

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242

**Classification Appeal Decision
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code**

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Landscape Architect
GS-807-11

Organization: [activity]
Forest Service
Department of Agriculture
[geographic location]

OPM decision: Forester
GS-460-12

OPM decision number: C- 0460-12-01

Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

1/12/99
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Since this decision changes the classification of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision (5 CFR 511.702). The servicing personnel office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action.

Decision sent to:

[appellant's address]

Personnel Officer
Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
[servicing personnel office address]

Assistant Director, Human Resources
Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Introduction

On August 3, 1998, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [the appellant]. His position is currently classified as Landscape Architect, GS-807-11. He believes its classification should be to the GS-807 series at the GS-12 grade level and that the existing classification fails to consider the complexity of the position in terms of landscape architecture and recreation program management. He works in the Resources Program, Supervisor's Office, [activity], Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, duty station, [small city]. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

To help decide the appeal, an Oversight Division representative conducted a telephone audit of the appellant's position. The audit included interviews with the appellant and his immediate supervisor who is temporarily serving as the acting Forest Supervisor. In reaching our classification decision, we have reviewed the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description (PD) number 000346.

General issues

According to the appellant, landscape architects in three other Forest Service regions perform the same work as he does but are classified at a higher grade level, GS-12. We cannot compare the appellant's position to others as a basis for deciding his appeal, because comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112).

The appellant certified that his position description is correct. During the telephone audit, we determined that the description of major duties and responsibilities accurately reflects the appellant's assignments.

Position information

The [activity] is one of 12 - 13 national forests in Region [] of the Forest Service. It covers 1.9 million acres of mountainous terrain lined with trees and rangeland interspersed with trees. The [site], which is strategically the Forest's most important acreage, runs for 125 miles along the [geographic feature] ending near the Canadian border. Its largest land mass, the [site] , lies south and east of [city and state], and encompasses more than a million acres of grasslands and various smaller mountain ranges such as the [. . . mountains]. Most of the [activity] is recreational in use, although timber is harvested from its lands and cattle graze in some areas. Some 356,000 acres is rugged country that Congress has designated as wilderness lands.

The [activity] is divided into four districts, each headed by a district ranger who reports to the Forest Supervisor. Organizationally, there is a Forest Supervisor, a deputy, an engineering staff headed by a GS-810 civil engineer, and a variety of resource specialists, including the appellant, who provide technical and administrative guidance and direction to district staff. The appellant reports to the

deputy just as the other technical operations specialists do, e.g., geologist, archeologist, range conservationist, Planning Staff Officer. The appellant's position serves as the Forest's specialist for recreation, wilderness, trails, scenery resource management, recreation site and facility design, interpretation, and accessibility. The position also serves as the Interpretation Program Coordinator, with responsibility for identifying interpretive opportunities on the Forest, designing interpretive signage, and providing technical expertise to district staff.

Recreation Program Manager duties are the predominant part of the appealed position. The acting Forest Supervisor estimates that these duties and responsibilities, on average, take up almost 80 percent of the appellant's time and that they have steadily gained in importance within the last couple of years. As the Recreation Program Manager, the emphasis of this part of the appellant's position is on master planning for recreation; the operation and maintenance of recreation facilities and trails; development and maintenance of recreation databases; reviews of ongoing recreation programs; workload and budget analysis using Meaningful Measures techniques; customer satisfaction and social assessments to determine customer needs; recreation capital investment; and travel management.

