

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 75242-1027

**Classification Appeal Decision**  
**Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [appellant]

**Agency classification:** Information and Technology Technician  
GS-303-6

**Organization:** [agency location]  
Bureau of Land Management  
Department of the Interior  
[city, state]

**OPM decision:** GS-303-6  
Title at agency discretion

**OPM decision number:** C-0303-06-04

/s/ Bonnie J. Brandon

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Bonnie J. Brandon  
Classification Appeals Officer

August 30, 2002

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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).

**Decision sent to:**

[appellant's name]  
[appellant's address]

Director, Human Resources  
[installation address]

Director of Personnel  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
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## **Introduction**

On March 26, 2002, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [the appellant]. We received her agency's administrative report on June 24, 2002. The agency has classified the appellant's position as Information and Technology Technician, GS-303-6. However, the appellant believes that her duties should be classified at a higher grade using the criteria in the Job Family Standard for Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200. The appellant's position is assigned to the [organizational location], Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Department of the Interior, at [city, state]. We have accepted and decided her appeal under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

We conducted a telephone audit with the appellant on July 30, 2002, and a telephone interview with the appellant's first-level supervisor on July 31, 2002. We also spoke to the classifier and the Web manager at the [state office] on August 7, 2002. In deciding this appeal, we fully considered the information obtained by telephone and all information in the appeal record provided by the appellant and her agency, including her current work assignments and position description of record (PD), [number].

The supervisor certified that the appellant's PD is current and accurate. The appellant has not certified the accuracy of the PD. She believes that the description "...fails to give an actual representation of the knowledge, skills and abilities *necessary* [appellant's emphasis] to perform these duties." Further, she describes her tasks in detail. We view a PD as adequate for classification purposes when it is considered so by a person knowledgeable of the occupation and the classification standards and is supplemented by current information about the position's organization, functions, programs, and procedures. While the PD of record does not delineate every task the appellant performs in creating and maintaining the office's Web site, we find that the PD describes the major duties and responsibilities of the appellant's position and includes information about the position that is significant to the classification. Therefore, the PD is adequate for our purposes to accurately reflect the duties and responsibilities assigned to the appellant.

## **General issues**

The appellant makes various statements about her agency and its slow response to her position review requests. The agency previously classified the appellant's position as Contact Representative, GS-962-5. On May 31, 2002, the agency reclassified the position as Information and Technology Technician, GS-303-6, as the result of a position review. 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). Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

The appellant discusses the high quality of her work. However, quality of work cannot be considered in determining the grade of a position (*The Classifier's Handbook*). The appellant mentions her personal qualifications, based upon Web/graphics publishing training. Qualifications are considered in classifying positions. However, these are qualifications required

to perform current duties and responsibilities, not qualifications that appellants personally possess. Therefore, we could not consider the appellant's personal qualifications, except insofar as they were required to perform her current duties and responsibilities. To the extent that they were needed for this purpose, we carefully considered them along with all other information furnished by the appellant and her agency, including her official PD.

### **Position information**

The [city name] Field Office manages and administers approximately 1,300,000 acres of public land and 179,000 acres of segregated mineral estates lands on the [geographic area]. The Office administers BLM's realty, land tenure adjustment, cultural resources, recreation, range, wild horses, watershed, wilderness, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, oil and gas, coal, mineral materials, resource protection, wildfire management, fire rehabilitation, and prescribed fire programs in the area.

The appellant is assigned to the [work unit] Staff and works on the Customer Services Team which works at the public desk. The Team also includes a Mail and File Clerk and a Student Trainee. Her supervisor is a GS-401 Supervisory Resources Specialist.

The primary purpose of the appellant's position is twofold: to provide information to the public about the Field Office and BLM's programs and recreational activities and to act as the Web manager for the Field Office. The appellant spends about 50 percent of her time performing Web duties. She spends about 35 percent of her time performing visitor information duties and about 10 percent of her time in brochure, pamphlet, and guide development duties.

