

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability  
Classification Appeals Program

Chicago Field Services Group  
230 S. Dearborn Street, DPN-30-6  
Chicago, IL 60604-1687

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

**Appellant:** [appellant]

**Agency classification:** Civil Engineer  
GS-810-11

**Organization:** Engineering Group  
[location] Ranger District  
[name] National Forest  
[name] Region – Region [#]  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
[city and state]

**OPM decision:** Civil Engineer  
GS-810-11

**OPM decision number:** C-0810-11-08

Ricardo Sims for

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William B. Middendorf, Jr.  
Classification Appeals Officer

December 29, 2003

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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]  
[name] National Forest  
[address]  
[city and state]

[representative]  
President, Local [#####]  
National Federation of Federal Employees  
[name] National Forest  
[address]  
[city and state]

[human resources officer]  
Human Resources Officer  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
[location] National Forest  
[address]  
[city and state]

Director, Human Resources Management  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 96090  
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Director of Human Resources Management  
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J.S. Whitten Building, Room 302-W  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

## **Introduction**

On March 4, 2003, the Chicago Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant] who is employed as a Civil Engineer, GS-810-11, in the Engineering Group of the [name/location] Ranger District of the [name] National Forest in [city and state]. The [name] National Forest is part of the [location] Region, U.S. Forest Service (FS), Department of Agriculture. The appellant requests that his position be reclassified to Civil Engineer, GS-810-12. He believes the agency did not credit him for his full range of engineering knowledge and the independence with which he performs his work. We received the agency administrative report on May 5, 2003. We have accepted and decided the appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **Background**

The appellant's position description (PD) was updated to reflect his current work on December 11, 2001. The appellant appealed to his agency and received its original decision February 11, 2002, sustaining the classification as Civil Engineer, GS-810-11. The appellant requested changes to be made to the February 11, 2002, agency classification to remove what the appellant said were incorrect statements regarding the appellant's position. The agency made the corrections and issued a revised decision April 29, 2002, upholding their classification. The appellant subsequently appealed the classification of his position to OPM.

## **General issues**

Although the appellant agrees that his PD accurately describes his duties and responsibilities, he does not agree with the classification of his position at the GS-11 level. The appellant based his appeal on the premise that he believes the duties quoted in his position description should be rated a GS-12 and the agency's classification decision was hastily done. His appeal specifically addresses the full range of engineering duties as described in Parts II, III, and IV of the GS-810 Civil Engineering Position Classification Standard (PCS).

In adjudicating his appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of his position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing his current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). This decision is based on the work currently assigned to and performed by the appellant and sets aside any previous agency decision. Therefore, the classification practices used by the appellant's agency in classifying his position are not germane to the classification appeal process.

## **Position information**

The [name] National Forest is located in [state/location]. Both the [national forest] and the [name] National Forests were established by presidential proclamations in 1933. Since 1993, these two national forests have been managed as one, with headquarters offices in both [city] and [city and state]. The appellant serves as the Bridge and Dam Engineer in the Forest providing civil engineering support and technical advice for the design, construction, and inspection of the

bridge and dam programs. The appellant is responsible for 66 vehicle bridges, 125 trail bridges and 49 dams located throughout the five Districts and over 1.6 million acres that comprise the Forest. The appellant reports to the GS-13, Forest Engineer, who provides administrative direction in terms of broadly defined missions or functions. The supervisor, along with the Contracting Officer, consider recommendations from the appellant and determine what bridge or dam projects or maintenance will be undertaken during the fiscal year. The appellant plans all technical aspects of his work, establishes priorities and work schedules, approves minor changes, and handles all contacts with the public and Federal, State and local agencies. He insures that inspections, records, and reports conform to National Bridge Inspection Standards and to requirements in Forest Manual 7736. When unexpected repairs are needed, he determines what needs to be done, estimates the cost, and takes the information to his supervisor and Contracting Officer before the work is contracted out. The results of his work are considered technically authoritative and are usually accepted without significant modification. His work is reviewed for the achievement of program objectives. The appellant's structural design plans are reviewed by the regional office and any plan variants must be approved by the Washington office. The appellant is expected to advise his supervisor or the Contracting Officer of issues and matters that warrant the attention or require higher-level approval.