- Master planning for the Forest's recreation resource is project-oriented. For example, from 1994 to 1997, the appellant was involved about 25 percent of the time in analyzing the potential impacts of oil and gas leasing on the recreation and scenery resources of the Forest. The appellant was required to develop unique methods for analyzing and mitigating possible impacts from oil and gas development. This nationally recognized and controversial project involved key scenic and recreation resources along the [site]. In June 1998, the appellant was selected to lead a team of recreation professionals entrusted with analyzing the management situation for each of the five National Forests in central and eastern [state] [the {named} Recreation Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) and making recommendations for changes to existing plans of the forests. There is little guidance on how to accomplish this analysis, since it has never been done before in Region [] or in most other regions. This project is expected to take as much as 30 percent of the position's time over the next two years. As the project leader, the appellant is responsible for leading the effort, coordinating with recreation staff officers in the [named] forests and other [named] teams doing parallel efforts for other resources (e.g., wildlife, vegetation, and social concerns), and writing the final document for the recreation resource. This effort involves master planning for eight million acres. Much of the appellant's work on this project involves coordinating with other Federal agencies, [two] National Parks, state offices of land management, fish, wildlife, and parks, and academia at the University of [state].
- The appellant coordinates with the engineering staff and the Forest's districts to develop and prioritize recreation capital investment projects and produces the portion of the Forest Capital Investment Program document that deals with recreation projects. This requires developing comparative data about needs versus costs using the agency's Meaningful Measures methodology.
- Travel management planning is a controversial area and largely a recreation responsibility. Travel management involves determining what limitations to place on motorized and non-motorized

vehicle access to trails and roads in the Forest. Travel plan revisions for the [forest area] are expected to begin in the year 2000. Travel planning for the entire Forest is expected to take from 1999 through 2002 to complete (the Forest has 1,500 - 2,000 miles of trails, 300 - 500 miles of wilderness trails, and 50 miles of river with 10 to 13 campsites along river banks). The appellant is responsible for interacting with public interest groups and other governmental agencies to ensure national resources are protected and preserved and that the public's views on transportation access and travel within the Forest are considered. The Forest's trails get tremendous use and many are of archeological interest because they are old Indian trails. The [named] AMS also includes travel management planning as an important element of its analyses.

Forest Landscape Architect duties have been a significant part of the appellant's position, but the acting Forest Supervisor does not expect this trend to continue. According to the supervisor, landscape architect duties will occupy about 20 percent of the appellant's time on average.

- The appellant has been involved in all stages of development and construction of the \$6 million [forest site] , the region's largest, most costly recreation facility. In 1996, 1997, and 1998, the appellant devoted 30 - 40 percent of his time to the [site] project. Involvement included designing a parking facility for the [site] and providing all landscape design services after the landscape contractor left the site prior to completion, e.g., irrigation system design, signage, walk and photopoint design, landscape planting design. Work during 1998 and 1999 focuses on finalizing a large living history area for the [site].
- From 1994 - 1997, the appellant was involved in work on the Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Impact Statement. Responsibilities included inventorying existing recreation and scenery resources, attending and speaking at public meetings, analyzing potential impacts of oil and gas leasing on the scenery resource, and determining the effects of various alternatives on the entire Forest's scenery resource. These activities took about 25 percent of the position's time.
- The appellant is responsible for an interpretive master plan for the east half of the [activity], an area consisting of more than 500,000 acres. This involves large scale development work along the 60 mile long [named] Scenic Byway such as designing numerous highway pullouts, managing timber, creating interpretive signage, and reconstructing four campgrounds. As the Forest's Interpretive Specialist, the appellant is responsible for reviewing all interpretive efforts for the Forest.
- Since mid-1997, the appellant has been part of a national-level committee working to develop a consistent approach (i.e., design image) for the Forest Service "built" (i.e., constructed) environment. The appellant's specific role on the committee is to help integrate regional architectural styles and sustainable landscape plans into the Forest Service image. The committee is responsible for revising the Forest Service handbook to set design standards for future administrative and recreation facilities within the agency. These responsibilities occupy about 10 - 15 percent of the position's time and are expected to last to the year 2000.

The Deputy Forest Supervisor sets broad overall objectives and, with input from the appellant, establishes project priorities. Work products are subject to peer review and coordination for technical accuracy before work is submitted to the supervisor for signature. Projects are not typically reviewed by the Region's landscape architect unless they exceed \$250,000.

Series determination

We find the appellant's position is a mixed series position because it involves work covered by more than one occupational series: GS-807, Landscape Architecture Series, and GS-460, Forestry Series. *The Classifier's Handbook* states that grade-controlling work determines the series for most positions. The *Handbook* also observes that, for a mixed series position, a number of factors may need to be considered in order to determine the proper series. These factors are the reason for the position's existence, the paramount knowledge required, the organizational function, and recruitment sources.