The appellant provides information and assistance to the public involving a broad range of inquiries. Her responses are based on regulatory requirements and related administrative practices and policies. The appellant provides both general and technical information on a variety of activities including recreational opportunities, special use applications, and special permits. She issues various kinds of permits. The appellant must understand the Office's activities, programs, procedures, and processes to the extent that the public desk provides the vast majority of information needed by the public. She also must maintain a general knowledge of the jurisdictions and responsibilities of other Federal and State agencies to properly refer inquiries as needed. She receives and evaluates telephone, email, and written requests for public information, determining completeness of request and availability of data in accordance with BLM visitor contact center procedures and policies.

The appellant performs a variety of clerical and administrative duties associated with managing the public desk: designing and laying out the visitor reception area; procuring supplies; establishing, updating, and maintaining various contact room procedures; and requisitioning printing support, and related materials and services. She uses office automation software and word processing software to produce a range of documents with complex formats: brochures, pamphlets, guides, flyers, banners, forms, memorandums, and letters. The appellant also develops graphics for t-shirts. She works with specialists in developing guides and pamphlets on user guide authorizations, but develops guides on recreational opportunities and other general

information herself. She also coordinates activities and public information with interpretative associations and other internal and external organizations.

The appellant redeveloped the Web sites for the Office and the [named] National Conservation Area (now maintained by another position). The sites were developed using Microsoft FrontPage, a Web development tool that allows individuals without extensive technical skills to create quite sophisticated Web sites and simplifies Web site management. The appellant maintains and ensures that Web site pages are professionally presented, current, accurate, and factual and are related to the organizational mission. She obtains and consolidates data from other offices, both internally and externally located, and, when appropriate, transfers formatted data to the main Web server using File Transfer Protocol for posting to the site. She also fields inquiries in the Office's Web manager mailbox by responding to the inquiries herself or forwarding them to appropriate officials for reply.

The appellant's PD and other material of record furnish much more information about her duties and responsibilities and how they are performed.

### **Series, title, and standard determination**

The agency placed the position in the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303. The appellant believes that the Web management duties and responsibilities currently assigned to her position are two-grade interval administrative duties, thus the occupational series should be the GS-2210 Information Technology Management Series. Further, she believes that Web manager duties constitute the paramount skill level required and since they constitute the largest percentage of her work, these duties should drive the title and series of her work.

The GS-2200 Job Family Standard is a relatively new standard that covers two-grade interval administrative positions that manage, supervise, lead, administer, develop, deliver, and support information technology systems and services. The standard currently includes only the GS-2210 Information Technology Management Series. This series covers only those positions for which the paramount requirement is knowledge of information technology principles, concepts, and methods to perform functions such as planning, designing, analyzing, developing, and implementing systems for the organization.

Information technology refers to systems and services used in the automated acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission, assurance, or reception of information. Information technology includes computers, network components, peripheral equipment, software, firmware, services, and related resources.

The GS-335 Computer Clerk and Assistant Series covers positions involving performance or supervision of data processing support and services functions for users of digital computer systems. This work requires knowledge of external data processing sequences, controls, procedures, or user and programming languages rather than in-depth knowledge of computer requirements or techniques associated with development and design of data processing systems. The GS-335 standard states that employees in this occupation support or assist other employees who design, operate, or use automatic data processing systems applications and products by

performing work in one or a mix of functional areas. One of the functional areas identified by the standard is the providing of support to computer specialists. Such support work typically requires knowledge of the scope, contents, and purposes of program documentation. The duties may also require a working knowledge of programming languages. This knowledge may also be supplemented by knowledge of internal software routines. Another functional area involves providing support to subject-matter users by working at remote terminal stations entering raw data to update or change information files.

In determining whether the appellant's position warrants classification in the GS-2210 series, we examined the appellant's assignments along the dimensions where they most closely parallel those of the GS-2210 occupation. These dimensions include the appellant's development of the Grand Junction and Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area Web sites.

