

December 8, 2020

California Department of Human Resources
1515 S Street, North Building, Suite 500
Sacramento, California 95811-7258

RE: Bargaining Unit 10's Salary Inequity

Dear CalHR Representatives,

My name is Jennifer Stewart, and I am a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) in the Central Valley Flood Protection Board's (CVFPB) Environmental Services and Land Management Branch. I am monitoring the bargaining process closely, as CalHR's response will show whether this administration values scientists and our work. I have also talked to fellow co-workers and managers, who are likewise monitoring this negotiation because they recognize that its results will have implications for this Branch for years to come. Without prompt action to address this salary inequity, I anticipate adverse impacts to CVFPB environmental staff in terms of hiring, morale, and retention. I urge the Newsom Administration to correct this pay disparity as soon as possible.

At the CVFPB, there is no real distinction between tasks assigned to the Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist) staff and the Engineer, Water Resources and Senior Engineer, Water Resources staff. Staff from each classification series and various working levels participate in a mix of technical and policy-based work dealing with permitting encroachments to the State-Federal flood control system and advancing flood risk reduction projects in the Central Valley. Environmental and engineering staff lead workgroups and projects with equal frequency, often providing direction to both environmental scientists and engineers. It is demoralizing for Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialists) tasked with these responsibilities to earn 22% less than our Engineer, Water Resources and 44% less than our Senior Engineer Water Resources counterparts for the same work.

Scientist classifications must remain competitive to attract and retain top talent that can further the CVFPB's mission. Scientists working for the Federal Government and for counties across California earn significantly higher salaries than those working for the CVFPB. The maximum salary for a San Francisco County Senior Environmental Specialist is 21.4% more than the maximum for CVFPB'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. The salary inequity problem is apparent to those external to the State as well, as various NGOs have spoken about the need to fairly compensate State scientists.

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. I am enthusiastic about the CVFPB's many successes to date, and know that more equitable compensation will help the CVFPB attract and retain the diverse and innovative scientists needed to lead the nation in flood risk reduction and public safety. Please correct State scientist's salary inequity.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Stewart, MS
Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)
Central Valley Flood Protection Board