According to the acting Forest Supervisor, the primary purpose of the appellant's position is to perform the duties of the Forest's Recreation Program Manager, i.e., to carry out duties and responsibilities related to planning and managing the outdoor recreation forest resource. Over time, these duties have become the larger, more important part of the appealed position. The paramount knowledge required to perform the work is forestry, specifically the management of renewable resources such as recreation. The appealed position is organizationally located in the Supervisor's Office of the [activity], and it reports directly to the Deputy Forest Supervisor. Finally, the normal recruitment source is individuals with a degree in forestry or a related subject-matter field that includes at least 30 semester hours in any combination of biological, physical, or mathematical sciences or engineering, of which at least 24 semester hours of course work is in forestry, and a sufficient amount of professional experience gained in a forestry work situation.

Considering these factors, the GS-460, Forestry Series best represents the main purpose of the position and the paramount knowledge and experience required. The appropriate series for the appealed position is GS-460.

Title determination

The development of programs of intensive management of Federal lands has led to various degrees of specialization within the field of forestry. The variations in specialty fields make it impracticable to define all such variations as classification specializations. Therefore, the specializations established by the GS-460 standard are limited to major categories within the series that require significantly different knowledges and skills. According to the specializations and titles established in the classification standard, the appropriate title for the appealed position is Forester.

Grade determination

Because the appealed position is a mixed series position, we must determine its proper grade level by using the GS-460 and GS-807 classification standards to evaluate its regularly assigned duties and responsibilities. The appealed position also performs some interpretive work, so we must further determine whether the *Guide for the Evaluation of Professional Positions Engaged in Interpretive Work* is relevant to the grade determination.

Evaluation using the Forester Series, GS-460, position classification standard

The GS-460 series includes positions which primarily require professional knowledge and competence in forestry science. The work includes development, production, conservation, planning, evaluation, and management of each forest resource such as timber, wildlife and fish habitat, and outdoor recreation including wilderness to meet both present and future public and local private needs and demands; protect resources against depredations; and interpret and communicate principles, facts, and legislation upon which the management of forest land rests.

Grade-level criteria for Part I of the GS-460 series are used to evaluate non-research positions in which non-supervisory responsibilities are grade-controlling. Part I is appropriate for evaluating the appellant's position. It is described in Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES format, positions are evaluated by comparing the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required with nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions. A point value is assigned to each factor in accordance with the factor-level descriptions. For each factor, the full intent of the level must be met in order to credit the points for that level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. The total points assigned for the nine factors are converted to a grade by reference to the grade conversion table in the standard. A factor-by-factor analysis of the appealed work is provided.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts the forester must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply those knowledges.

At level 1-6, foresters apply a professional knowledge of established methods and techniques of forestry which enables them to perform recurring assignments of moderate difficulty. The methods and techniques are well established, apply to most situations encountered, and do not require significant deviation from the established methods. Unusual or difficult problems are screened out or discussed with the supervisor before assignments are carried out.

At level 1-7, foresters apply a professional knowledge of forestry to a wide range of duties in an intensive forestry resource and utilize skill in solving problems covering diverse forestry situations

and assignments. Assignments require sound professional knowledges and skills sufficient to modify or adapt standard forestry techniques and procedures, and to assess, select, and make use of precedents in devising strategies and plans to overcome significant resource problems. Coordinative skills are used to develop a variety of integrated annual work plans for complex projects which often extend over three to six years. Attendant skills are needed to review and critique the operational implementation of plans.

At level 1-8, foresters demonstrate a mastery of the forestry profession to the extent that they apply new scientific findings, developments, and advances to the solution of critical problems of a particularly unique, novel, or highly controversial nature. At this level, foresters are recognized as a technical authority in the particular subject matter or resource program.