We found that the appellant's work varies in difficulty ranging from specialized to highly structured and recurring tasks. For example, the appellant performs initial troubleshooting, usually involving graphic and image problems. Her daily tasks include maintenance of the Office's Web site. We found that the full range of the appellant's duties, including the specialized tasks, is best characterized as support work, performed by following established methods and procedures.

Consistent with positions in the GS-335 series, the appellant's work is based on practical knowledge, rather than technical knowledge, of the purpose, operation, procedures, techniques, and guidelines of the assignment. The appellant performs routine, procedural, or standard Web manager responsibilities. She is not involved in the technical planning, design, or development of systems typical of GS-2210 information technology specialists. Positions in the GS-2210 series require application of technical knowledge of Internet systems, services, and technologies.

There is no evidence that the appellant's position requires the level of knowledge of information processing methodology/technology and computer capabilities and processing techniques typical of GS-2210 positions. The appellant's position is limited in scope by the fact that the CSO has overall technical and program oversight. Lack of server responsibilities also limits the scope of the appellant's position. Overall, the appellant's Web manager duties are comparable to the work described in the GS-335 series.

The appellant's position is a mixed series position because it involves work covered by more than one occupational series. *The Classifier's Handbook* states that grade-controlling work determines the series for most positions. Generally, mixed positions should be classified in the series appropriate for the paramount qualifications required. In this case, the supervisor has stated that the Web manager duties would not constitute the primary basis of recruitment if refilling the position. Obtaining the skills needed to run the public desk would be just as, if not more, critical. He believes that the Web duties could be placed in another position if necessary; however, keeping those duties with the primary public contact is deemed most appropriate. Initially, other positions were considered for the Web site duties, but they were placed with the appellant due to her insight into the information needs and expectations of the public as well as her extensive working knowledge of a wide range of BLM programs. Further, the organization believed that adding Web responsibilities to other positions would detract from essential work

these positions performed. For these reasons, the appellant's position is best placed in the GS-303 series.

The GS-303 series includes positions the duties of which are to perform or supervise clerical, assistant, or technician work for which no other series is appropriate. The work requires knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out the work of an organization and involves application of procedures and practices within the framework of established guidelines. The basic work processes associated with the appellant's assignments are clerical in nature. The appellant performs a number of support functions requiring knowledge of information management and clerical and administrative procedures, instructions, regulations, and directives as they relate to her employing organization. The GS-303 series does not specify titles. Therefore, the agency may designate an appropriate title by following the guidance in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*. The position does not require the services of a qualified typist, so the office automation duties do not warrant the parenthetical title *Office Automation*.

The classification standard for the GS-303 series contains no grading criteria. As the appellant's Web management duties make up 50 percent of her work, we have used the Position Classification Standard for Computer Clerk and Assistance Series, GS-0335, to grade that portion of the work. We have used the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work to grade the remaining portion of the appellant's work.

## **Grade determination**

### ***Evaluation using the GS-335 Standard***

The GS-335 standard uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which uses nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspects, 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. Under FES, positions that significantly exceed the highest factor level or fail to meet the lowest factor level described in a classification standard must be evaluated by reference to the Primary Standard, contained in Appendix 3 of the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*. The Primary Standard is the "standard for standards" for the FES. Each factor level has a corresponding point value. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion chart in the standard.

### ***Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position***

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts which the employee must understand to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply those knowledges. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, a knowledge must be required and applied.

