



October 2024 Meeting Minutes

October 23, 2024, 1:00-3:00 pm

Attendance: Dan Engelhart, Jed Becher, Megan Benage, Monica Weber, Morgan Sussman, Whitney DeLong, Matt Olinger, Adam Browning, Michelle Apman, Denise Legato, Barb Naramore

1. Meeting overview (5 minutes)

- Review agenda and time allotments
 - 2 action items: schedule FOR meeting (scheduled), schedule Fisheries meeting (not yet scheduled)
 - Added two items from management per email request from Adam

Old Business

2. Vacation accrual—Thank you! (Megan B.)

- **How many requests did HR receive?** By deadline (10/4), 583 total requests (67 of these are MAPE-represented DNR staff). This number counts all vacation accrual adjustments, not just 5-year cap. 10 additional requests were submitted after deadline. 144 done by employment services so far, 106 have been moved to the next step (transactions).
- **How are they going through requests?** Employment services team does initial review (making sure work is related), then requests are passed on to transactions team, then onto payroll team for retroactivity and adjustment to balances. Matt only knows of a couple that have been denied (MNIT employees, not DNR, therefore not eligible). Matt says things are moving pretty smoothly. Each request takes about 15 minutes for initial review.
- **How will staff be notified?** Employment services team will notify staff when their request has been moved to next stage of review (Notifying as they go, not all at once at the end of

the process). This makes the process more transparent and hopefully will cut down on the number of “nudge” emails HR gets (which will ultimately slow down the process). Expect an email from HR (Chelsie Fisher or Becky Keller) regarding individual requests.

- **Ballpark idea of timeline?** Hard to give an exact timeline, but things are moving. Keep in mind there is a select group within Employee Services that is working on requests, and they received a lot of requests, so it will take some time.
- **Additional notes:**
 - There is no cutoff date for submitting requests, but requests submitted after the 10/4 deadline will not receive retroactive vacation accrual credit. If submitted after 10/4, the vacation accrual date is the date the staff person sends an email to HR with the request form attached.
 - If a staff person is already at the maximum vacation accrual rate, there is no advantage to submitting a request.

THANK YOU! This is a huge win that affects a lot of people for a lot of reasons. This means a lot for retention and competitive hiring, really gives DNR a leg up, and attracts high-quality candidates. We appreciate the response and partnership!

3. Updates from Management (CMO/HR)

- **See above re: vacation accrual credit process**
- **Developed agency specific [leadership development program](#).**
 - 2 tracks:
 - Excel Leadership Track: leadership development for supervisors. Application period open until November 4, 2024, for training January – May 2025
 - Grow Leadership Track: leadership development for aspiring leaders (non-supervisors). Application period will be open from February 3- March 3, 2025, for training May – September 2025
 - This training has been on HR’s wish list for a long time, and they are excited about it.
 - The supervisor or someone else in the chain of command does need to indicate support for this staff member’s involvement in the program, similar to the concept for ELI and SLI in that the time away from work is feasible.
 - In addition, this support is also to recognize there will be continued effort to apply lessons learned and discussions regarding any homework, etc. to foster what is learned.

- The program is designed to enhance current leaders and provide an understanding of leadership and what that means in an organizational sense and in a DNR-specific sense. This program is not meant to be remedial or to address individual situations.
- **Work EVO:**
 - Initiated search for leased space for Central Office operations. CO lease expires end of June 2026. The RFP was published this week. Per RFP process, there are limits to what/when information can be shared. Work EVO has informed the development of the RFP and acknowledges that the way we work has changed.
 - Work continues on phase 1 facilities analysis. In the coming weeks, we will have more information to share with folks in terms of decisions about the anticipated future of various phase 1 facilities.
 - Is there a list of Phase 1 facilities somewhere? CO, 4 Regional HQ, 17 co-located offices
 - All DNR emails coming out soon reminding folks of the enterprise space standards. 3-days per week in the office is required to hold an assigned space. If you don't meet this, staff should begin the process of moving their items out and preparing to use hotel workspaces when they are in the workplace.
 - Megan asked about allotments for field and equipment needs. If this is something that is planned for as part of this process. The short answer from Barb Naramore: Yes.
 - Whitney asked about consolidated workspaces and if there is a consideration for pulling staff together to have more camaraderie. She used the example that if she were to go to the office, there would be no point because no one else is there, so it's 6 in 1 half dozen in the other to just work from home. Barb mentioned that what one employee wants will be different from what another employee wants and that they don't want to have unused space because it costs money, but they do want to maintain flexibility for future ways that people prefer to work.
 - Monica asked about digital storage and records retention, where a grants person needs to retain physical copies of documents.
 - Barb mentioned that the RFP team talked with divisions about their current use of storage and what the future may look like.