The knowledges required by the appellant's position are fully equivalent to but do not exceed level 1-7. The appellant serves as the Forest's specialist for recreation, wilderness, and trails and provides technical and administrative guidance and direction to district staff (i.e, first level units) in these areas. A substantial part of the appellant's assignments are indicative of this level of knowledges. The appellant developed unique methods for analyzing and mitigating possible impacts from oil and gas development on a nationally recognized and controversial project involving key scenic and recreation resources along the [location]. Currently, the appellant is responsible for leading the [named] Recreation AMS. There is little guidance on how to accomplish the [named] Recreation AMS analysis, since it has never been done before in Region [] or in most other regions. The appellant will have to adapt standard forestry techniques and procedures and use precedents to devise strategies and plans to carry out this assignment. Travel management planning is a controversial area which involves determining what limitations to place on motorized and non-motorized vehicle access to trails and roads in the Forest. The Forest's trails get tremendous use and many are of archeological interest because they are old Indian trails.

Level 1-7 is credited for this factor and 1250 points are assigned.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

Supervisory controls covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the forester's responsibility, and the review of completed work. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. Responsibility of the employee depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives. The degree of review of completed work depends upon the nature and extent of the review.

At level 2-4, the supervisor outlines overall objectives and available resources. As required, the supervisor and forester confer on priorities within the assigned area and deadlines for the assignments. The forester independently constructs an action plan, establishes methods and procedures for

completing assignments, and coordinates work with specialists in other resources. From time-to-time, the forester meets with the supervisor to review overall progress and confer on policy issues for controversial forest areas. Completed work is reviewed for general adequacy in meeting program or project objectives.

At level 2-5, supervisory guidance or control is exercised through broad general objectives which have been approved for the assigned programs. Within broad areas of direction, the forester is responsible for independently determining the validity and soundness of programs and plans and developing forestry standards and guides. The results of the forester's work, including recommendations and decisions, are accepted as technically authoritative. When work is reviewed, it is primarily in relation to broad policy requirements and administrative controls such as budgets.

Supervisory controls over the appealed position fully meet those described at level 2-4. For assigned work, the supervisor sets broad overall objectives and consults with the appellant in developing project priorities. The appellant is responsible for independently planning the position's work, coordinating with other resource specialists, and resolving technical problems. Through weekly staff meetings, the appellant shares the status of his projects. Analyses, suggestions, and recommendations are relied upon by the supervisor as technically accurate, and the review of work is usually for agreement with overall policies, priorities, and the attainment of land management objectives.

Level 2-4 is credited for this factor and 450 points are assigned.

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them. Guidelines refer to standard guides, precedents, methods, and techniques such as governing statutes and regulations, long-range subject matter or resource plans, and annual work plans.

At level 3-3, most assignments have aspects which require the forester to adapt or interpret existing methods, practices, and instructions or to generalize from several techniques in carrying out activities and in solving the more complex problems. Some assignments require frequent departures from standardized procedures.

At level 3-4, guidelines are often inadequate to deal with the more complex or unusual problems or with problems concerned with novel or controversial aspects of forestry. There may be relatively few precedents or guides which are pertinent to the specific problems. The forester is required to deviate from or extend traditional forestry methods and practices or to develop essentially new or vastly modified techniques and methods for obtaining effective results.

At level 3-5, foresters are largely occupied with major problems which are highly unusual and for which there is little information or few guidelines available.

Guidelines for the appealed position fully meet but do not exceed level 3-4. Some guidance is available to the appellant for Forest planning responsibilities, but often he must rely on vastly modified techniques to obtain effective results. There are no guidelines for many of the projects which occupy a significant part of the appellant's time such as the [named] Recreation AMS and the national-level committee working on a consistent design image for the Forest Service "built" environment. Only broad regional guidelines were available to him for use in analyzing the Forest's Oil and Gas Environmental Impact Statement. He had to develop most of the analysis and some of the mitigation procedures and techniques. The appellant must use resourcefulness and experienced judgment in devising new techniques and methods to accomplish project assignments.