At Level 1-4, employees perform a wide range of duties including preparing, advising, assisting, coding, and procedure-related problem-solving duties using a knowledge of computer procedures and processing methods. Similar to assistants at Level 1-4, the appellant performs a wide range of duties associated with her Web site responsibilities, requiring a practical knowledge of computer techniques and procedures and software capabilities related to Web pages. The appellant's position also requires knowledge of Web scripting language and the ability to transfer pages to the Web server. Comparable to assistants at Level 1-4, the appellant maintains the Office's Web site. For example, she checks links to ensure they are working and updates and corrects information when necessary. The appellant can readily identify, interpret, and resolve routine problems that typically involve spatial or graphics difficulties. Overall, the knowledge required for the appellant's position is consistent with Level 1-4.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-5. Although the duties and responsibilities performed by the appellant require an understanding of Web software, the work does not require the in-depth knowledge of systems and programs indicative of Level 1-5. Assistants at Level 1-5 carry out limited specialized projects and assignments using knowledge of fundamental data processing methods, practices, and techniques in work involving development, test, implementation, and modification of computer programs and operating procedures. Assistants prepare programs or write new program documentation and operating procedures. In contrast, the appellant is required to use off-the-shelf software programs that require no modification.

At Level 1-5, employees use their knowledge as the bases for analysis and decision making in several functional settings. In addition, employees at this level use knowledge of data content and output options for a variety of administrative, scientific, and/or technical program applications that are processed on any of several multiprogram operating systems. In contrast, the appellant makes substantive determinations regarding the content of the Web pages in only general public information areas. The content regarding specialized areas is largely determined by specialists in those areas. In summary, the appellant's position does not require the level of knowledge for decision making, or modifying or developing new program or operating procedures commensurate with Level 1-5.

This factor is evaluated at Level 1-4 and 550 points are credited.

### *Factor 2, Supervisory controls*

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the responsibility of the employee, and the degree to which work is reviewed by the supervisor.

The appellant's position meets Level 2-3, the highest level described in the standard. At this level, the supervisor provides direction on objectives and priorities for new work, deadlines, and deadline changes for new and established work. The employee identifies the work to be done, plans and carries out the steps required, and submits completed work without supervisory review. At this level, employees adapt or develop new work procedures and instructions for application by themselves and others. Consistent with Level 2-3, the appellant independently plans and carries out steps for completing assignments in accordance with established instructions and practices. She is expected to seek assistance from the supervisor if a conflict



arises that is out of the ordinary, e.g., the appellant receives a request from a specialist or supervisor to put information on the Web page where the content would be questionable.

Although the appellant has no direct reporting relationship to the [state office] Web manager, the appellant obtains assistance from him when a situation arises that is beyond the knowledge or skill of the appellant. While she develops the general information content, specialists/supervisors in other offices provide the technical information for the Web site. The appellant then independently determines the format of the information. Before the site is made public, the appellant's completed work is reviewed by the [state office] Web manager for editorial considerations and conformity to accepted practices; because of the appellant's experience, this is a cursory review. Similar to assistants at Level 2-3, the appellant's work methods are not normally reviewed unless a recurring, common pattern of problems develops.

At Level 2-4 of the Primary Standard, the supervisor sets the overall objectives and resources available. The employee and supervisor, in consultation, develop the deadlines, projects, and work to be done. The employee, having developed expertise in the line of work, is responsible for planning and carrying out the assignment, resolving most of the conflicts that arise, coordinating the work with others as necessary, and interpreting policy on own initiative in terms of established objectives. In some assignments, the employee also determines the approach to be taken and the methodology to be used. The employee keeps the supervisor informed of progress and potentially controversial matters. In contrast, the appellant is not required to interpret policies or to establish approaches or methodologies as envisioned for positions at Level 2-4. Unlike employees at Level 2-4, the appellant refers to her supervisor or the [state office] Web manager for assistance and guidance when conflicts arise. The appellant's position does not meet Level 2-4.

This factor is evaluated at Level 2-3 and 275 points are credited.

### *Factor 3, Guidelines*

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them.

