



# Memorandum

To: Nicki Neal  
Director

Thru: Keith Murry *Keith*  
Class Studies Supervisor

From: Rob Weber *RW*  
Class Studies Analyst

Date: September 13, 2013

Subject: Fish Pathologist Job Class Study

## Introduction:

The Department of Fish & Game (DFG), Commercial Fisheries requested the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations (DOP&LR), Classification section review the current authorities and responsibilities assigned the Fish Pathologist (PCN 115089) and update the class specifications and salary alignment to reflect these changes. This study includes one position.

## Study Contacts:

The study contacts include: Lisa Myers (Administrative Officer I), Stacie Bentley (Human Resource Consultant IV), and Ted Meyers (Fisheries Scientist I).

## History of Job Classes:

The Fish Pathologist job class was initially established on June 1, 1973 as a two level series to implement and manage the fish disease investigation and control program, Division of Fisheries Rehabilitation, Enhancement, and Development (FRED). This series included a journey level (Fish Pathologist I) and a single position, Program Chief (Fish Pathologist II).

The Fish Pathologist III was made effective June 1, 1974. This level was responsible for the statewide fish pathology program and included responsibility and authority for program planning and control of State, private, and commercial propagation activities. As result of the overlap in authority and responsibility between the Fish Pathologist II and Fish Pathologist III, the Fish Pathologist II was rescinded, leaving a two level series.

In July 1981, the series was expanded from two to three levels: Fish Pathologist I (6120) – journey level; Fish Pathologist II (6121) – senior/work review level; and Fish Pathologist III (6122) – principal State fish pathologist, a single position.

The Fish Pathologist job class series has waxed and waned since its initial inception in June of 1973 and historically has been a series where the journey level was rarely used and typically vacant of filled positions. In May of 2013, 6120 and 6122 were abolished because there were no positions allocated to either the journey level or the principal State fish pathologist. As the 6121 was the sole remaining class, it was renamed Fish Pathologist.

**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 rate of basic 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 work of the fish pathologist is professional, analytical, and evaluative in examining, diagnosing, and recommending treatment for diseases that affect finfish and shellfish. This includes recommending medications and procedures for correcting pathological conditions. An incumbent assigned to this class exercises independence in making recommendations; is required to become a certified fish pathologist; and must possess extensive knowledge in diagnosing diseases, parasites, and toxins as a misdiagnosed pathology and recommendation has the potential to decimate the entire stock of a finfish and shellfish hatchery.

A new factor required of this class that is not present in the current specifications includes managing the daily operations of the Anchorage fish pathology laboratory, supervising laboratory staff, and managing and reporting on the laboratory budget and approving all purchases up to five thousand dollars. An incumbent working in this class hires and supervises technical and professional level staff, provides training, and assigns and reviews their work. An incumbent working in this class reports to the Fish Pathology section's program manager (Fishery Scientist I).

As the Fish Pathologist is a single position, this analyst examined job classes from PH01: Fish and Wildlife family to first determine if the work of the study position could be grouped with existing classes. The classes include: Fishery Biologist IV; Biometrician II & III; and Fisheries Geneticist II & III. The comparisons made with these classes demonstrates that the work assigned the study position is one that requires advanced study in the examination and diagnosis of the diseases that affect finfish and shellfish populations within Alaskan waters. This work is particularly targeted towards the ongoing oversight and regulation of Alaska's fish hatcheries. Other requirements of the study class include managing the Anchorage fish pathology laboratory and supervising subordinate laboratory staff. The nature of the assignments made to the study position break the tests of similarities for grouping with the existing classes. The results of the analysis support updating the current Fish Pathologist job class to a single position job class with management responsibility for the Anchorage fish pathology laboratory and examining the salary range for appropriate alignment within the PH01 family of classes.

**Class Title:**

A class title should be the best descriptive title for the work. It is intended to concisely and accurately convey the kind and level of work performed and should be brief, easily recognized,

gender neutral, and understood by potential applicants. Fish Pathologist is the appropriate title for this body of work and is an industry standard for positions that examine, diagnose, and recommend treatment for pathologies of finfish and shellfish.

**Minimum Qualifications:**

The minimum qualifications established for a job class must relate to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the work and must not create an artificial barrier to employment of individuals in protected classes. Required training should be limited to the basic formal training that customarily prepares individuals for work in the field. Experience requirements are intended to ensure new employees can successfully perform the work after a period of orientation or familiarization. Required experience should be directly related to the actual duties of positions in the class and should not be equivalent to the work to be performed.

The minimum qualifications for the Fish Pathologist job class have been designed to facilitate the recruitment of candidates with an extensive formal education in the biological sciences and highly developed knowledge and experience in the arena of fish pathology and examination processes. A special note was added to care for the required certification as either a fish pathologist or fish health specialist.

**Class Code:**

A Class Code is assigned based on the placement of the job class in the classification schematic of Occupational Groups and Job Families. Occupational Groups are made up of related Job Families and encompass relatively broad occupations, professions, or activities. Job Families are groups of job classes and class series that are related as to the nature of the work performed and typically have similar initial preparation for employment and career progression.

The work of the Fish Pathologist job class is such that it advises on, supervises, and performs professional and technical pathological work in the research and conservation of aquatic resources; as such the Fish Pathologist is appropriately aggregated among the classes in PH01: Fish and Wildlife job family.

**Fair Labor Standards Act:**

The position in this study is covered by the minimum wage and maximum hour provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as Amended (FLSA).

An employee working in this class requires advanced specialized education in microbiology or a related scientific field and meets Subpart D – Professional Employees exemption. An employee working in this class also meets Subpart B – Executive Employees exemption as they are assigned the authority and responsibility for supervising two full time subordinate laboratory staff and managing the ongoing operations of the Anchorage fish pathology laboratory.