Level 3-4 is credited for this factor and 450 points are assigned.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

At level 4-3, assignments consist of a variety of professional work operations such as inventorying a given resource and its current condition; drafting conventional, short-range plans of resource management or protection; and inspecting work on-the-ground for conformance to standards and instructions. Problems are similar to those previously encountered in the forest area, and assignments are carried out without substantial adaptation or modification of precedents. The exercise of originality is less significant than the judgment required to apply a range of conventional approaches.

At level 4-4, foresters independently carry out a wide variety of assignments consisting of diverse and complex technical or administrative problems and considerations. Assignments typically involve land management problems requiring in-depth analysis and evaluation of alternatives due to complicating factors such as extensive programmed developmental activity and heavy resource use; environmental problems and conflicting requirements whose resolutions may have serious public impacts; or strong, conflicting public demands and pressures to redirect the land management strategies for different forest resources. Typically, the work assignments require the forester to relate new work situations to precedent situations, extend or modify existing techniques, or develop compromises with standard forestry practice to adequately solve the forestry problem.

At level 4-5, work is characterized by a variety of assignments and problems arising on a number of geographically and environmentally varied forest units where the forester is independently responsible for coordination, liaison, and planning activities covering broad resource programs or intensive analysis and problem solving in a particular program area where the forester serves in an authoritative capacity as an expert. The work involves solving problems concerned with novel or controversial aspects of forestry and related fields. Assignments require the forester to be especially versatile and innovative in order to recognize possible new directions or approaches or to anticipate future trends and requirements in forest resource use and demands.

The complexity of the appealed position meets but does not exceed level 4-4. The appellant serves as the Forest's specialist for recreation, wilderness, and trails. Assignments involve the full range of duties concerning recreation activities such as the management, planning, and development of recreation sites, a national scenic byway, interpretive opportunities, and socio-economic assessments for planning. Assignments require consideration of a number of conflicting uses on the varied Forest areas. The Forest is under intensive use as a recreational resource because of its diverse mountain ranges, including the nationally significant [location] , and there are a number of conflicting pressures from different recreation and resource user groups. Constantly changing recreation management technologies requires in- depth technical skills and the ability to use newly emerging procedures in recreation database management and Meaningful Measures recreation budgeting methodologies.

Level 4-4 is credited for this factor and 225 points are assigned.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

The factor covers the relationship between the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. Effect measures such things as whether the work output facilitates the work of others.

At level 5-3, the purpose of the work is to investigate and analyze a variety of conventional resource problems and environmental conditions and to recommend and/or implement solutions to meet resource management objectives. The work affects the efficient development, protection, and use of a particular resource; the public's perception of the adequacy of the resource's management; and the socio-economic welfare of dependent communities.

At level 5-4, foresters develop essentially new or vastly improved techniques or solutions to specific problems in a resource and coordinates results with related resource activities. They are typically concerned with problems that occur at a number of locations within a broad geographic area or affect the continued existence of a resource unique to a geographical area. The results of the work directly influence the effectiveness and acceptability of agency goals, programs, and/or activities.

At level 5-5, foresters are concerned with resolving critical or highly unusual problems, developing new approaches or techniques for use by other foresters, determining the soundness of programs and plans, and developing standards and guides for improving forestry resource use. The results of the forester's assignments affect top-level administrators of the agency, resource program managers, and the work of state and county officials. The work has considerable influence in a number of forest areas in one or more states.

The appealed position meets but does not exceed level 5-4. As the Forest's Recreation Program Manager, the appellant coordinates the Forest's Capital Investment Program for recreation construction. This involves identifying and determining the prioritization of projects within the Forest and its districts that result in expenditures of \$10,000 or more. The appellant handles the Meaningful Measures costing methodology for the recreation resource. Typically, he deals with issues and

problems that occur at a number of locations within the broad expanse of the Forest, e.g., the Oil and Gas Environmental Impact Statement, socio-economic assessment work in the [named] Ecosystem and in the [named] Recreation AMS, travel management planning involving motorized and non-motorized recreation use, and involvement as the Forest's representative in the joint development of the [two named rivers] river systems Comprehensive Recreation Management Plan. The results of the appellant's work directly affect use of the Forest's lands for recreational purposes and influences the effectiveness and acceptability of agency goals and programs.

