

Position Classification Flysheet for Soil Conservation Technician Series, GS-0458

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes all positions that require a practical knowledge of the methods and techniques of soil, water, and environmental conservation as they relate to agricultural operations and land use measures. Soil conservation technicians advise property holders on the effectiveness of applying soil and water conservation practices or assist in research efforts.

This standard supersedes the standard for the Soil Conservation Technician Series, GS-0458, which was issued in March 1987.

EXCLUSIONS

1. Classify positions that require a professional knowledge of the field of soil and water conservation in the [Soil Conservation Series, GS-0457](#).
2. Classify positions that primarily require the application of a practical knowledge of the methods and techniques of surveying in the [Surveying Technician Series, GS-0817](#).
3. Classify positions that primarily provide technical support in forestry work which involves the application of a practical knowledge of the methods and techniques of forestry in the [Forestry Technician Series, GS-0462](#).
4. Classify positions that primarily provide technical support in range conservation work which involves the application of a practical knowledge of the methods and techniques of range conservation in the [Range Technician Series, GS-0455](#).

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Most soil conservation technicians are found in first level units and are principally concerned with working with agriculture concerns. However, some work with representatives of local governmental units or land developers to implement resource conservation and development measures such as installing nylon filter cloth and riprap on a shoreline to protect a part from continued soil erosion; erecting carp control traps and barriers to prevent carp from damaging the bottom of lakes and marshes; ensuring or increasing viability of a wetland adjacent to a shopping mall development site; or performing comparable work.

However, the primary focus of most soil conservation technician's work is to support the professional soil conservationist's efforts to market the concept of conserving soil to achieve optimum land use consistent with sound soil and water conservation objectives. The soil conservation technician gathers preliminary data for use in developing such products as physical resource plans, papers on the history of land use, and/or documentation of conservation practices currently being applied for a land unit or area. The technician then typically surveys, plots, lays out, and stakes selected sites and assists landowners in selecting, installing, and maintaining a

variety of measures that conserve and improve the soil, plant, water, marsh, wildlife, and/or recreational resources of a land area. Examples of single conservation measures which may be installed on a land site include contour cultivation, grass waterways, terracing, tree planting, field windbreaks, irrigation ditches, grass and legume seeding, and farm drains. Examples of multiple conservation practices applied to treat a physical resource include center pivot irrigation and strip cropping; conservation tillage practices (till plant, chisel plant, rotary strip, slot, and chisel plow), fertilization, and pesticide application; or land leveling, surface irrigation and conservation cropping systems. In addition, a combination approach involving seedings, terraces, diversions, ponds, sod waterways, erosion control structures, and wildlife habitat may be necessary.

Many soil conservation technicians revise established conservation plans for one or more assigned land unit(s) in accordance with the objective for the unit(s) as outlined in the organization's annual plan of operations. This work involves scheduling visits with landowners to determine whether additional conservation measures should be applied to complete the original plan, or whether modifications to current and projected measures are necessary. Consideration must also be given to such concerns as the landowner's financial capability to meet the expenses of implementing these measures and changed conditions due to such criteria as availability of new plant materials or new soil and water conservation techniques; advances in equipment usage; or changes in market conditions, soil fertility, pesticides, and herbicides. Significant changes to the plans for a land unit, such as those involving fundamental change in land use or agriculture operations, would normally require an evaluation by a soil conservationist.

After a plan of action has been developed or approved by the soil conservationist and construction has begun, the soil conservation technician typically inspects different phases of the construction project as regards to the established criteria for conserving soil and water resources. Such efforts may include inspecting ponds, grade stabilization structures, earthen dams, tile outlet terraces, and animal waste control facilities to ensure the work is done correctly and that it complies with the reimbursable agreements. Upon completion of construction, the soil conservation technician prepares inspection reports concerning contractor compliance with the approved plans and specifications.

Many soil conservation technicians provide educational services consisting of formal lectures to elementary and secondary students, participation in fairs and exhibits, preparation of news articles, organization of soil and water conservation tours for landowners, and demonstrations or explanations of a specific conservation measure to groups of contractors or landowners. Some soil conservation technicians, in varying degrees, assist the soil conservationist in administration of a first level unit through activity such as accumulating data or performing other activity related to developing annual work plans for a county or other designated area; maintaining basic functions in an office when the soil conservationist is out; and performing other comparable duties.

TITLES

Soil Conservation Aid is the authorized title for positions at grades GS-3 and below.

Soil Conservation Technician is the authorized title for positions at grades GS-4 and above.
Lead Soil Conservation Technician is the authorized title for positions that meet the criteria of the [General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide](#).

Supervisory Soil Conservation Technician is the authorized title for positions that meet the criteria of the appropriate [supervisory guide](#).

In addition, agencies may supplement the basic title by adding a parenthetical suffix, where necessary, to identify duties and responsibilities which reflect specific knowledges and skills required in the work.

EVALUATING POSITIONS

The Soil Conservation Technician Series, GS-0458, is a one grade interval series for purposes of personnel administration. Additional information on the nature of technician work and criteria for determining grade levels are contained in the [Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-0400](#).