

POSITION CLASSIFICATION STANDARD FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNING SERIES, GS-0023

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes positions whose primary concerns are planning, advising on, and coordinating the use of land, water, and related resources to provide opportunities for the creative use of leisure time outdoors, with due regard to protecting and enhancing the quality of the outdoor environment for the enjoyment of people. The work requires application of knowledge of (a) pertinent aspects of economics, sociology, and other social sciences in the assessment of demand for outdoor recreation, (b) the practices of natural resource conservation involved in the development and coordination of programs to provide recreation resources, and (c) the techniques of area planning.

EXCLUSIONS

Positions whose major duties require primarily competence in other occupations are excluded from the Outdoor Recreation Planning Series. Examples are:

1. Positions concerned with planning, organizing, and coordinating recreation programs and activities for military personnel, patients in hospitals and domiciliaries, and other designated groups are classified in the Recreation Specialist Series, GS-0188. Such positions are concerned primarily with programs oriented to sports, games, crafts, etc., at community centers, at service clubs, or for handicapped groups. By comparison, outdoor recreation planners are concerned with developing and protecting natural resources to assure recreational opportunities for the general public.
2. Positions that involve primarily designing the physical layout, arrangement, and appearance of recreation areas, including the ground forms and structures, are classified in the [Landscape Architecture Series, GS-0807](#).
3. Positions primarily concerned with managing parks, reservoirs, or other areas used for recreation and other purposes are classified in the [Park Management Series, GS-0025](#), or other series as appropriate.
4. Positions involving planning or other work relevant to outdoor recreation, but whose primary duties demand thorough knowledge of, and professional competence in, a particular field such as wildlife biology, forestry, economics, civil engineering, urban planning, or soil conservation, are classified in the appropriate professional series. For example, those professional positions that are concerned primarily with economic studies are classified in the [Economist Series, GS-0110](#). Also, positions concerned with planning for a variety of uses of forest land, such as timber, recreation, and watershed management, would normally be classified in the [Forestry Series, GS-0460](#).

BACKGROUND

Objectives

Outdoor recreation is an important activity on America's lands and waters. Studies have revealed that most Americans seek outdoor recreation and that all indicators – population increase, rising incomes, growing mobility and more leisure time – point to a mounting demand for outdoor recreation. Primary concerns of positions in this occupation are to assess the demand for outdoor recreation and to provide the facilities needed to meet this demand. The land, water, mountains, forests, wildlife, and other outdoor elements which are useful for recreational purposes are considered to be recreation resources.

Outdoor recreation planners insure that outdoor recreation needs are met for people in both urban and rural areas. At the same time, they seek to protect and enhance the scenic and aesthetic quality of the physical environment in which the people live. This concern for the outdoor environment includes open space and other public land in urban areas. The outdoor recreation planner aims to assure opportunities for creative use of leisure time outdoors.

Nature of work

Many outdoor recreation planners are directly involved in the effort to coordinate all Federal outdoor recreation planning, policy, and activity. Some planners assist land managers, scientists, and engineers by developing long-range recreation aspects of such programs as: multiple-use forestry, reservoir or park management, soil conservation, or civil works planning.

Outdoor recreation planners:

- appraise needs for new or expanded outdoor recreation resources;
- identify and classify existing or potential outdoor recreation areas;
- develop and review long-range and short-range outdoor recreation plans to meet present and future needs of the population;
- coordinate and assist Federal, State, local, and private efforts to reclaim and protect the outdoor recreation environment and provide outdoor recreation opportunities;
- administer financial assistance programs to the States, and through States to local public agencies; and
- develop standards and methods for outdoor recreation planning.

Qualifications required

Outdoor recreation planners seek to provide recreation opportunities for people in urban, seashore, forest, and other environments. Consequently, the outdoor recreation planning positions may require consideration of particular aspects of one or more fields, e.g., economics, urban planning, sociology, landscape architecture, forestry, wildlife biology, park administration, or soil conservation. The planners consult at length with specialists in these related fields when the need arises. The planners must possess a framework of knowledge and competence which will not only facilitate communication but provide insight as to which specialists to consult, at which point, and for what reason. The degree to which there is a need for knowledge of certain disciplines will vary with the position.