Level 5-4 is credited for this factor and 225 points are assigned.

Factor 6, Personal contacts

This factor includes face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place.

At level 6-2, personal contacts are with employees in the agency, inside and outside the immediate organization, e.g., foresters from higher level organizational units; occasionally, resource persons from State or local forestry units; and with the general public. Contacts are usually established on a routine basis, but the forester's authority may not be initially clear to the person contacted.

At level 6-3, contacts are regularly with professional subject matter specialists in forestry and related disciplines within the agency, in other Federal agencies, in universities, in private foundations and professional societies, with influential local community leaders, with State officials, and with newspaper, radio and television reporters. In many cases, the contacts may be on an ad hoc basis and the role of each party is established and developed during the course of the contact.

At level 6-4, contacts are with high-ranking representatives from outside the agency at national or international levels including such persons as key officials, mayors of large cities, and state governors.

The appealed position meets but does not exceed level 6-3. Contacts on the Forest are with other resource specialists, district rangers, and resource assistants who are responsible for recreation and range activities. Contacts outside the Forest are with other resource specialists in forests bordering the [activity]; Region [] resource specialists; members of the national level team developing design standards; State land management planners; State fish, wildlife, and parks staff; university professors who deal with tourism; and recreation user groups. In many cases, contacts are on an ad hoc basis and the reasons for the contact are established and developed during the course of the contact.

Level 6-3 is credited for this factor and 60 points are assigned.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

Purpose of personal contacts ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives.

At level 7-2, contacts are to inspect work and monitor activities of special users; to discuss technical requirements of contracts in order to resolve problems concerning contract stipulations; and to coordinate work with other foresters and technical resource specialists.

At level 7-3, contacts are to negotiate controversial issues with various parties in a way that will obtain agency objectives and result in retention of good will; to influence or persuade various organizations or individuals who have conflicting interests and viewpoints on the use of various resources so as to reach an agreement that is consistent with goals and objectives; to justify the feasibility and desirability of significant forestry resource plans and proposals; or to influence or persuade other experts to adapt techniques or methods about which there may be conflicting opinions.

At level 7-4, contacts are to justify, defend, negotiate, or settle significant or controversial land management matters. The work may include legislative hearings, land-use presentations, or similar meetings where the resolution of the issue usually involves a long range impact beyond the specific issue or geographical area involved.

The appealed position meets but does not exceed level 7-3. Much of the appellant's work is to coordinate work efforts in recreation, discuss recreation management and planning topics with district personnel, and provide technical advice and assistance on recreation matters. Travel management planning work is a controversial area that involves negotiating about motorized and non-motorized travel issues with various user groups.

Level 7-3 is credited for this factor and 120 points are assigned.

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and the physical exertion involved in the work.

At level 8-1, the work is usually performed in an office setting. The forester may occasionally visit forest areas where the forester does considerable walking, bending, or climbing, but this is not a frequent enough occurrence to warrant the next higher level.

At level 8-2, the work requires regular and recurring work in a forest area where there is considerable walking, bending, or climbing, often over rough, uneven surfaces or mountainous terrain.

The physical requirements of the appellant's position equate to level 8-1. His work is primarily sedentary, although there is considerable physical activity associated with on-the-ground examinations. Site analysis occurs less than 15 percent of the time and infrequently involves walking or climbing on rough terrain.

Level 8-1 is credited for this factor and 5 points are assigned.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required.

The work at level 9-1 is primarily performed in an office-like setting involving everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precautions. There may be occasional exposure to the risks described at the next higher level when visiting forest areas.

At level 9-2, the work is performed in settings in which there is regular and recurring exposure to moderate risks and discomforts such as very low temperatures, adverse weather conditions, falling limbs or trees, and similar situations. Employees usually must wear protective equipment in the forest area.

The appealed position meets but does not exceed the definition of level 9-1. The appellant primarily performs his assignments in an office setting.

