M E M O R A N D U M

State of Alaska
Department of Administration
Division of Personnel

To: Matt Robus, Director
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Department of Fish & Game

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Subject: Wildlife Physiologist Study

History:
In late 2004 and early 2005, the Department of Fish & Game submitted a Classification Study Maintenance Request to: a) revise the Definition of the Fishery and Wildlife Biologist IV job classes, similar to the language of the second option of the Habitat Biologist IV, and b) establish a new Wildlife Physiologist job class series. In the latter part of March 2005, position descriptions for identified positions and clarification of the request were received by the Division of Personnel, resulting in a major expansion to the scope of the Biologist work. During June and July, the first drafts of the proposed job class specifications were submitted for comment to the Department of Fish & Game, but due to unavailable time as a result of seasonal resource management and research activities, the department was not able to respond in a timely manner. In August, it was decided to split apart the Wildlife Physiologist study from the delayed Biologist III/IV study, in order to move forward. A second draft of the proposed Wildlife Physiologist job class series was submitted, followed by discussion to resolve differences and reach agreement between all parties of the Divisions of Wildlife Conservation and Personnel. In November, at the department's request, implementation of Wildlife Physiologist Study was put on hold until the Biologist III/IV Study and a separate salary analysis were completed. The latter completion occurred recently.

Scope:
This study, which involved four positions in the Division of Wildlife Conservation, was conducted to establish an appropriate job class series to reflect professional scientific research work, which requires highly specialized backgrounds in wildlife physiology or nutritional biochemistry disciplines.

Study Method:
This study was initiated at the request of the Division of Wildlife Conservation, Department of Fish & Game.

Initial discussion was held with departmental representatives, to understand the reasoning behind the request, which originally was merged with a maintenance request, rather than submitted as a class study request. Updated position descriptions were requested for four positions identified by the Division for possible reallocation. Once the PDs were received and reviewed, position interview questions were formulated, and interviews were conducted with the incumbents. Additional information was collected and analyzed; levels of work or job class concepts were identified; and drafts of the Definition and Distinguishing Characteristics for each level were completed.

Drafts of the above two specification sections were sent to the original study team contacts, including the Deputy Director and Fisheries Scientist I of the Division of Wildlife Conservation. The remaining sections of the class specifications, specifically Examples of Duties, Knowledge, Skills and Abilities, and Minimum Qualifications, were drafted and sent to Mr. Titus, Mr. Small and Mr. Hoover. Responses were received with subsequent changes made to language in some of the five sections, most being of a minor nature; those that were not were discussed further with the second drafts incorporating compromise language. The class specifications as finalized, reflect past discussions and agreements.

Each job class was analyzed for internal alignment; ranges were assigned, and conclusions and decisions were documented. Last, individual positions were allocated against the new job class specifications as discussed in a separate memorandum.

Class Concepts:

Wildlife Physiologists I-III design, conduct, supervise and/or manage professional research work specializing in wildlife physiology or nutritional biochemistry disciplines, and directed toward the development of new or fuller scientific knowledge of the subjects studied. Supervision may be assigned at the second level but is not necessarily class controlling.

Wildlife Physiologists I perform journey professional physiologist work in designing, conducting, and implementing wildlife physiology research investigations for specific projects of moderate complexity or limited scope, and which are segments of complex research programs.

Wildlife Physiologists II provide advanced professional physiologist expertise in designing, conducting and overseeing major field and lab wildlife physiology research projects including multiple sub projects. May supervise a collaborative physiology research laboratory and services, and wildlife professionals, technicians and graduate students.

Wildlife Physiologists III design, direct, supervise and manage major physiology research programs and related scientific investigative projects; provide the highest level of professional expertise in wildlife physiology and biochemistry; and may supervise and manage a related laboratory unit and services in partnership with academia.

Class Analysis:

The state's Classification Plan provides for the grouping of positions into job classes when they are sufficiently similar with respect to duties and responsibilities, degree of supervision exercised and received, and entrance requirements so that: 1) the same title can be used to clearly identify each position; 2) the same minimum qualifications for initial appointment can be

established for all positions; 3) the same basic rate of pay can be fairly applied to all positions; and 4) employees in a particular class are considered an appropriate group for purposes of layoff and recall. Job classes should be constructed as broadly as is feasible as long as the tests of similarity are met.

The study process includes the comparisons of work performed at each level, including the examination of eight classification factors used as guidelines for appropriate internal alignment and subsequent range assignments. The classification factors include the nature, variety and complexity of work; the nature and scope of recommendations, decisions, commitments and consequence of error. In addition, factors include the nature of supervision received, and nature and extent of supervision exercised; the nature of available guidelines; initiative and originality required; purpose and nature of working relationships, and qualifications required.

During the position interviews and review of position descriptions and related documents, this analyst identified three levels in existence.

The **Wildlife Physiologists I** perform journey professional physiologist work, typically as part of a team or individually assigned to physiology research components or segments of a complex research program. Though highly qualified educationally, incumbents in positions at this level are progressively gaining specialized experience while defining problems, planning, analyzing, interpreting and reporting findings of scientific investigative projects, under the direction of upper level Wildlife Physiologists. Investigative work involves body condition, metabolism and nutritional status of terrestrial or marine wildlife, and requires the design of sampling plans, logistical planning, field observations, field collection and analysis of physiological data and tissues, and laboratory analyses.

In contrast, the **Wildlife Physiologists II** perform advanced professional physiologist work, applying expertise gained through extensive educational and experience. Positions in this job class determine the scope of research, including the feasibility and appropriateness of application of new advances in physiological ecology and nutritional biochemistry. Wildlife Physiologists II design the complete study plan for physiology research projects; determine the application of existing and new scientific methodology to develop and discover new information; formulate experimental approaches; determine processes; and conduct, oversee and report on the findings of research conducted in all related research projects. Publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals occurs. Project findings are typically incorporated into and could impact the direction of wildlife research and management programs. Administrative responsibilities exist related to lab operations and/or projects. Supervisory authority may exist but is not class-controlling.