The appellant also serves as the Contracting Officer Representative (COR) providing professional engineering expertise, technical advice, recommendations, and suitable alternatives to the Contracting Officer and Forest officials. The appellant is responsible for contract compliance on all assigned projects. The appellant's duties in this context include the review of maintenance construction proposals for technical accuracy and feasibility, alternative considerations and cost saving options. He writes construction contracts and bid documents in conjunction with the Contracting Officer. He reviews all proposed construction changes and modifications, recommending major changes to the Contracting Officer or his supervisor. He interprets agency policy and contracts for contractors and resolves problems relating to plans, specifications, materials, and reports.

The appellant's other duties include structural and geotechnical engineering designs for other Forest facilities and safety and building code interpretations. He also completes designs and maintenance plans for solar energy installations as needed. However, these additional duties do not represent a significant portion of the appellant's time.

In reaching our classification decision, a representative of the Chicago Human Capital Group conducted a telephone audit with the appellant on June 5, 2003, and a telephone interview with his immediate supervisor on June 19, 2003. In deciding this appeal, we fully considered the audit, the interview findings, and all information of record provided by the appellant and his agency, including his current work assignments and position description (PD) of record. Both the appellant and his supervisor have certified to the accuracy of the appellant's official PD, number [#####].

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

The agency has assigned the appellant's position to the Civil Engineering Series, GS-810. The GS-810 Civil Engineering Series includes professional positions in the field of civil engineering,

typically requiring application of general knowledge of the physical sciences and mathematics underlying engineering, and specialized knowledge of the mechanics of solids, hydraulics, theory of structure, strength of materials, engineering geology, and surveying. This standard consists of the following sets of grade-level criteria: Part I Criteria for grades GS-5 and GS-7; Part II, Planning and Design; Part III Construction; Part IV Facilities Engineering Management; and Part V Investigations and Survey.

We find the title, Civil Engineer, and GS-810 series to be proper for this position. Neither the appellant nor the agency disagrees with this determination.

## **Grade determination**

### *Evaluation using the GS-810 PCS*

Parts II, III, and IV of the GS-810 Position Classification Standard (PCS) have been used to evaluate the incumbent's position. Critical to the correct application of position classification standards is an understanding of the full intent of a particular factor or grade level. Simply matching the duties of a position to words, phrases, or an illustration in the standards can lead to inappropriate interpretation and inaccurate grade level determinations. It is extremely important, therefore, to understand the full content of the criteria provided for a particular factor level or grade level. Moreover, it is essential to view illustrations and examples within the full context of the grading criteria for which they are provided.

#### *Part II, Planning and design*

This part covers the actual performance of the planning and design functions. This includes the coordination, review, and analysis of such work done by other engineers or contract engineering firms; review of plans and designs submitted by applicants for project approval; and development of techniques and methodology for carrying out these functions. It defines grade levels in terms of: (1) the inherent complexity of the planning and design problems assigned and (2) the level of judgment and authority exercised. The standard uses the terms conventional work and advanced work to indicate levels of complexity. Conventional work can be accomplished by applying or adapting standard references, criteria, and precedents. Advanced work requires searching out and selecting laws, formulas, principles and materials and applying them to novel situations. Advanced work may involve using new methodology or evolving new design concepts and criteria for systems, structures, or materials. The level of judgment and authority exercised is determined by (1) the kind and degree of supervision received; (2) the extent to which the employee must assess or identify the scope of the assignment and the methods used to complete the work; and (3) the extent of responsibility delegated with the work.

At the GS-11 level, engineers are expected to be well versed in the standard theory and practices in their field and to proceed without technical instructions or guidance in applying these to conventional projects or pieces of work. The GS-11 level engineer receives assignments of conventional work with a general indication of results expected, and must identify the limits of the problems involved, the kinds of controlling data needed, and the criteria and techniques to be applied. Conventional work often requires consideration of and selection from several

alternative approaches or solutions to problems to arrive at the best treatment from a technical standpoint, and sometimes requires substantial adaptation of standard guides and criteria. The GS-11 engineer obtains guidance from the supervisor, or higher authorities, on how to proceed when there are critical problems regarding cost versus optimum technical solutions, prioritizing operational needs, or responding to conflicting political or public interest pressure.