Level 9-1 is credited for this factor and 5 points are assigned.

In accordance with the FES criteria published in the standard for the series, the appellant's position is evaluated as follows:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-7	1250
2. Supervisory Controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-4	450
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and Effect	5-4	225
6. Personal Contacts	6-3	60
7. Purpose of Contacts	7-3	120
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
TOTAL POINTS		2790

The appellant's forester duties are evaluated at 2790 total points. Therefore, in accordance with the grade conversion table in the GS-460 standard, these duties of the appealed position are graded at GS-12.

Evaluation using the Landscape Architecture Series, GS-807, position classification standard

This series includes positions that perform professional work in planning and designing land areas and concurrent landscape construction and maintenance. It involves analysis of land characteristics, operational requirements, and land-use intensities correlated with ground and water forms, plant forms, structures, roads, and walks to serve esthetic, functional, economic, and other related purposes. Positions in this series require professional landscape architecture planning and design ability. The grade level of landscape architect positions is measured by applying two basic classification criteria taken together:

- (1) Difficulty of assignments. This refers to those factors that are inherent in an assignment and make it more or less difficult to work on. The difficulty of assignments is influenced by the amount of land being dealt with; the natural, climatic, and topographic features of the terrain; the variety of functional purposes or uses of the land, and the degree of originality required as these relate to the landscape architect's knowledge of the principles of landscape architecture and ability to apply them, knowledge of agency philosophy and procedures, ability to coordinate activities and negotiate, and the extent to which the landscape architect is an authority in his field.

- (2) Level of responsibility. This factor is measured by the degree of supervision received and the authority to act and the type of personal contact work performed.

Difficulty of Assignments

At the GS-11 level, assignments involve a full range of professional activity on conventional projects. Assignments are typically broad in scope, diversified, and difficult due to design problems caused by a combination of factors such as an area composed of a number of sites with a variety of uses and functions. Typical projects are the design of a large recreational area including a network of sites for picnicking, camping, boating, and swimming and the origination or review of plans for small housing developments. These projects involve area designs which locate the sites and necessary walks, roads, and parking areas so all functions of the area will be integrated. Also typical at this level are assignments requiring plans for small sites that have unusual design problems such as a road turnout with difficult aspects like rugged terrain with heavy rock outcroppings and accessibility problems or a barren, sandy site with unusually complex erosion and drainage problems. Landscape architects at this level may be engaged in preparing or reviewing master plan drawings and narratives for large tracts composed of areas similar in scope to those already described. This level requires the ability to apply new design and construction methods; to prepare technical reports; to modify, adapt, and make compromises with standard guidelines; and to develop effective coordination with other organizations.

At the GS-12 level, assignments are extensive in scope and importance, largely involve planning and coordination, and contain many difficult features. Typical assignments include responsibility for preparing and coordinating master plan drawings and narratives for large tracts of land, including a number of areas requiring the cooperation of people from one or more design fields in addition to landscape architecture, and landscape design for major roads and adjacent sites on large tracts of land connecting one area with another and requiring extensive coordination with those responsible for the engineering design of the road. At this level, landscape architects may be required to review any type of landscape construction and recommend acceptance or rejection of it. Some positions review landscape architectural plans submitted to their agency by architects, builders, contractors, and others. Reviews are for the purpose of checking such things as the quality of the landscape design, costs, conformance with agency requirements, and agreement between landscape architectural and engineering aspects of the project. Frequently, GS-12 landscape architects are required to make recommendations for improvement of design involving extensive alterations of plans submitted for approval. These assignments require the ability to handle advanced landscape architectural problems such as unusual climate and terrain and the ability to coordinate the activities of a number of groups effectively.

