation for State Scientists is a major threat to our shared agenda. This inequity is driving high staff turnover; challenging recruitment, retention, and vacancy rates; harming morale among our scientists; and most importantly, negatively impacting their agencies. Simply stated, scientist pay inequity is already harming the ability and capacity of California to safeguard the state's resources, products, food, and climate. This will get much worse in the months and years to come, as we turn to California's diverse State Scientists for answers and action.

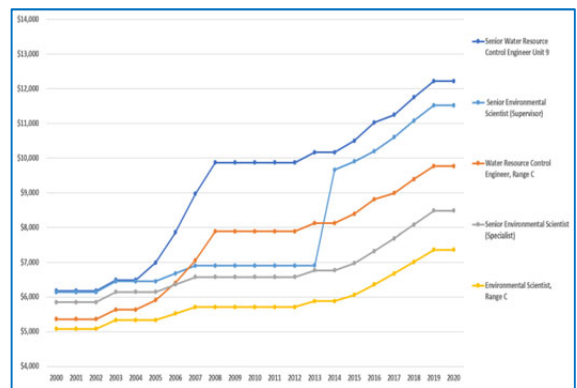
You recently signed a state budget with ambitious goals. Those goals depend on State Scientists: improving public health and advancing environmental justice; decarbonizing our economy and advancing inclusion and opportunity; coping with megafires and surviving drought; saving pollinators and rebuilding state parks. State scientists must develop the strategies and manage the initiatives. Scientists must develop and manage grant programs, write the RFPs and review the proposals. They must review plans and issue permits, all while advising California's leaders and engaging California's communities. They always work hard, but now we are asking them to work even harder to advance \$15

billion of change in just a few short years. It is no exaggeration to say that without the hard work of dedicated State Scientists, the tremendous investments we are making will fail.

Unfortunately, our State Scientists are overworked and understaffed, and will require immediate support if they are to do all that we are asking of them. While other bargaining units have benefited from California's commitment to pay equity, scientists have been conspicuously excluded. State scientists feel frustrated, demoralized, and underappreciated for a variety of reasons, including:

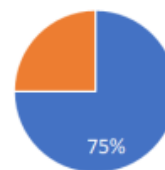
State scientist salaries are well below industry standards and are in conflict with state policy:

- Before 2005, State Scientists, environmental engineers, geologists, and other technical staff were compensated equitably for similar duties. Since 2005, other salaries have increased while scientists have not received equitable treatment. This “horizontal parity gap” means that state environmental engineers working alongside State Scientists can earn up to 49% more than their scientist peers, for doing the same or similar work.
- Salaries for most scientific supervisors and managers were increased in 2014 to align with their environmental engineer counterparts, to comply with successful “Like Pay for Like Work” litigation. In a break with precedent and against all norms of justice, rank and file staff scientists were excluded from this, creating a “vertical parity gap” – *supervisors’ salaries were given a major adjustment, but those of their staff were not!*
- Consequently, State Scientists are paid far less than their peers elsewhere in government. Local and Federal agencies will pay 30-60% more for the same work. Private industry scientists are paid vastly more than the State Scientists who serve the public good.



Low salaries cause turnover, harm morale, extend vacancies, and discourage qualified candidates:

- Turnover is especially high as State Scientists leave for higher paying jobs elsewhere. Currently, 57% of environmental scientists have been on the job for 5 years or less. While individual departments and programs vary, the average vacancy rate for scientist jobs in California agencies is 14%. California Energy Commission vacancy rates exceed 20% for some scientist classifications.
- Vacant positions burdens existing staff with more work and more stress. High turnover means that existing staff must spend time and resources training newcomers, and those newcomers lack the experience and relationships needed to do their jobs well. Loss of institutional knowledge and relationship capital severely hinders the state in addressing pandemics, health inequities, restoration projects, and climate change.
- Consequently, morale is low. To support their families, scientists take gig work and slog through second jobs to make ends meet. A recent survey of State Scientists found: 75% will be looking for a new job within 1-2 years due to the pay inequity issue; >90% indicated pay inequity impacts their willingness or ability to recruit



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others to work for their department; and 40% said that they would not have accepted their position if they had known about the continuing pay issue.