The following are examples of roles which several disciplines play in outdoor recreation planning:

- Forestry – A large proportion of outdoor recreation activities is on forest lands. A basic familiarity with forest management practices is significant. Such knowledge is important in outdoor recreation planning because of the necessity to consider the behavior of these lands under varying intensities and types of use.
- Sociology – Outdoor recreation planners must understand the relationships between income and other socioeconomic factors, such as education, occupations, leisure, and age in planning outdoor recreation. There is differential participation in outdoor recreation related to income. The variation in participation is especially important when such expensive activities as boating, water skiing, and horseback riding are considered. Also, sensitivity to urban problems in outdoor recreation planning and development is important.
- Wildlife biology – Some understanding of habitat requirements and ecological relationships of wildlife facilities is necessary for planning the use of land and water for recreation purposes. Unless the wildlife requirements are provided for there will not be much prospect of maintaining wildlife in the recreation areas. A similar understanding of aspects of fishery biology is important.
- Economics – Outdoor recreation planners apply some knowledge of economics in calculating recreational benefits. They analyze the currently available supply and distribution of recreational facilities, and project potential demand. Economic considerations must be brought to bear in determining location of facilities, intensity of development, and whether potential use justifies development costs. Also, the difficult evaluation of intangible benefits obtainable from open space, greenbelt areas, and other such resources must be taken into account along with tangible gains or losses when resource development decisions are made.
- Soil and water conservation – Outdoor recreation planners apply an understanding of conservation in determining suitability of land for recreational use and the appropriate conservational practices and measures needed for protection and improvement of the land or

water. The planner must be sensitive to the limitations and treatment needs of soil, water and related resources to create or maintain the quality of the environment through proper management of these resources.

TITLES

Outdoor Recreation Planner is the authorized title for nonsupervisory positions in this series.

Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner is the authorized title for positions that require supervisory qualifications.

CLASSIFICATION FACTORS

Grade levels for outdoor recreation planners are determined through use of two factors: Nature of the Assignment and Level of Responsibility.

Nature of the assignment

This factor deals with the scope, difficulty, and impact of the assignment. It takes into account elements such as:

- (a) the kind and level of planning, coordination, and other leadership duties;
- (b) the values and magnitude of the outdoor recreation resources involved and the activities which take place thereon;
- (c) the complexities resulting from the interrelationships of the economic, intergovernmental, sociological, scenic, physiographic, historical, and other factors influencing resource planning and development;
- (d) the socioeconomic and public interest impact of the projects and programs concerned;
- (e) the controversial or precedent-setting nature of the problems involved;
- (f) the requirements and complexities involved in coordinating and integrating resource planning activities with diverse programs and activities of other governmental and nongovernmental organizations; and
- (g) the knowledge, skills, and mental demands needed to perform the work.

At the lower grade levels the assignments are primarily developmental in nature to provide the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of recreation planner work. At the lower levels, work requires use of generally accepted methods, techniques and practices. At higher

grades the assignments involve planning and coordination problems of increased scope and difficulty, and require considerable knowledge, skills, and insights.

Level of responsibility

This factor takes account of the degree of freedom the recreation planner has in making judgments and taking action, the effect of such judgments and actions on program objectives or policy, the extent of the supervision and guidance he receives, and the extent of review of his recommendations and proposals.

The nature and significance of the outdoor recreation planner's contacts with others is an important consideration in determining the level of responsibility.

At the lower grade levels a good deal of supervisory assistance and control, particularly on unusual matters, is provided. At these levels there is little or no commitment responsibility and personal contacts generally involve matters which are factual and noncontroversial. At the higher grades there is freedom to plan and carry out assignments within the framework of general objectives and basic administrative controls. At these higher levels personal contacts are especially important and often involve controversial matters. The impact of actions, recommendations, and decisions is substantial.

EVALUATION NOTES

This standard provides grade level criteria for outdoor recreation planner positions having nonsupervisory duties and responsibilities which are grade controlling.

Outdoor recreation planner positions that have significant supervisory responsibilities should be evaluated by use of both this standard and the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#).

This standard does not provide specific criteria for evaluation of positions above grade GS-13. Most such positions are supervisory positions. They are classifiable by reference to the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#). Nonsupervisory positions above GS-13 should be evaluated by extrapolation from the criteria in this standard and the application of sound position classification judgment.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER, GS-0023-05

Nature of the assignment

This is a trainee level. Assignments consist of a variety of standardized tasks and are selected to provide: (1) training and on-the-job experience in methods, procedures and techniques relevant to recreation surveys and studies; (2) an orientation to the agency's programs, policies and procedures; (3) a basis for more responsible assignments.

Typical assignments include: (1) carrying out designated portions of an inventory of existing recreation resources; (2) preparing graphs, charts, and other types of data utilized in presenting material produced by higher grade recreation planners; (3) gathering and analyzing facts which are part of a larger study; and (4) reviewing material prepared by other agencies for completeness and ascertaining that all necessary documents are presented.