4. Fisheries Series Reclassification

- Key Question: When will the meeting between MAPE, HR, and select Fisheries managers be held?

- After the January Meeting, MAPE asked for a separate meeting with HR about interim solutions for Fisheries staff. Adam sent a note on 2/14 that HR was working on putting something together. A meeting was initially scheduled for May 6, 2024, but then subsequently canceled due to a miscommunication about the meeting's purpose.
- After the July meet and confer, HR agreed to schedule a meeting and MAPE agreed to limit the scope of attendees. **A meeting was set for December 9th, 2024.**
- The key MAPE representatives who will attend are Megan Benage., Jed Becher, Bill McKibbin, Nate Beckman, and Dan Englehart.
- **Issues with NR-spec class and inequity across all Divisions**
- **Where do reclassifications fall within the workload priority list, recognizing the current lack of staff?**

Key Issues:

- Addressing miscommunication around Fisheries reclassification
- Interim pathways to move forward
- Outdated job class specifications (especially the Fisheries Spec Senior one)
- Request for updated org chart for each Section

Key Questions with the most emphasis on number 1:

1. What are the potential “interim pathways” to address classification issues within Fisheries? Let's explore the possibilities for positive change.
 - a. Are there any processes/steps that would facilitate this?
2. How can we move forward with updating job class specifications so that they're accurate and reflect the work the assistant area fisheries supervisors do? Whose responsibility is this to complete?
3. Why does it seem like Fisheries/Wildlife position classifications are not “equal?” Why are Fisheries staff not afforded the same promotional opportunities as Wildlife counterparts? There are 6L, 8L, and 11L referred to as assistant managers in wildlife, and in fisheries, there are only 8Ls referred to as assistant supervisors, but no 11Ls on the wildlife side. Recently, some 6Ls and 8Ls were posted on the wildlife side. The 6Ls commonly move up to 8Ls within 2 years. Nothing similar is happening on the fisheries side.
4. Why are wildlife assistants in MAPE referred to as assistant managers and fisheries assistants referred to as assistant supervisors when these staff do not have manager or supervisor responsibility except for filling in when the supervisor is not available?
5. Why does Wildlife have up to 3 assistant managers (sometimes multiple 11Ls) in one office where on the fisheries side, there will only be one assistant supervisor (always an 8L), and the rest are all specialists (6L) or technicians (AFSCME)?

6. Early on in this discussion, the argument was that only 11L Assistant Wildlife Managers existed where there was remote supervision (that is what staff were told). Now, we are seeing 11L postings where there is an area supervisor in the office.

5. Naturalist Safety concerns

1. Naturalists are required to do programming in remote areas. How can we provide better support, equipment, and training to help naturalists navigate difficult situations?
2. Specific examples of naturalists dealing with difficult public interactions – How do we support staff? What kind of training can we implement?
 - Example of Naturalists who left because of safety concerns.
 - Denise: We need to have a broader conversation, so we understand what best practices/rules/what ifs are in place. Then we can understand what is missing from communication, job design, and protocols (i.e., making a plan depending on different work locations and situations)
 - Linda R: Naturalists do the same training as night security staff. The chain of command needs to be followed, but there is a concern about reprimand.
 - Denise: If someone feels unsafe, they have the authority to call law enforcement. No need to call the supervisor first. We need both proactive training and emergency protocol. Starting point: Get people together to address key concerns, then put protocols in place that can be used.
 - Have meetings separate from management. Usually, the park manager is the naturalist supervisor. However, regional naturalist provides guidance on programming.
 - This seems to have HR's attention. The plan is to do a gap analysis on safety planning and protocols. Matt O. and Adam B. will be working on this. Might help frame where we go from there.

6. Update on Communication Series study (Jed)

- Update on status and results: Denise plans to meet with division directors to discuss appeals that were submitted. Then HR will be communicating with individuals. Matt anticipates this will be wrapped up in a few weeks.

7. Wildfire—On-call Communication (Megan E.)

- TBD pending the outcome of the 10/21 meeting with HR

- Not discussed at this meeting.

8. Other/Future Business?

9. Feedback loop meeting to be scheduled with Adam Browning

- MAPE will reach out to Adam separately for dates
- Discussed a number of things about approaches to solutions. Can we have a truly neutral party mediate, like a Liaison? How can we find an in-between for a respectful workplace complaint vs. doing nothing? Solutions come from dialog. Having a meeting or a group about this where people could discuss the issues to decide what to do. This is a wide-ranging problem, and we need participation from both sides. Inventory what tools we already have access to. From there, figure out where the gaps are. HR seems to understand this in an important thing to understand.