

**1998 PEER Survey of California
Department of Fish & Game Employees**

In November, 1998, **Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility** (PEER) surveyed all 1600 California DFG employees about the state of environmental affairs within the agency.

[Response Rate = 30%]

BUDGET RESOURCES

1. DFG has sufficient funding to adequately fulfill its mission regarding game species.

2% Strongly agree 9% Agree 9% No opinion 45% Disagree 35% Strongly disagree

2. DFG has sufficient funding to adequately fulfill its mission regarding non-game species.

2% Strongly agree 6% Agree 8% No opinion 30% Disagree 54% Strongly disagree

3. Director Schafer's "No Hollow Forces" initiative has helped me to do my job better.

0% Strongly agree 9% Agree 30% No opinion 27% Disagree 34% Strongly disagree

4. DFG hatcheries, wildlife management areas and ecological reserves are adequately staffed and funded.

1% Strongly agree 7% Agree 19% No opinion 36% Disagree 37% Strongly disagree

5. DFG hatcheries, wildlife management areas and ecological reserves are in better condition today than five years ago.

1% Strongly agree 10% Agree 30% No opinion 37% Disagree 22% Strongly disagree

6. The recent agency reorganization has improved DFG's ability to protect natural resources.

0% Strongly agree 10% Agree 26% No opinion 30% Disagree 34% Strongly disagree

SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

7. DFG uses the best scientific data to make permitting, policy and enforcement decisions.

1% Strongly agree 16% Agree 17% No opinion 44% Disagree 22% Strongly disagree

8. Under the current administration, I was encouraged to confer and share information with outside experts (e.g., universities and other public agencies) during the course of my work.

4% Strongly agree 28% Agree 31% No opinion 26% Disagree 11% Strongly disagree

9. *The Department directorate has generally followed the recommendations of biological, enforcement or administrative staff in making decisions.*

0% Strongly agree 17% Agree 22% No opinion 39% Disagree 22% Strongly disagree

10. *Scientific evaluations at DFG are influenced by political considerations.*

33% Strongly agree 48% Agree 12% No opinion 6% Disagree 1% Strongly disagree

ENFORCEMENT

11. *I fear being rebuked for advocating aggressive environmental enforcement.*

34% Yes 37% No 29% No Opinion

12. *In the past two years I have been directed to ignore an environmental law, regulation or violation.*

20% Yes 55% No 25% No Opinion

13. *Some permit applicants/project sponsors receive preferential treatment after first contacting the Resources Agency or the Governor's Office.*

22% Strongly agree 33% Agree 42% No opinion 2% Disagree 1% Strongly disagree

14. *[For law enforcement employees only] In the past two years, DFG management has inappropriately intervened in a criminal investigation.*

35% Yes 40% No 25% No Opinion

WORK ENVIRONMENT

15. *Morale in DFG is good.*

2% Strongly agree 7% Agree 2% No opinion 38% Disagree 51% Strongly disagree

16. *The current DFG directorate has ensured that employees receive timely information on issues that affect their work.*

2% Strongly agree 24% Agree 11% No opinion 34% Disagree 29% Strongly disagree

17. *The lines of communication have been open between employees and DFG management.*

1% Strongly agree 22% Agree 10% No opinion 40% Disagree 27% Strongly disagree

Breakdown of Respondents:

A) 49% Scientific 26% Law enforcement 11% Administrative

9% Hatchery/Wildlife Area Mgmt. 5% Office Support

B) 61% Rank & File 35% Supervisor 4% Management

"DFG EMPLOYEES SPEAK OUT!"

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING DFG IS...

Stopping Retaliation

"The price for advocating aggressive environmental enforcement is much more insidious than being directly rebuked. Those who get a reputation for uncompromising candor find themselves up against a glass ceiling. Despite the respect of their peers, their knowledge, skills, and the depth and breadth of their experience, they are passed over for promotions or are shuffled into dead end jobs."

Providing Leadership

"The appointees the Wilson administration named to run the California Dept. of Fish and Game (CDFG) are all pro-business types, with little or no biology background. From the results of their management, I can also say they lack basic management and leadership skills. These people have instituted changes in our Department, including the recent reorganization, which could set back environmental protection efforts for many years. Furthermore, they have made these changes in a dictatorial style, with little or no communication beforehand, thus sinking the staff's morale to new lows."

"To recover from the attempted murder of the Department by Pete Wilson."

"Wilson's legacy: the best Governor money could buy!"

"Reversal of legacy of Wilson's anti-environment policies."

Improving Management

"Putting and keeping management in the hands of biologists and out of the political arena."

"Top heavy organizational structure. Too many people in upper management and too few people in the field."

"Too many chiefs and not enough indians."