The GS-11 engineer is responsible for coordinating his/her area or phase of work with engineers concerned with related specialized phases, to arrive at mutually satisfactory approaches and solutions to problems. When the GS-11 engineer is assigned work of an advanced nature, the supervisor usually defines the limits and objectives of the assignment, and during the course of the work discusses and makes suggestions about the use of untried or unusual techniques or methods. As indicated in the standard, a typical example of a conventional GS-11 level civil engineer assignment would be preparing designs and specifications setting forth required capacity, size, location and materials and methods to be used in building various roads and allied structures in parks. The engineer must consider such things as landscape features and providing for heavy water runoff and drainage.

The complexity of the appellant's projects/assignments fully meets the GS-11 level. He is well versed in standard civil engineering theories and practices, applying these to conventional projects without technical instruction or guidance. The appellant performs all the design civil engineering for the bridge and dam programs and is responsible for assigned projects from initiation to completion. In doing so he is responsible for the full range of technical and administrative tasks associated with bridge and dam projects including the planning, design and estimate, selection and negotiation with the contractor, and the review of the construction process. These types of assignments favorably compare to example six discussed earlier at the GS-11 level. Most projects are conventional in nature and are performed in conjunction with contractors.

The appellant states that his position meets the GS-12 grade level because he must define and solve problems obscure in nature in his determination of dam hazard rating, hydrological analysis, designs of cofferdams, bridge abutments in unstable ground, and retaining walls. An example of this was when the [name] Flowage Dam was rebuilt which included hydrological design and modeling, dam break analysis, coordination and getting approval from outside agencies, writing contracts, designing and writing, administering the cofferdams, and the final construction of the dam. In addition, he presented plans to the [state] Department of Natural Resources, dam emergency action plans must be presented, updated and advocated to local Counties, and bridge projects are coordinated with [state] Department of Transportation. These plans must also be justified to higher authorities such as getting approval from the Washington Office for variants on dam design standards. He also must develop schedules and consults with State agencies on all his dam and bridge projects. When requested, the incumbent consults with the Forest Products Lab, the Forest Sciences Labs, and academic researchers on designs and monitoring of bridges, dams, towers, and other structure and safety issues. The appellant receives little or no technical advice from his supervisor. As the Individual-in-Charge, he is responsible for the full range of technical and administrative work associated with the project. In addition, there are well-documented designs prepared for previous bridges and dams that the appellant regularly utilizes in his planning and design work.

At the GS-12 level, engineers are not only well-versed in standard theory and practices in their field, but must have gained further experience and know-how that will enable them to identify and define the nature and scope of obscure problems, and to project assumptions and derive criteria from inconclusive or variable data. Assignments at this level typically include (1) individual work on advanced planning or design problems, or (2) responsibility for coordinating or monitoring planning and design work that is largely conventional in nature, but which encompasses a number of components or phases of project work.

Individual assignments carried out by GS-12 engineers deal with systems or facilities that (a) encompass a fairly wide range of interrelated elements some of which are conflicting and difficult to reconcile or accommodate, (b) pose critical problems of performance requirements vs. costs, under application of standard materials and criteria, or (c) require designs and plans which must deal with factors of an undetermined or unprecedented nature. The engineer must engage in intensive search and study of the approaches applied and results obtained in similar situations, the findings of research and study on related problems, manufacturer's and laboratory reports on materials and equipment, or other similar sources of information. From each study, and from firsthand investigation and observation, the engineer extends or modifies existing criteria or techniques or develops new approaches to the solution or problems. The engineer may develop prototypes, models, or other testing criteria and methods to try out or validate design assumptions and approaches.

Illustrative assignments at the GS-12 level include: (1) defining criteria for, and giving technical review to assisting engineers in the development of specifications for projects of highly specialized nature, such as facilities to house and support scientific experimentation and systems development operations; the operations utilize novel mechanical and electrical equipment systems, requiring highly customized housing, foundations and utilities; (2) conducting preliminary investigations and planning for public work projects, e.g., hydroelectric power development in a river basin, and preparing reports and recommendations that serve as a basis for project approval and funding, including ascertaining the amount of power that can be produced by the facilities (dams and reservoirs) that can be constructed in the basin, in relation to the other uses which these facilities must serve (conservation, navigation, recreation, irrigation, and the like); developing preliminary designs and cost estimates based on such factors as the type of power plant and equipment, including capacity of generating units to be installed, layout of principal features including intakes, penstocks, powerhouse, tailrace and switchyard; and estimating the total cost of the hydroelectric power production project and translating into a schedule of annual charges to customers, based on cost of construction, interest, maintenance and operation, amortized over a specified period of years; and (3) furnishing technical guidance and coordinating project work on irrigation engineering matters in an area characterized by considerable variation in physiography, climate, soil conditions and agricultural practices for construction and operation of irrigation facilities usually carried out cooperatively under several jurisdictions with such complicating situations as variations or conflicts in application and interpretation of water rights, lack of uniformity in organizing and financing operations, differences in methods and standards traditionally applied to different crops and areas, and the like; adapting and modifying facility designs and operational methods to accommodate a variety

of needs and situations; and consulting with and working out compromises with, and gains the cooperation of, representatives of the several jurisdictions and user organizations involved.