At Level 3-2, procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are available. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the assistant to use judgment in selecting appropriate guidelines. Guidelines for the appellant's position include general procedural guidelines in the form of equipment and software manuals and BLM and Office policies, procedures, and instructions. The recurring nature of the appellant's assignments and user problems permits considerable additional reliance on established procedures and previous experience. The appellant's position is similar to Level 3-2 in that guidelines are available, selection of an appropriate guideline is relatively clear, and some judgment is needed in selecting from a number of guidelines or alternative procedures for accomplishing the work. Comparable to Level 3-2, the appellant refers to the [state office] Web manager for guidance when digression from guidelines has not been established by the appellant's experience and precedent situations.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 3-3. At this level, an assistant works with new requirements or new applications for which only general guidance is available. In addition, judgment is used in adjusting the most appropriate guidelines to fit new processing requirements or developing new methods for accomplishing the tasks at hand. Assistants at this level adapt guidelines when their judgment is based on an understanding of the intent of the guidelines. In contrast, the appellant does not work with new requirements or new applications for which only general guidance is available. While the appellant faces an evolving technology that requires frequent changes and modifications, the fundamental nature of the guidelines remains unchanged. Guidelines are available for nearly all areas of her work and do not require the appellant to modify, adapt, or adjust guidelines as intended at Level 3-3.

This factor is evaluated at Level 3-2 and 125 points are credited.

#### *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.

The appellant's position is comparable to Level 4-2 where employees perform a few different although related tasks, using specified procedures and methods. Consistent with this level, the appellant decides what needs to be done, identifies and carries out methods and variations within established procedures, and makes other similar decisions to perform such work. For example, after receiving a request to place information on the Web site, the appellant is responsible for determining the best possible course of action in terms of design and format. Comparable to Level 4-2 assistants, the appellant selects and applies established procedures and methods to perform work that meets BLM policies and regulations.

At Level 4-3, work is distinguished by the employee performing a variety of tasks involving discrete methods and procedures or a variety of related tasks that require a sequence of actions involving differing methods and procedures. At this level, assistants identify the sequence of standard and variable procedures and methods needed to prepare and process the assignment or to resolve error conditions. Unlike positions at Level 4-3, the appellant's work is relatively routine and new or unusual situations rarely occur where she would be required to apply the various methods and procedures characterized at this level. The appellant's work does not typically involve situations where there are several courses of action to choose from. The complexity of the appellant's duties does not equate to Level 4-3.

This factor is evaluated at Level 4-2 and 75 points are credited.

#### *Factor 5, Scope and effect*

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, e.g., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-2, employees perform a range of duties in scheduling, production control, library, or other computer support positions according to established procedures and methods. Results of the work are complete products or complete segments of other products or work processes. An example of work at this level is an assistant who collects raw information, prepares flowcharts, codes programs, or performs other similar kinds of work on a variety of projects. At Level 5-2, the work affects the accuracy of processing by providing for data contention and other potential conflicts during processing and coding according to specifications. Reliability and acceptability are affected by completing the work within deadlines, ensuring against media and control related processing failures, and providing the requested output. Work at this level affects the availability and usefulness of the information involved.

The appellant's position meets Level 5-2 for both scope and effect. The purpose of the appellant's position is to collect, select, organize, and provide information in accordance with established rules, regulations, procedures, and practices. The work affects the way in which others receive information and the availability and usefulness of the information.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-3. This level is distinguished from Level 5-2 by the additional requirements for solving problems and answering technical questions about control, scheduling, and/or direct support functions. Problems and error conditions at this level are conventional to data processing although solutions are not always covered by established or standardized procedures. Results of the work affect the efficiency of processing services and adequacy of products used in subsequent activities.

Work at Level 5-3 includes explaining to and assisting customers in the application of system capabilities when the customer has unusual or unique processing requirements that are difficult to formulate. Work at this level may also involve adjusting and rebalancing a number of single system schedules to enhance processing services by using the capacities of several computer systems. Unlike assistants at Level 5-3, the appellant uses standardized approaches in assisting users. Although the appellant's work affects the way in which individuals receive information, the results of the work do not affect the efficiency of processing services, adequacy of products used in subsequent activities, and processing procedures and methods as envisioned at Level 5-3.

This factor is evaluated at Level 5-2 and 75 points are credited.

#### *Factor 6, Personal contacts*

Factor 6 includes face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain.

