



California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region

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PAY DISPARITY BETWEEN SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS

I concur with the recent letters you received from the chairs of the Santa Ana, Central Coast, and San Diego Regional Water Boards addressing the pay disparity issue, and I will attempt to not repeat the important facts presented in these letters. The very critical message in these letters is that the large and increasing pay disparity between our scientific and engineering staff at all levels must be addressed if we are to successfully recruit and retain competent scientists thereby enabling the Water Boards to effectively fulfill their mission of protecting California's water resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

Water quality issues are very complex. To competently address these issues requires an integrated team approach, of many learned disciplines from the science, geology, and engineering fields of knowledge. The diverse educational backgrounds that are available through the environmental scientist classification is just as critical to our success in addressing water quality issues as is the educational backgrounds of our engineers and geologists.

While the Water Boards continue to vigorously address the more traditional areas of water quality (i.e., wastewater discharges to surface waters and land; spills, leaks, investigations and cleanups; total maximum daily load; etc.), their work is evolving to focus significantly on non-point sources, examples being agricultural runoff and storm water. The science of the water quality issues of both point and non-point sources includes many factors among which are the interactive impacts resulting from diverse biological and chemical entities including salinity in an environment characterized by highly cyclical climatological conditions, ranging from drought to flood, and highly variable water supply conditions that have been highly modified by anthropological activities. Addressing these complex non-point water quality issues requires a team of individuals having science, geological, and engineering expertise who participate equally in a watershed approach to problem solving directed to finding solutions for these difficult issues.

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Today, another environmental factor, global warming and the resultant effort to reduce green house gases, has placed even greater emphasis upon the need for a highly disciplined team approach by an able group of scientists, geologists, and engineers, while solving water quality problems, incorporating in their solutions an approach that minimizes green house gas production. This is an environmental factor that has being newly introduced to the Water Boards, but its successful resolution will require the interaction and integration of great science and engineering expertise. The required scientific expertise includes but is not limited to the fields of chemistry, biology, limnology, toxicology, biochemistry, agronomy, bacteriology, and soil science.

The contributions of our Environmental Scientists are of comparable value, responsibility, and complexity to that of the Water Board's Water Resource Control Engineers and Engineering Geologists. While many Water Board engineers have demonstrated their high professional competency through registration, many of our scientists have made comparable demonstrations of professional competency by undertaking and successfully completing advanced academic studies and obtaining advanced science degrees. It is, therefore, untenable, that our scientists are being paid a third less than their engineering coworkers.

We must be able to recruit and retain high caliber technical staff if we are to succeed as an agency to protect water quality throughout California. To compete with other public agencies and the private sector, the Water Boards must offer comparable compensation. While the recent salary gains of our engineers are entirely appropriate and necessary for recruiting and retaining competent personnel, they now need to be matched with comparable compensation for our scientists if we are to recruit and retain competent scientists.

The administration is urged to address these compensation problems for the Water Board's scientists. The Department of Personnel Administration must be convinced that the time is right to correct this great pay disparity.

Karl E. Longley, ScD, P.E., Chair

cc: Central Valley Regional Water Board Members
All Regional Board Chairs
State Water Resources Control Board Members
State Water Resources Control Board Executive Director Tam Doduc