Level of responsibility

Higher grade outdoor recreation planners provide detailed instructions and close guidance and review before, during, and after performance of assignments. Public contacts are limited to obtaining more or less routine information for study purposes.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER, GS-0023-07

Nature of the assignment

This is the developmental level. GS-7 planners perform tasks which expand their repertoires of methods and techniques and further develop skills in recreation planning. They carry out varied assignments which expose them to various work situations and problems.

Outdoor Recreation Planners GS-7 perform fact finding, analytical, and interpretive work which supports broader assignments of higher grade planners. Assignments are usually screened beforehand for unusual or difficult problems. The assignments typically require use of a range of established procedures and a grasp of basic policies and principles applicable to recreation planning and development.

GS-7 planners apply familiarity with established agency planning procedures, whereas GS-5 planners acquire such familiarity.

GS-7 planners perform such tasks as the following:

- gather and analyze data related to existing and potential recreation resources, with responsibility for recognizing prominent trends;

- correlate, adjust, and correct statistical data;
- identify resource study problems for consideration by higher level planners;
- prepare data summaries and basic drafts of supporting material for inclusion in resource study reports;
- carry out the routine aspects of review and evaluation of project proposals submitted by agencies requesting financial assistance under grants-in-aid programs.

Level of responsibility

The supervisor specifically describes purpose and scope of the assignments and problems to be anticipated. The supervisor spot checks routine work to evaluate progress and determine compliance with instructions. S/He is readily available for consultation when problems are encountered and closely reviews any nonroutine matters. Completed work is thoroughly reviewed for accuracy of conclusions and overall acceptability.

Outdoor Recreation Planners GS-7 are expected to support any tentative evaluations reflected in draft material they prepare. Their limited recommendations are thoroughly reviewed.

GS-7 planners make personal contacts to gather and exchange information and to explain established policies and requirements. Contacts with other agencies or private groups involve only noncontroversial items. Personal contacts are usually made in the presence of higher level planners.

GS-7 planners are subject to occasional checks on the familiar phases of their work. They receive very detailed instructions and frequent supervision on new facets. By comparison, GS-5 planners receive close supervision on all assignments.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER, GS-0023-09

Nature of the assignment

Outdoor Recreation Planners GS-9 perform difficult and responsible work involving review, analysis, evaluation or coordination of matters related to recreation planning, development, and use. They apply resourcefulness and judgment in dealing with problems in selecting, adapting, and applying accepted principles, precedents and procedures to recreation planning and development. GS-9 is the first level at which the planners work independently to any significant degree on other than very routine assignments. GS-9 planners apply significant understanding of the programs to their assignments. By comparison, GS-7 assignments are screened so as to require primarily knowledge of well-established procedures and practices.

Representative assignments are to:

- Serve as a team member on studies to determine if areas constituting a complex of land and water resources, e.g., a river basin or group of islands, possess natural and recreational values worthy of inclusion within a system of Federal, State, city, or other local outdoor recreation areas. Identify existing and potential recreation resources and develop and analyze the data needed for supporting recommendations and report. The data may include information about land use, ownership, and values; water use and values; scenic, geological and historical features; flora and fauna; visitation; and other relevant geographic, socioeconomic, or political items.
- Investigate, review and evaluate project proposals for grants-in-aid assistance to determine technical soundness, economic feasibility and compliance with the statutory requirements for financial assistance in acquiring and developing outdoor recreation facilities. Determine that documentation submitted adequately explains purpose and scope of the specific projects and that the project proposals are in accord with approved comprehensive long-range outdoor recreation plans for a State or other entity. Make on-site inspections and contact officials at various governmental levels to develop information needed for the review of the project. Make recommendations for action on proposals and prepare supporting material.
- Review applications for permits for dredging, filling, excavation, and other work in navigable waters to determine whether the proposed work conflicts with outdoor recreation programs or has a significant impact on outdoor recreation resources and natural beauty. Work closely with Federal, State, and local officials concerned, and conduct field reviews of proposed projects as necessary. Prepare findings, comments, and recommendations for decision by higher authority.

Level of responsibility

The supervisor specifies the scope of the assignments, objectives, and desired end product. GS-9 planners are expected to take the initiative and work independently on routine aspects of their assignments. They do not receive the intensive supervision received by GS-7 planners. In all controversial matters and when problems occur that are not covered by guides, precedents or accepted practices, GS-9 planners consult higher level planners. Completed work is subject to general technical and administrative review. GS-9 planners make recommendations on project proposals and permit reviews. The recommendations are major considerations in decisions on development or use of recreational resources.