The appellant's contacts meet Level 6-2, the highest level described in the standard, where contacts are with employees in the agency, inside and outside of the immediate organization; the general public; or special users. The appellant has frequent and ongoing contact with specialists and supervisors throughout the Office. She also has contact with counterparts in other Federal agencies, [state office] information management specialists, local and State government organizations, interpretive associations, public land visitors and callers, and users of the Web site. As at Level 6-2, the appellant's contacts are structured and routine and the role of each participant is readily determined.

The appellant's contacts do not meet Level 6-3 of the Primary Standard where contacts are with individuals or groups from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting. For example, the contacts are not established on a routine basis, the purpose and extent of each contact is different, and the role and authority of each party is identified and developed during the course of the contact. Contacts at Level 6-3 are regularly established with people in their capacities as attorneys, contractors, representatives of professional organizations, the news media, or public action groups. The appellant's contacts are not normally with the type of individuals described at this level, and the contacts do not involve the variety of issues intended at Level 6-3.

Level 6-2 is credited for 25 points.

*Factor 7, Purpose of contacts*

This factor covers the purpose of personal contacts, which ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts meets Level 7-2, the highest level described in the standard. At this level, the purpose of personal contacts is to plan or coordinate changes in scheduling requirements or priorities as the result of data or equipment related problems; to participate with users in planning and coordinating new or modified requirements when the work fits generally within system options, schedules, etc.; or to plan user participation, methodology, and deadlines for new projects. Comparable to this level, the appellant meets with various staff members and attends staff and planning meetings to set deadlines and priorities in planning and coordinating her work.

Level 7-3 is not met. As described in the Primary Standard, the purpose of contacts at this level is to influence, motivate, interrogate, or control people or groups. The people contacted may be fearful, skeptical, uncooperative, or dangerous. The appellant's contacts do not require motivating, interrogating, or controlling parties who are fearful, skeptical, or uncooperative.

Level 7-2 is credited for 50 points.

*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 physical exertion involved in the work.

At Level 8-1, the work is generally sedentary, although there may be some nominal walking or standing for short periods of time or carrying of light loads (e.g., paper, books, reports) that require only moderate physical ability and physical stress. The appellant's position fully meets Level 8-1.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 8-2, which requires extended periods of standing, walking, stretching, bending, and stooping or carrying of loads that may weigh as much as 45 pounds. Although the appellant's position may at times require moderate physical demands when she goes to the field to maintain familiarity with BLM activities and recreation activities, these occasions are too rare to meet the intent of Level 8-2. The majority of the appellant's time is spent sitting at a workstation.

This factor is evaluated at Level 8-1 and 5 points are credited.

*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 and occupational health regulations required.

At Level 9-1, the work involves common risks or discomforts requiring normal safety precautions typical of offices, meeting rooms, libraries, and the like. The work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated. The appellant's work environment consists of the everyday risks and discomforts of offices and similar work sites, although she occasionally works outside as described under Factor 8. This factor warrants evaluation at Level 9-1.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 9-2, which involves moderate risk requiring exercise of safety precautions. Special clothing or protective equipment is not normally required although there is moderate risk of bodily injury. The appellant's work environment is in an office and does not require the safety precautions typical for positions at Level 9-2.

This factor is evaluated at Level 9-1 and 5 points are credited.

*Summary*

We have evaluated the computer assistant duties of the appellant's position as follows:

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-4	550
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and effect	5-2	75
6. Personal contacts	6-2	25
7. Purpose of personal contacts	7-2	50
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	5
<i>Total</i>		1,185

The appellant's position warrants 1,185 points. In accordance with the grade conversion table in the GS-335 standard, 1,185 points fall in the range for the GS-6 grade level.

### ***Evaluation using the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work***

Positions classified in the GS-303 series are graded by application of the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work (Guide), unless another one-grade interval guide or standard contains more appropriate grade level criteria for evaluating the work. Because of the mixed nature of the appellant's work, the remaining work is best graded by means of the Guide.