A number of the appealed position's assignments, which have occupied a substantial amount of the position's time, are representative of GS-12 level work. One of these assignments is the [forest site]. The appellant has worked on all stages of the Center's development since its inception in 1989 including earthgrading design, irrigation systems, erosion control, intensive rock placement, and landscape planting design. This nationally significant project is complex from a landscape architecture

standpoint due to the rocky, drought-prone nature of the site; the need to provide a sustainable native-plant landscape that requires low maintenance and no irrigation once established; the need to design and install a rock landscape on a large scale; the need to provide access for the disabled on a steep site; and the need to provide all landscape design services after the landscape contractor left the site prior to completion. In working on this project, the appellant has been required to work with two different sets of contractors, an engineering contractor, and a nationally-known landscape architect subcontractor. Recently, the appellant completed the design for a parking facility for the Center that will double the parking capacity, and he is assigned to finalize the design of a large living history area for the Center in the near future. Over the past three years, the appellant has spent approximately 30 - 40 percent of his time working on this project. Another project of extensive scope and importance is the scenery viewshed analysis work for 1.5 million acres that the appellant performed for the Oil and Gas Environmental Impact Statement over a three - four year period. Approximately 25 percent of the appellant's time was devoted to this project. The appellant has also performed considerable master planning for the east half of the Forest, an area involving over 500,000 acres. The plan involved large scale development work for capital investment projects and interpretation and timber management along the [named] Scenic Byway. Currently, the appellant is part of a national level team that is developing design standards that will affect all future building and facility construction in the agency. In the next five years, upcoming work on scenery management will include revising the Forest Plan to determine, among other things, which areas will have what kinds of timber harvest and prescribed fire, which areas will have no harvesting, and which roads and trails will be considered viewpoints. An estimated 35 percent of the appellant's time will be spent on planning these issues.

Responsibility of the position

At the GS-11 level, supervision is general. Although work is reviewed in the early stages of development when controlling design decisions are being formed, work is not subject to a detailed technical review. Work is normally accepted as technically sound. Personal work contacts include dealing with the public and outside agencies for the purpose of exchanging professional advice and making commitments on routine matters. Contact work includes dealing with people such as contractors, State and municipal officials, and agency administrative and maintenance personnel.

At the GS-12 level, work is assigned in broad, general objectives, and landscape architects are relatively free from technical control. Technical decisions and recommendations are seldom changed by higher authority, and completed work is reviewed for adequacy in terms of broad objectives and compliance with agency policies and regulations. Personal contacts constitute a substantial portion of the work. GS-12 landscape architects coordinate work and maintain liaison with organizations performing related work, e.g., planners, architects, engineers, builders, contractors, State and municipal authorities, and the general public.

Work is assigned to the appealed position in terms of broad, general objectives by the position's supervisor. Typically, the appellant's landscape architecture decisions and recommendations are not reviewed for technical sufficiency. The Region's landscape architect usually only reviews projects that exceed \$250,000. On a regular basis, the appellant coordinates work with other resource

specialists on the [named] Center, the [named] project, and the national level committee. In performing his assignments, the appellant works with a variety of interdisciplinary fields, Federal, State and local authorities, and the general public.

Based on our analysis of the classification criteria of the GS-807 series, we conclude that the appellant's position is equivalent in difficulty and responsibility to the GS-12 level.

Guide for the evaluation of professional positions engaged in interpretive work

This guide is used in the grade-level evaluation of professional positions in the social, biological, or physical sciences when such positions, as the highest level function and for a substantial portion of the time, involve planning and implementing interpretive programs in Department of Agriculture National Forests, e.g., timber, water, range, recreation and wildlife resources. Although the appealed position performs interpretive work, such work is not performed a substantial portion of the time nor is it the position's highest level function, i.e., the position's interpretive work is not equivalent to a GS-13 level assignment. GS-13 level assignments are characterized by interpretive programs in which the story or stories to be told are very complex, e.g., the physical features to be interpreted represent irreplaceable values and interpretive media (museums, extensive dioramas, original paintings for trailside display) represent major monetary investments. Because interpretive work is not the appealed position's highest level function and is not performed a substantial portion of the time, this guide is not appropriate for evaluating the grade level of the position.

Decision

Based on our analysis of grade-level criteria in both the GS-460 and GS-807 classification standards, the appealed position is correctly classified at the GS-12 level. The proper series, title, and grade of the appealed position is GS-460-12, Forester.