A united community calls for CalHR to address this liability:

- A recent CalEPA analysis found dramatic vertical and horizontal parity challenges faced by their scientists. They concluded that this long-standing disparity threatens the capacity of CalEPA to implement its mission; creates high staff turnover and vacancy rates; and results in increasingly low morale. In 2020, Secretary Blumenfeld sent a letter urging CalHR “to reaffirm California’s commitment to pay equity...and reaffirm the State of California as an Employer of Choice.”
- In a 2020 letter to CalHR, Resources Secretary Crowfoot explained that Environmental Scientists are underpaid compared to their federal, private sector, and state counterparts. He said that pay equity currently impacts several departments, harms retention and recruitment of talented Environmental Scientists, and that “pay equity is urgently needed to enable high-quality science to meet our Agency’s mission.”
- CalHR has received similar letters from Senator Barbara Boxer, County District Attorneys, environmental coalitions, and even representatives of regulated industries concerned about how State Scientist compensation issues are affecting timely permit and project delivery.
- The Legislative Analyst’s Office 2018 “MOU Fiscal Analysis” discusses issues around the expanding demand for State Scientists, and the LAO has identified the parity issue between Unit 10 and Unit 9 classifications doing similar and comparable work and has informed the legislature that appropriate differentials between supervisors and rank-and-file should be reestablished.
- The “2018 California State Employee Total Compensation Report” projects an 11.8% growth in jobs for ES and Specialists, highlights a 14.4% vacancy rate for ES positions as of 2018, and demonstrates that ES positions were compensated far less than their peers.
- Laws, regulations, and policies call for action that still has not happened. CA Government Code 19826 makes clear that classifications doing similar and comparable work must be paid similarly, a requirement upheld in the recent “Like Pay for Like Work” lawsuit that resulted in salary increases for supervisors. CalHR is not in compliance with their own horizontal and vertical salary relationship policies – while they maintain both vertical and horizontal salary relationships for the other 20 bargaining units, scientists in Bargaining Unit 10 are excluded.

Governor Newsom, this is why California’s State Scientists look to you for leadership and action. **Your inspiring inaugural speech** was clear: “everyone deserves fair pay.” This is a moral issue, but it is also an unsustainable situation: State Scientists will receive the pay increase they deserve, either because their leaders choose to do the right thing; via contentious labor action; or because our scientists burn out and the programs and services we rely on simply collapse. One of these scenarios opens new pathways for greater progress, while the other two jeopardize the exceptional opportunity we all share right now.

Our organizations are partnering with you in saving California. We work closely with California State Scientists, engineers, geologists, and other state specialists every day, and we see the critical roles they all play. This truth is at the heart of our plea to you. In order for any workforce to perform to their highest potential, corrosive and extreme inequities in compensation simply cannot persist. And in the

case of scientists, California's population, economy, and environment cannot risk further loss and marginalization of this essential, frontline talent.

We urge you to seize this opportunity to make a minor investment in a grand enterprise. Your decision to do right by California State Scientists is essential to advancing your agenda. Your action will show how an enlightened people come together to overcome great challenges. Today, in the midst of a devastating pandemic and climate catastrophe, the world is learning they must listen to scientists. California is a standard-bearer for this growing movement. Embarrassing current inequities refute California's message, suggesting we value science but not the working people who deliver that science. As you remedy this problem, you will show California, and the nation and world, what it means to value science.

We ask that you please listen to the Cabinet Secretaries you appointed to oversee your scientific workforce – they made this case better than we ever could. Please ensure that your upcoming budget proposals reaffirm your personal commitment to science and pay equity.

Please direct your staff and CalHR to work with Bargaining Unit 10 to resolve this longstanding inequity. We hope your actions will help demonstrate to the nation and the world what it means to listen to science and value scientists.

Respectfully yours,

Daniel Gluesenkamp
California Institute for Biodiversity

Jay Ziegler
The Nature Conservancy

Sean Bothwell
California Coastkeeper Alliance

Jane Sellen
Californians for Pesticide Reform

Lauren Weston
Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet

Norman Gershenz
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Dan Silver
Endangered Habitats League

Michael J. Painter
Californians for Western Wilderness

Chance Cutrano
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CA Association of Local Conservation Corps

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Bill Allayaud
Environmental Working Group

Janet Cobb
California Wildlife Foundation

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Mark Rockwell
Fly Fishers International

Maureen Forney
Grand Old Broads

Avinash Kar
Natural Resources Defense Council

Nsedu Witherspoon
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Margaret Goodale
Pacifica's Environmental Family

Asha Sharma
Pesticide Action Network

Claire Schlotterbeck
Hills for Everyone

Quirina Geary
Tamien Nation

Andria Ventura
Clean Water Action

Cyn Coulouthros
Yes Please GARDEN

Timothy Hogan
TWB Environmental

Ann Van Leer
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Amber Hasselbring
Nature in the City

Esperanza Vielma
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