The Guide describes evaluation criteria in terms of two narrative factors: Nature of assignment and Level of responsibility. These two factors are placed in context with the definition of the grade level as spelled out in law and with illustrative work examples at each grade. The highest level of work described in the Guide is GS-7.

#### *Nature of assignment*

This factor addresses the knowledge requirements and the complexity of the work.

At the GS-6 level, work requires considerable evaluative judgment within well-defined, commonly occurring aspects of an administrative program or function. The work may involve providing direct assistance to specialists or analysts by performing a segment of their work, or it may involve responsibility for a stream of products or continuing processes based on direct application of established policies, practices, and criteria. Assignments involve a relatively narrow range of case situations that occur in a broad administrative program or function.

This work typically involves identifying issues, problems, or conditions and seeking alternative solutions based on evaluation of the intent of applicable rules, regulations, and procedures. Assignments requiring evaluative judgment are narrowly focused, address a single product or action, and are relatively clear-cut. The employee usually deals with problems or situations that remain stable and resemble past problems or situations. Assignments often involve problems or situations where there is not one absolutely correct solution, only a best or most appropriate one. Work requires practical knowledge of guidelines and precedent case actions relating to a particular program area equal to that acquired through considerable work experience or specialized training. The work also requires skill to recognize the dimensions of a problem and express ideas in writing.

The appellant's assignments compare favorably with work typical of the GS-6 grade level. The appellant provides public assistance by answering a wide variety of questions in a number of functions, such as lands, minerals, recreation, forestry, personnel, range, etc. She independently questions the customers to ascertain their explicit needs, assists them in identifying and focusing on their desired results, and directs Internet users to specific information on the Web site. The appellant gathers information from internal and external specialists, regulations, other Web sites and through visits to field resources in order to provide accurate and comprehensive assistance to customers through providing information on the Web site, as well as through face-to-face and telephone contact. Each contact situation requires a different approach because of the diversity of information available and the need to review each customer's goals. The appellant's work requires considerable knowledge of BLM's mission, program objectives, and activities; but the information given by the appellant remains relatively constant. For example, the appellant issues

permits for fuel wood, vegetative sales, and mineral materials. While she is the only public desk employee in BLM authorized to issue permits independently, the procedures involved and the questions that arise are recurring and covered by specific regulations.

The appellant performs multiple computer functions necessary to prepare written information responsive to customer needs for both hard copy and Web venues. The appellant also performs the basic administrative functions necessary to maintain the public desk such as designing and laying out the visitor area, procuring supplies, and providing advice and guidance to seasonal employees and volunteers. Overall, the appellant's assignments parallel the difficulty of assignments described at the GS-6 level for the variety and complexity of transactions and the knowledge and ability required to respond to customers' requests.

Work characteristic of the GS-7 grade level consists of specialized duties with continuing responsibility for projects, questions, or problems that arise within an area of a program or functional specialty. Assignments consist of a series of related actions or decisions prior to final completion, and the decisions or recommendations are based on the development and evaluation of information from various sources. The work involves identifying and studying factors or conditions and determining their interrelationships as appropriate to the defined area of work. The work requires knowledge and skill to recognize the dimensions of the problems involved, collect the necessary information, establish the facts, and take or recommend action based upon application or interpretation of established guidelines. It requires practical knowledge, learned through on-the-job training and experience, to deal with the operations, regulations, principles, and peculiarities of the assigned program, function, or activity.

The nature of the appellant's assignments does not meet the increasingly difficult transactions and the broader program aspects described at the GS-7 level where the employee has continuing responsibility for projects. The appellant's assignments are more repetitive in terms of regulations and procedures to be applied and problems to be handled. Her work does not typically involve studying factors or conditions, determining their interrelationships, and recommending action based on an interpretation of established guidelines. In contrast to the GS-7 level, the appellant's assignments do not require her to possess specialized knowledge of a program or functional specialty. Overall, the appellant does not perform a range of clerical or technical work that requires a comprehensive knowledge of special and complex subjects as required at the GS-7 level.