GS-9 planners deal extensively with Government officials at various levels and private individuals to:

1. Provide basic technical assistance on standard, noncontroversial studies;
2. Obtain planning data;

3. Exchange information; and
4. Discuss routine aspects of cooperative undertakings.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER, GS-0023-11

Nature of the assignment

GS-11 planners perform assignments requiring substantial resourcefulness and the exercise of experienced judgment. They analyze, evaluate and coordinate matters involving recreation planning, development, and use. They evaluate several alternative approaches to problems and select the best. They regularly adapt standard guides, methods, principles, and procedures in carrying out their duties. GS-11 planners must understand and know the organizational, political, economic, social and conservational factors involved in recreation planning and use. Consequently, their assignments are broader in scope than those of GS-9 planners, whose analyses are more basic, require a less developed level of expertise, and less mature judgment. GS-9 assignments are usually segments of the broader studies and require application of existing policies and procedures.

Representative assignments for Outdoor Recreation Planners GS-11 are to:

- Review and appraise comprehensive outdoor recreation development plans and projects of Federal and State agencies to ascertain how they relate to each other and to developments in the field of recreation. Through contacts with officials of Federal and State agencies, and other organizations promote coordination and cooperation in the development of outdoor recreation plans. Recommend courses of action looking toward optimum results from recreation planning in the jurisdiction.
- Conduct studies to evaluate the recreational potential of water resource projects aimed at providing general guides to future water resource development and land acquisition. These studies are basic to more intensive study and planning for the development of water and related land resources of river basins or subbasins. These studies include investigating and inventorying existing and potential recreation resources, analyzing population distribution, judging needs for recreation lands and facilities, and examining relationships of needs to growth and mobility of the population and to the economy.
- Gather data, analyze problems, make recommendations for action and provide leadership in a program for disposing of surplus property for parks and recreation uses. Process applications from State and local governments to acquire surplus real property. Visit park sites, confer with public officials, work out with such officials plans for utilizing the property, and prepare reports with recommendations.
- Conduct comprehensive studies of large existing recreational complexes or reservoir developments to reassess recreational development needs and to determine the means to

achieve optimum recreation use for the useful life of the project. Make studies relating to water supply, sewage disposal, traffic control, safety, and protection for public use areas.

- Work closely with the State to which assigned and render technical advice and assistance in developing its project proposals for matching Federal funds. Review and evaluate complex project proposals that require a high awareness of resource capabilities, demands for recreation, priorities, intergovernmental relationships, and other interrelated factors.

Level of responsibility

GS-11 outdoor recreation planners carry out their assignments within the framework of basic agency policies, defined objectives, and approved procedures. The supervisors indicate the general scope of assignments. GS-11 planners have considerable freedom in planning their day-to-day work and in choosing appropriate methods and techniques for executing various tasks. Higher level planners advise on special problem areas such as applying new policies and making evaluations where controversial and complex matters are involved.

Their recommendations deal with (1) disposal of surplus property for recreation use, (2) development programs for areas which possess recreation potential, (3) areas desirable for acquisition and development for recreational purposes, (4) disposition of State and agency requests for recreation development funds. Complete work is reviewed for overall adequacy and soundness of results obtained.

Nature and variety of contacts are similar to those at the GS-9 level, but GS-11 planners exercise even greater tact and diplomacy in dealing with professionals in other disciplines, other agencies, and groups. They seek solutions to problems and exchange information through the personal contacts.

GS-11 planners seek assistance on unusually complex problems or matters of policy; GS-9 planners do not function so independently. Planners at GS-9 are not likely to be placed in charge of complete reconnaissance studies.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER, GS-0023-12

Nature of the assignment

GS-12 planners carry out assignments which require highly developed and experienced judgment and a great deal of originality and resourcefulness. They identify problems in the development and management of recreation resources. They work especially on matters of controversy, inadequate data, inconsistent procedures or lack of guides. By comparison, GS-11 planners have complex but well defined assignments. GS-12 planners operate with marked freedom from technical control in selecting techniques and establishing methods and procedures for problem solving or program execution. They identify alternatives in seeking settlement of conflicts and negotiate sensitive issues.