"Decreasing management staff. In wildlife protection there are 300 sworn positions. One hundred are supervisors and management. One chief per two indians is not sufficient!"

"The 'old guard' of DFG, is only interested and educated in hunting and fishing."

"Unimaginative, old-fashioned, 'trailing-edge', uninspiring, innovation-challenged, policy and paperwork-happy, 'top-heavy' mid and upper-level management."

"DFG started 80 years ago providing help to hunters and fishermen. Now DFG is so top heavy with beauracrats and political appointments that the people pay all costs are all but ignored. Tear down the whole department and start over with DFG people not politics!"

"Our leadership pays too much attention to budget controllers, the Governor's office and business interests."

"Getting rid of a multitude of Deputy Directors and overall removal of top staff who have been politically appointed. Their large salaries suck the life blood out of the Department which renders our efforts ineffective."

"Lack of competent upper management."

Putting Science Before Politics

"Restoring scientific and professional credibility."

"To make correct environmental decisions based on the biological sciences and not on the opinions of stakeholders who simply want to further their own economic interests. Good, down-to-earth, educational opportunities should be provided for those stakeholders who wish to understand the scientific basis for any particular environmental decision."

"Getting politics out of how we regulate."

"Remove politics from the directorate."

"Managing state resources based on sound science and not on politics."

"DFG management is too political and unscientific; therefore DFG is too political and unscientific."

"To make decisions that are best for the environment, instead of what's best for the political agenda."

"Overcoming 15 years of political interference in the DFG's legislative mandates and public trust responsibilities."

"Constant political pressure to accommodate development/strike deals, lack of institutional support to enforce endangered species violations (in DFG, in local district attorney's office, Ag's office)."

"The realization that public trust responsibilities should override recreation and commodity interests, (i.e. that the state's biota are our primary constituents -- not special interest groups)."

"De-politicizing the DFG decision-making process."

"Devoid itself of political influences -- Governor's office specifically."

"The insinuation of business and commercial interests in resource management issues."

"Stopping the decline of rare, threatened and endangered species in the face of the political power of development interests."

Protecting the Environment

"Making resource protection our highest priority."

"We need stronger habitat protection laws and the guts to stand up to the developers!"

"Facing reality and accepting the fact that game species in California have been mismanaged and are in the decline and taking the bull by the horns and changing game management styles to better protect the species."

"With the habitat/wildlife diversity of this state, we should be a leader in wildlife conservation, protection and enhancement. But historically, CDFG has been a follower -- underfunded, unenlightened, and unenthusiastic. As often stated we are merely managing the decline of wildlife in California."

Increasing Resources

"Fulfilling its mission with inadequate funding."

"To have funding necessary to fulfill our mandates and increase our work force, both have been greatly reduced over the last eight years."

"Adequate staffing and funding to deal with excessive workload."

"It is impossible for DFG to protect, enhance and appropriate fish and wildlife today because of political directives and inadequate staffing and budgets."

"Budget -- small . Mission -- big."

"Overcoming budget deficits year after year. If we have the staff and budget, we can do the work."

"Adequate funding, and then allocation of that funding to benefit the resources of interest to the public (i.e. not only game fish and wildlife)."

"Getting the funding needed for the dept. To meet its mission of preserving and protecting land."

"Projects are going un-done because of lack of funding."

"Field work continues to shrink and the administration part of the Department continues to grow. Our biologists sit behind desks in an office because funds and personnel (seasonal help) are not available to do the field work. The Department is upside down -- the administration is more important than the resource and the work in the field."

"Put your money and manpower where the work is being done -- in the field, not in some office in Sacramento or at all the 'new' headquarters!"

THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION MUST MAKE IS...

Leadership

"Although politics will always be of importance, DFG leaders should be scientists or at minimum, have some environmental/habitat/wildlife background and knowledge. This could be a dilemma, with our leaders being politically-appointed; however, DFG needs to take a stronger stance on issues concerning resources, without the fear our 'leaders' must have of being eliminated."

"Choose a department employee to be the next Director, not a political crony!"

"Appoint director who cares and knows about Fish and Wildlife issues, not a political hack."

"Only the director and few top slots should be political appointees."

"New leadership from the top down is vital -- many of our mid-level managers are useless in making management decisions and supporting their employees."

Management

"Republican Wilson appointees (i.e. The Commission et. al.) need to change. More biologists, less appointee yahoos."

"Cleaning house of Wilson appointees."

"Some of the 'old guard' clearly need to retire. I hope it goes without saying that the entire upper management should be removed."

"Hire competent managers! Not political hacks with no relevant experience, knowledge or education. The best work in my office, at least, is done by staff who have taken ownership of an issue and forced management to take the issue seriously. We get virtually no useful direction from management. The tail wags the dog, if there's any sign of life at all."