Though some assignments may require advanced work, the work examples provided do not show that the appellant performs GS-12 level work on a regular and recurring basis. These assignments are representative of conventional projects that are within the GS-11 level as defined in the PCS. Unexpected problems, such as incorrect drive pilings, design plans and changes, and changes in ground conditions, impact the design and planning functions, but do not meet the GS-12 criteria to “identify and define the nature and scope of obscure problems” and “derive criteria from inconclusive or variable data”. These problems are not unexpected, but rather are common problems typical of bridge and dam engineering. When the kinds of critical or overriding problems identified above arise, the appellant is empowered to resolve the problem(s) on his own.

Although he is responsible for coordinating and monitoring conventional planning and design work, particularly when contractors and other outside sources are involved, he is not faced with identifying and defining the nature and scope of obscure engineering problems, where the engineer must project assumptions and derive criteria from inconclusive or variable data. As previously noted, he deals with conventional engineering problems typical of bridge and dam construction. Most of the appellant’s projects meet the GS-11 grade level since they involve applying standard theory and practices in the field to conventional projects or pieces of work but often require consideration of, and selection from, several alternative approaches or solutions to problems to arrive at the best treatment from a technical standpoint. They sometimes require substantial adaptation of standardized guides and criteria. Our analysis fully considered the solar and water tower designs that the appellant performs in addition to his regular and recurring duties for the Forest. We found no indication that he regularly works on projects having advanced planning and design problems encompassing the elements characteristic of the GS-12 level summarized above.

Unlike the GS-12 level, the appellant is not required to do any independent work on advanced planning or design problems, as any variants on dam design standards must get approval from the Washington office. There is no evidence of any obscure problems with the dam work he has referenced. Any responsibility he may have for coordinating or monitoring planning and design work encompassing a number of components or phases of project work falls to his supervisor who is the Forest Engineer and has the ultimate authority in these matters. Again, the appellant is not required to perform such complex work. As the Forest’s Bridge and Dam Program Engineer, he performs work that is considered “conventional work”.

Although the appellant operates with considerable independence and his completed work is accepted as technically accurate, reviewed only in terms of meeting general engineering requirements, his degree of judgment and authority must be considered within the context of the limited complexity of his planning and design projects. As previously noted, the appellant’s assignments are conventional in nature and do not meet the scope and technical complexity typical of the GS-12 level. Therefore, we find the appellant’s overall planning and design program management functions are credited at the GS-11 grade level.



### *Part III, Construction*

This part covers surveillance and control of construction operations. The two elements used in evaluation of construction engineering positions are: (1) level and kind of authority exercised, and (2) scope and complexity of construction operations. The point values indicated for the degrees or levels under these elements are to be converted to grades by applying the grade-level conversion table in the PCS.

#### *Element 1 - Level and kind of authority exercised*

This element is concerned with the kinds of functions performed or supervised by the engineer, and the relative independence and authority with which he carries out these functions. Supervision over the work of inspectors, technicians, sometimes other engineers, and, in some cases, administrative personnel, is an integral part of the responsibility of engineers who exercise surveillance over construction operations. The nature of supervisory authority and responsibilities directly related to (1) the kinds of functions performed, and (2) the scope of construction operations under the engineer's control. These factors are used to define degrees and levels in the 810 standard, the first under Element 1 and the second under Element 2.

Engineers may perform functions associated with the "office" or the "field" side of construction operations, or they may perform a combination of these functions. Different kinds of authority are normally associated with the two kinds of functions, and these are indicated in the degree definitions under this element.

The degree of independence with which the engineer carries out these functions is generally related to the location of his/her position in the construction surveillance activity. For example, the engineer in charge of construction operations for a project usually makes decisions on certain questions, thus restricting the independence with which an engineer may act in those areas.