The **Wildlife Physiologists III** design, direct, supervise and manage major physiology research programs and related projects; provide the highest level of professional expertise and leadership in wildlife physiology and biochemistry; and may manage related laboratory facilities and services. Positions in this job class direct the design, development and professional presentation of scientific findings of related but different research projects, which are components of major marine and/or terrestrial vertebrate research programs. The latter is typically statewide in nature and application, and of major impact and significance to the state and federal management of marine and terrestrial vertebrate. Short and long-range planning, and administrative and management responsibilities are true of this job class; extensive collaboration and partnering

with the scientific community, state agency professionals and management, and national fact-finding or regulatory bodies are also the norm. The Wildlife Physiologist III job class is a supervisory job class, with positions exercising full supervisory authority.

In summary, there are adequate differences in the variety and complexity of the work; recommendations, decision-making and commitments, and other classification factors to warrant three levels.

Internal Alignment:

The salary range of a job class is determined based on internal consistency within the state's pay plan, in accordance with merit principles, with the goals of providing fair and reasonable compensation for services rendered and maintaining "like pay for like work." In evaluating internal consistency, the difficulty, responsibility, knowledge, skills and other characteristics of a job are compared with job classes of a similar nature, kind and level in the same occupational group and job family or related job families.

The appropriate occupational group and job family are the Biological Sciences Group, and Fish and Wildlife Research and Development Family, respectively. The 6100 Family includes classes of positions that advise on, administer, supervise or perform professional and technical biological work in the research, development, conservation, and management of aquatic and wildlife resources.

The journey professional Wildlife Physiologist I job class is equivalent to the journey professional Fisheries Geneticist I, R17. The latter is a highly specialized discipline, very similar to the former, and requires at least a master's degree in biology with an emphasis in genetics, again very similar to the Wildlife Physiologist I. The Wildlife Physiologist I requires at least a master's degree in biology but with an emphasis in physiology or nutritional biochemistry.

The duties of both job classes are directed toward the development and application of genetic or physiology research for fish or wildlife research and management operations. Incumbents in positions of both job classes perform the full range of assignments independently but under the direction of a higher level Fisheries Geneticist or Wildlife Physiologist, using standard methods and techniques of the specialized field but also conducting experimental investigations. Typically, positions in both job classes are responsible for designing sampling plans; conducting or overseeing the field collection of data and tissues; and analyzing and interpreting findings. All of these duties are part of the process of conducting and overseeing research investigations, which are segments of a group of projects or subprojects.

The advanced professional Wildlife Physiologist II is equivalent to the advanced professional Fisheries Geneticist II, R19. The latter requires a very similar educational background to the Wildlife Physiologist II, but in a different discipline.

The duties of both job classes consist of unusual or exceptional matters requiring new or major modifications to research approaches, methods and techniques. Overall, the research work is performed to determine the nature, magnitude, and interrelationships of phenomena and processes; create or develop means of investigating such phenomena or processes; and develop the principles, criteria, methods and a body of data of applicability for use by others. Positions in

both job classes function with a high level of independence in designing, implementing, conducting, supervising or leading major research projects, which are incorporated into fish and wildlife research and management programs.

The supervisory/managerial/senior expert Wildlife Physiologist III is equivalent to the supervisory/expert Fisheries Geneticist III, R21. The latter, in addition to requiring a highly specialized educational and experience background in one discipline similarly to the Wildlife Physiologist III, supervises and manages the operation of the statewide Fisheries Genetics Laboratory, field and laboratory collections of genetics data, related services and programs. Also, the sole Fisheries Geneticist III position provides leadership in genetic research and directs genetics research projects, all contributing to fish research and management programs statewide.

Other related job classes (R21) requiring highly specialized backgrounds in providing expertise in one discipline and having similar job concepts include Wildlife Veterinarian, Biometrician IV and Fish Pathologist III.

The range assignments of the journey professional Wildlife Physiologist I (R17), advanced professional Wildlife Physiologist II (R19) and supervisory/managerial Wildlife Physiologist III (R21) job classes are one range higher than those assigned to the journey professional Wildlife Biologist II (R16), advanced professional Wildlife Biologist III (R18) and regional supervisory/staff advisor/technical consultant Wildlife Biologist IV (R20).

The Wildlife Biologist series require a bachelor's degree in biology, branch of biology, and a number of other majors, whereas the Wildlife Physiologist series requires at least a master's degree in biology with an emphasis in physiology or nutritional biochemistry or comparable graduate level course work.

In addition, the duties and responsibilities of the Wildlife Biologist series are more generalized and much less research oriented, in that major modifications or development of new research approaches, methods, criteria, etc. to find answers to phenomena and processes are not the norm. Wildlife Physiologist positions are highly specialized, require special training, and involve applied scientific investigations and research.

Last, the Wildlife Scientist I and Fisheries Scientist I job classes, which require expertise in several disciplines rather than one discipline true of the Wildlife Physiologist III, have range assignments of R22, which is one range higher than that of the Wildlife Physiologist III.

In summary, internal alignment with previously mentioned job classes, which are assigned ranges below and above the series in question, supports the range assignments of R17, R19, and R21 to the Wildlife Physiologist I/II/III series.

Conclusion:

Wildlife Physiologist I is established at salary Range 17. Wildlife Physiologist II is established at salary Range 19. Wildlife Physiologist III is established at salary Range 21.

Allocations of individual positions against the new job class specifications are discussed in a separate memo.

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