"Replace old guard with progressive natural resource managers."

"Eliminate the political cronyism that has been pervasive particularly during the Wilson years. There are many well qualified professional managers available that do not place political dogma above resource management and protection."

"Let the experts run the Department - get politics out of the DFG."

"Stop creating new management positions and narrowly-defined specialist positions; put more resources into the lowest levels (wardens, unit biologists, DFG lands)."

"Install credible managers with resource backgrounds into the upper echelon management positions. Additionally, the change of many positions to CEA classification is an overt effort by Governor Wilson to 'control' what science is performed. This should be averted to maintain credibility."

"Replace upper management and executive with persons of high integrity and solid backgrounds in fish and wildlife and environmental management."

"Reduce management while increasing rank and file. Hire the right people, then let them do their job."

"Downsize the upside-down management pyramid. Send the empire-builders packing. Much of the funding which used to be available for Fish and Wildlife management has been usurped downtown."

"Progress towards the depoliticization and reduction of the department's management. The current administration has filled upper management with CEA positions replacing those once protected by civil service status. We suffer from far too many expensive chiefs and too few underpaid indians."

"Reduce the administrative log jam caused by an overly regulated system full of too many bean counters. Good people are leaving the Department (and state service) because they are not supported by the Department (or state process)."

Special Interests

"The 'Big Business' interests have no business heading a resources agency."

"Let science (not politics) take lead in decision making."

"To base our resource decisions on science."

"Management practices are based on politics not science."

"To reduce the intrusion of politics into resource management."

"Make decisions for the environment, not the pocketbooks of developers and big companies."

"Minimize the politics in decision making regarding natural resource protection."

"Allowing employees to make decisions based on biological information rather than political views."

"Abolish DFG and replace it with an organization NOT controlled by Ducks Unlimited and the California Waterfowl Association."

"Move away from traditional 'hook and bullet' priorities and programs."

"Expansion of our clientele to include the non hunting/fishing public."

"Appoint Fish and Game Commissioners who are well qualified to make important resource decisions. The Fish and Game Commission is currently made up of politically appointed farmers and businessmen. This practice must end. These are the people who determine whether or not to list a species under the California Endangered Species Act, yet they are often philosophically opposed to endangered species listings and completely unable to comprehend the science behind the proposed listing. They often ignore the Department's recommendations on endangered species issues. They have been sued repeatedly over their capricious decisions and their decisions have been regularly overturned by the courts."

"Go back to making decisions for the resources (Fish and Wildlife) and get away from the political influences. DFG should be working towards goals of increased fish wildlife species and habitats and standing firm instead of changing face with each new governor."

Environmental Protection

"Environmental problems a high priority and political support for solutions -- unlike the current administration which is only pro-growth/pro-business."

"Take our responsibility as resource protectors and conservationists seriously and speak and act accordingly."

"Reinstating the Endangered Species Act which has been disassembled by the Wilson Administration. Acquire as much natural habitat as possible through the partnerships or other means. Stop the siltation of streams. Do not accept token stream corridors. Permanently secure the Headwaters forest from any further cutting of trees."

"Take a more aggressive stand on protecting habitat for wildlife and fisheries. This may include forcing water diverters (private and public) to fully screen their water diversions to prevent as much incidental take of fish species/numbers as possible. I also believe that directors should not be appointed by the Governor but instead elected by the public."

"Taking a stand against pollution that is carried forth into actions."

"Poor wildlife management practices have led to the decline of wildlife."

Law Enforcement

"Law enforcement must be given straight-line authority in order for it to be effective."

"Allowing enforcement to do their jobs as peace officers, rather than tying their hands and holding retribution over their heads for aggressive enforcement of 'all' laws of the state of California."

"Law enforcement needs to be a division on its own with a deputy director level position chief."

"Straight-line supervision for Law Enforcement Division. Provide adequate salary increases for WPD officers - in line with CHP and Corrections. Officer morale is at an all time low."

"Hire more wardens to catch wildlife law breakers."

"Straight line supervision for law enforcement we cannot be supervised by Regional Managers at a Region Level who's only goal in life is to protect his appointed job by DFG/Sacramento and the Governor."

"Make enforcement direct line. This will make the political types follow the law and will remove much of the politics - it is working with the U.S. Forest Service and is breaking the 'Good Old Boy' administration."

Reorganization

"Halt the reorganization and rethink its premises. The DFG could certainly use some reorganizing, but not along the current lines of thinking. Include more emphasis on endangered species, endangered habitats (natural communities), habitat protection, and the enforcement of environmental laws. There should be less emphasis on recreational hunting and fishing, since these activities are on the decline in California. Naturally, this goes against the grain of the Department's traditional thought patterns and structure."

"Initiate a practical reorganization, not this version we're struggling with now."