Representative assignments for Outdoor Recreation Planners GS-12 are to:

- Develop guidelines, standards, and procedures for recreation planning elements such as: measuring and reporting recreation use and predicting demand; analyzing recreation values; establishing and maintaining fee programs; operating and managing concessions; and other resource planning and management aspects.
- Provide technical assistance and advice to numerous establishments in an area on various phases of recreation plan development. Concentrate on particularly difficult and complex matters. Provide guidance in studies and development of recreation inventories and plans.
- Review or direct the recreation planning aspects of intensive and comprehensive water resource studies. Such studies are used in developing comprehensive basinwide plans for the conservation and development of water and related land resources. These studies require an in-depth analysis of the organizational, economic, social, intergovernmental and conservational factors involved. The planners also give full consideration to the natural, scenic, cultural and historic values of the environment. Coordinate recreation planning aspects with Federal, State, local and private planning agencies. Direct the preparation of reports on findings and recommendations.
- Review, evaluate and recommend the disposition of community requests for financial aid in acquiring and developing land for park, recreation, scenic, or historic purposes in or near urban areas. Controversy is involved or the community relations aspects are unusually sensitive; or some other unusual combination of complicating interrelationships is present in the assignment.

Level of responsibility

GS-12 planners receive most assignments in terms of broad objectives, emphasis, and relative order of priority for completion of projects. During the course of work, little or no technical guidance is provided except in critical or controversial issues. Policy controversies are resolved by consultation with supervisors. Completed assignments are reviewed to insure they meet program objectives. Reviewing authorities seldom question the decisions and recommendations of GS-12 planners on matters not involving policy considerations.

GS-12 planners are relied upon as authoritative sources of information in many facets of recreation resource projects.

GS-12 planners have broad, varied, and highly important public contacts. They may represent their bureaus at conferences with Federal, State, local and private officials to discuss recreation resource planning and management matters, to seek cooperation, to resolve differences, and to formulate working agreements.

GS-12 planners have substantial latitude in determining which areas merit study and in structuring their assignments. By comparison, GS-11 planners receive guidance on unusual or controversial assignments.

GS-12 positions also differ from those at GS-11 in that their greater breadth and depth of experience enable GS-12 planners to provide direction and guidance to lower level planners and review their work prior to submission to the supervisor. GS-12 planners handle the somewhat controversial, sensitive, and multifaceted problems.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNER, GS-0023-13

Nature of the assignment

GS-13 assignments call for high leadership skills and expert problem-solving abilities. These assignments generally involve recreation planning matters which are particularly complex, highly controversial, precedent-setting in nature, or entail especially intricate coordination problems. GS-13 planners must have a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the many facets of large scale programs for developing outdoor recreation resources and enhancing the quality of the physical environment. GS-13 assignments involve projects, programs, and actions which have widespread impact and affect the planning and operations of numerous entities, public and private. By comparison, GS-12 assignments, though complex and sensitive, are not as controversial and do not call for development of the agency position on controversial issues without guidance.

Representative assignments for Outdoor Recreation Planners GS-13 are to:

- Serve as functional leader or program chief in charge of a major phase of the agency's total program at the regional level in developing goals, standards, methods and systems for furthering outdoor recreation planning and development programs. Analyze trends and developments, and identify needed research and experimentation. Make recommendations for consideration by regional or higher level officials. Direct the preparation of instructions, information, and guidelines for use on a regional basis.
- Review or conduct studies of national significance such as wild and scenic rivers, island groups, and national recreation areas. Guide progress of studies to insure proper direction and completion. Coordinate study programs with Federal, State, and local agencies having an interest. Develop guidelines for Federal acquisition of land for recreational purposes and monitor activities of local agencies in this regard. Contribute substantially to the formulation of proposals for developing and administering the resource areas under study. Provide advice and assistance on policy matters to regional and field offices, States, and local agencies.

Level of responsibility

GS-13 outdoor recreation planners take the lead in problem solving which involves critical and controversial issues. They play a prominent leadership role in special area studies of national significance or of outstanding importance.

GS-13 planners identify needs for policy, regulatory, or legislative change and participate in the drafting of new legislation. Also, they prepare backup material for their supervisors or high officials to use at congressional hearings. They are relied upon for giving direction to modification of policies and programs having a widespread impact. They recommend and take actions within the broad outlines of established policy and objectives. Their recommendations are the bases for decisions on allocations of recreation development funds and important decisions affecting the use of land, water, and other resources. By comparison, GS-12 planners make recommendations on specific projects.

GS-13 planners represent their bureaus in discussing matters of primary importance with Federal, State, and private organizations. They are agency spokesmen in their functional areas on such occasions. They work out compromises where conflict exists on programs of unusual magnitude or which have unusual impact.

Technical accuracy and adequacy of the work of GS-13 planners is assumed. Review of their work is in the form of review and discussion of findings, recommendations, and policy implications.

GS-13 outdoor recreation planners are instrumental in bringing about policy change. By comparison, GS-12 planners may suggest areas where policy revisions are needed to their supervisors. GS-13 planners are considered to be technical experts within their functions.