This factor is properly evaluated at the GS-6 level.

#### *Level of responsibility*

This factor addresses aspects of the work such as supervisory controls, guidelines, and contacts.

At the GS-6 level, the supervisor assists with precedent assignments by providing an interpretation of policy or the concepts and theories of the work. Completed work is evaluated for appropriateness and effectiveness. Assistants work under a framework of numerous and varied guidelines, but these are often not completely applicable to the assignment or have gaps in specificity. Employees at this level use judgment in interpreting and adapting guidelines and

base their decisions and recommendations on facts and conventional interpretations of guidelines rather than on theory or opinion. Contacts with others are to provide, receive, or develop information in order to identify problems, needs, or issues, and/or to coordinate work efforts or resolve problems.

The appellant's level of responsibility is typical of the GS-6 level. The appellant acts on her own initiative within previously defined parameters to resolve administrative problems. She performs her assigned duties independently, including contact and coordination with customers to identify products sought and explain information sources and issuing various special permits. The appellant also instructs seasonal and volunteer employees in public desk, computer operations, and other general clerical work. Similar to the GS-6 level, the appellant discusses with the supervisor methods, techniques, and problems identified and consults with the supervisor in selecting the correct part of the most appropriate guideline to apply to each of a large variety of actions, e.g., the application of new decisions and rulings in general terms, the quality of service to be provided, the general sequence and priority of work processes.

As at the GS-6 level, the appellant's work is governed by varied and numerous guidelines (such as various local policies and directives and historical and current guidance relating to public release of information). Judgment and initiative are required in interpreting the guidelines, in developing detailed steps, and in adapting previous requests to most efficiently accomplish similar projects. The appellant's contacts are with interpretive associations, State and local governments, other Federal government agencies, employees within the agency; and the public for the purpose of explaining BLM activities, functions, products and services, and any costs that may be involved. Although the appellant's external contacts are broader than those described in the Guide at the GS-6 level, the purpose of these contacts does not exceed the GS-6 level.

At the GS-7 level, the supervisor makes assignments by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines. Employees work independently, using a general understanding of the expected outcomes and the scope of the assignments, and draw upon experience in resolving the more difficult situations that arise. Completed work is evaluated for appropriateness and conformance to policy. Guides, such as regulations, policy statements, and precedent cases, tend to be general and descriptive of intent, and they do not specifically cover all aspects of the assignment. Guidelines apply less to specific actions and more to the operational characteristics and procedural requirements of the program or function.

Employees at the GS-7 level must use significant judgment and interpretation to apply the guides to specific cases and adapt or improvise procedures to accommodate unusual or one-of-a-kind situations. Even though the personal contacts for GS-7 employees are often the same as those for GS-6 employees, the GS-7 employees serve as a central point of contact to provide authoritative explanations of requirements, regulations, and procedures and to resolve operational problems or disagreements affecting assigned areas.

The appellant's level of responsibility meets, but does not exceed, the GS-6 grade level criteria of the Guide. For example, the appellant's position does not regularly involve situations where specific guidelines do not apply. Although the appellant works independently to complete work assignments and has the latitude to determine the priority of tasks and identify needs, the guides



she uses are more specific and directly applicable than those described at the GS-7 level. Unlike employees at the GS-7 level, the appellant does not serve as the central point of contact to provide authoritative explanations of requirements and regulations or to resolve operational problems or conflicts. While she is the primary contact for the vast majority of questions asked by the public, the ultimate responsibility for providing authoritative explanations of requirements and regulations in technical areas lies with program specialists. The responsibility for resolving operational problems rests with the [organizational work unit] Staff supervisor. Therefore, this factor is evaluated at the GS-6 level.

### *Summary*

The appellant's work equates to the GS-6 grade level in both Nature of assignment and Level of responsibility.

### **Decision**

By comparison with both the standard for the GS-335 Computer Clerk and Assistant Series and the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work, the position is graded at the GS-6 level. The position is properly classified as GS-303-6, with the title at the agency's discretion.