**Internal Alignment – method and analysis:**

The salary range of a job class is determined based on internal consistency within the State's pay plans, in accordance with merit principles, with the goal of providing fair and reasonable compensation for services rendered and maintaining the principle of like pay for like work (AS 39.25.010(b)(2)).

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. Comparisons with classes in other job families may be made when similarities are sufficient to provide valid relationships, the comparisons within the occupational group are few, and/or when the study class displays characteristics that justify comparisons with another job family. The greater the similarity with the study class, the more weight should be given to the comparable class. Comparisons within the job family are typically given greater weight than comparisons to classes located in other job families.

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the job classes selected for alignment comparison.

Range	Job Class (Family Code)	Range Characteristics
19	Biometrician II (PH0142)	The work characteristic of this range requires a high level of independence in designing, planning and conducting major research projects of fish, shellfish, and wildlife populations of Alaska the results of which is documented in official reports and/or scientific journals.
	Fisheries Geneticists II (PH0142)	The classes of this range apply program guidelines and scientific information and knowledge in designing research projects and when working and consulting with regional biologists and other professionals in project design and when providing technical advice on State and international projects.
20	Fishery Biologist IV (PH0143)	The classes of this range display a variety of responsibilities which include overseeing and controlling fisheries management activities or research programs on a regional or statewide level; conducting project research and providing technical expertise for a division; providing guidance on controversial, interagency, and external issues; and reviewing policy, with significant influence on fisheries and biometric management or research.  Important to this level is overseeing the development and implementation of stock assessments, ensuring the scientific integrity of a management research project, and providing appropriate solutions to complex research questions and/or policy driven fishery issues.
	Biometrician III (PH0143)	The work is typically performed on a highly independent level using available program guidelines, scientific knowledge and other controlling policies and procedures for performing the work. Initiative and originality is required to identify policy issues and recommending appropriate solutions.  Also characteristic to this range is the authority to coordinate with inter-regional teams, communicate agency policies and position, and assign research projects to subordinate staff. While supervision is present it is not class controlling.

21	Fisheries Geneticists III (PH0163)	<p>The work characteristic of this range requires a high level of independence and expertise in designing, planning, and conducting major or regional research projects of finfish, shellfish, and wildlife populations of Alaska; the results of which are documented in official reports and/or scientific journals for review by a professionally diverse audience. Other significant characteristics regarding the nature and variety work assigned to this level supervising fish and shellfish genetic research and related laboratory services direct genetics research projects.</p> <p>The class of this range works independently with support and guidance from higher level managers if necessary and typically uses broad guidelines such as statutes and regulations to conduct work.</p>
Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the study class.		
Fish Pathologist (PH0157)	<p>This is a single position job class with supervisory responsible for professional and technical laboratory staff. This class is responsible for overseeing the work conducted at the Anchorage fish pathology laboratory, conducting fish pathology investigations, and inspecting regional fish hatcheries. This class references program policies, procedures, guidelines, and scientific manuals while working independently and with guidance from the program's manager in performing and overseeing fish pathology work completed by subordinate staff.</p> <p>This class consults with fish hatcheries personnel regarding hatchery practices and care; recommends proper FDA approved therapeutic chemical and drug treatments for aquaculture; and authorizes purchases for laboratory materials and equipment as needed and necessary. This class also recommends changes in laboratory procedures to reduce safety and health hazards and ensures the quality of laboratory work meets approved standards.</p>	

Analysis:

At range 19 the authorities and responsibilities for regional level projects are the prominent characteristics. This includes projects that have a significant or major scope in terms of complexity, species variety, sampling development, logistics, staffing and budget, and other factors associated with the assessment and study of wildlife and finfish and shellfish species. In comparing prominent characteristics, the Fish Pathologist job class is distinguished by its responsibility as an advanced level scientific class with supervisory and management responsibilities for the Anchorage fish pathology laboratory and staff. The level and scope of authorities and responsibilities on the part of the Fish Pathologist job class indicate alignment to range 19 is not appropriate.

At range 20 supervising subordinate program staff; reviewing and researching program policy to make or recommend effective changes; providing technical expertise and consultation in a specific fishery; and managing a program on a regional level are all authorities and responsibilities characteristic of this range. These characteristics have a direct correlation and effect on the other classification factors applied in this analysis, particularly consequence of error whereby the decisions made by a responsible incumbent have a significant ripple effect on the State's resources. When weighing these comparable factors with those distinguishing the Fish Pathologist, the level of assignments, the supervisory and management, and authority and responsibility required to apply judgment when examining and diagnosing the diseases of fishery stocks and prescribing methods for treatment as similarly weighted. The level and scope of authorities, responsibilities, and consequence of error on the part of the Fish Pathologist job class indicate alignment to range 20 is appropriate.

At range 21 supervising multiple levels of professional specialized and technical positions is a class controlling factor. The responsible employee working at this range will direct research projects, supervise and manage a work unit. The consequence of error associated with these factors coupled with the high level of specialized expertise indicates that aligning the Fish Pathologist job class to range 21 is not appropriate.

**Conclusions:**

The Fish Pathologist job class is being updated to a single position job class with management responsibility for a regional fish pathology laboratory and supervising laboratory staff. The job class title, class code, and AKPAY code have not been changed. The incumbent working in this class meets both Subpart B – Executive employees and Subpart D – Professional employees.

Job Class	Class Code	AKPAY Code	Salary Range	FLSA
Fish Pathologist	PH0157	P6121	20	Y

The effective date for these changes is September 16, 2013. Correspondence on the allocation of the study position is being distributed through the OPD system.

Attachments:

Final class specifications  
Allocation Spreadsheet

Cc:

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