

**Assessment Report
for
San Joaquin County Mosquito and Vector Control District
February 5, 2002**



Introduction

SJCMVCD Manager John Stroh contacted HR On Call to discuss ways to improve the overall atmosphere for staff at SJCMVCD. HR On Call submitted a proposal for an initial phase of information gathering and recommendations which was then approved by the Board of Trustees.

Between December 10 and December 20, 2001 HR On Call interviewed 22 of 28 staff members, as well as the Manager, the Assistant Manager, and Gary Langston, Union Representative, Local 790, SEIU. Various policies, position descriptions, agreements, and other written communications were also received and reviewed.

This report contains HR On Call's observations and recommendations. It was reviewed with Manager John Stroh on 1/7/02 and with Gary Langston on 2/5/02.

Observations

Virtually all staff are very satisfied with the work that they do and have a strong orientation towards serving the public. Those who work in the field especially appreciate the autonomy and responsibility they are given for their zones.

The majority of staff (80 – 85%) reported that they are generally pleased with working conditions and the performance of management.

A minority of staff (15 – 20%) reported their feeling of very low trust with management. This minority of staff perceive the Manager as being distant and aloof, making inconsistent interpretations of policies and agreements, and being non-responsive to simple requests.

At times the Manager is perceived as not following through on commitments, directions, and decisions, and sometimes giving the appearance of favoritism. This inconsistent follow-through can be frustrating for staff.

There is much confusion regarding the actions and decisions of the Board and the Manager. It is not clear to most staff when a decision is made by the Board and when it is made by the Manager.

There is not a clear understanding of the degree of empowerment of the Manager by the Board.



The Board does not generally have a large amount of time to devote to the many complex decisions that are placed before it.

Some staff desire a closer connection with the Board.

The Union desires a more "interest-based" relationship, and less of a "position-based" orientation, with management and the Board.

Recommendations

1. Clarify the degree of empowerment of the Manager by the Board, recognizing the limited amount of time the Board can devote to complex matters of policy. Communication should be limited to the degree of empowerment agreed upon.
2. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Manager and the Assistant Manager.
3. Management should be especially attentive to delivering promptly on any commitment or decision.
4. Management should strive to arrange more informal time with staff, apart from regularly held staff meetings, to enhance communication and trust.
5. Work together with the Union to move toward a more "interest-based" orientation in this important relationship in order to minimize polarizing "position-based" negotiating.