Element 1 has a range of 5 degrees, A through E, with point values of 20, 30, 40, 50, and 60, respectively. Only these specific values are to be assigned. Only Degrees A, C, and E are defined in this standard. They depict three common levels of authority in construction project organizations. Degrees B and D are not defined, but are to be used when a position falls between the defined degrees. They are especially for use in complex construction organizations established for large-scale construction operations. Therefore, the degrees are cumulative in nature. Thus, in order for a given degree level to be credited, the position must fully meet the criteria for that degree. If the criteria are only partially met, a lower degree level must be assigned.

The appellant believes that he exercises the full range of field and office engineering functions as described by Degree E, and that he makes determinations and takes action virtually without review; and believes his work should be credited at Degree E.

At Degree C, the engineer is usually responsible for one of the major portions of construction on a project or throughout a geographical area. A "major portion" would be such work as (1) the clearing and building of the reservoir and construction of roads, bridges, railroads, and utilities

that have to be relocated in connection with construction of a large dam; (2) construction of the canals for an irrigation system; or (3) the entire “field” or “office” engineering phase of construction activities. The standard indicates that responsibility for the “field” engineering phase, which includes construction management, is considered a major portion of construction. The engineer at Degree C has the authority to establish detailed inspection requirements, schedules, and control methods. The engineer interprets contract specifications pertaining to the assigned phase of construction and determines whether construction meets contract requirements. The engineer recommends changes in designs, specifications, and schedules to accommodate conditions at the construction site or to expedite construction.

As discussed above, the record shows that appellant is involved in both field and office functions and is responsible for developing and monitoring the dam and bridge program forest-wide. This is not unusual in such small jurisdictions.

The appellant’s position meets Degree C criteria in that his determinations are subject to only limited review. He exercises considerable authority within his area of responsibility and expertise. The appellant is responsible for making decisions on work problems surfaced by contractors. The appellant is responsible for the completion of the projects as to plan and specifications and the intent of the program for which the project is constructed. The appellant is expected to independently accomplish the work with minimum reference to the supervisor. The appellant provides professional engineering expertise, technical advice, recommendations, and suitable alternatives to the Contracting Officer and Forest officials. Completed work is accepted as technically accurate, and it is reviewed by the supervisor only for administrative and general engineering requirements. In addition, we have determined that the appellant’s contacts with other government agencies (Federal, State, and local) are more than routine, as are his meetings with business representatives and other private interests to negotiate differences in contract specifications.

At Degree C, an engineer normally reports directly to the engineer in charge of construction either on a project or in a geographic area. The engineer in charge exercises control mainly by establishing the organizational framework and the overall contractual requirements and interpretations under which work is to be accomplished. The engineer at this degree is expected to be fully conversant with construction systems, practices, and processes. Based on our review, we find the appellant’s position as bridge and dam program engineer to closely match this description.

The PCS requires that degree definitions be applied in the context of the kinds of functions performed or supervised by the engineer. While the level of independence exhibited by the appellant exceeds that described by Degree C, he does not have full authority to match. That ultimate authority resides with his supervisor, the Forest Engineer, and the Contract Officer. The engineer's position at Degree C typically involves performance or supervision of substantially the full range of either the "field" or "office" engineering functions associated with construction operations. The interrelated determination made in Element 2 below that the appellant’s work as performed in a Forest that has been identified as being limited to level 3 in scope and complexity of construction operations sustains this conclusion. This is also supported by the intent of the PCS to assign Degrees B and D only when the employee’s position is part of a complex

construction organization established for large-scale construction operations in which Degree E is predicated on a scope of field and office engineering operations that usually require managing through a staff of subordinate supervisors. As discussed previously, the appellant's construction program is not of this scope and complexity and does not require managing engineering functions through a typical Degree E subordinate engineering staff. His position also fails to meet Degree D in which positions in large scale construction environments fail to exercise the scope of authority defined at Degree E. Therefore, the position is assigned Degree C with a value of 40 points.

*Element 2 - Scope and complexity of construction operations*

The definitions of levels under this element consider such aspects as: (1) size of projects; (2) diversity of structures or facilities; (3) installation of technical or specialized facilities; (4) problems posed by construction site; and (5) presence of controversy or obstructive attitudes. This element has a range of seven levels, numbered 1 through 7, with point values of 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50 respectively. Levels 1, 3, 5, and 7 are described. The intermediate levels 2, 4, 6 are used when the scope and complexity of assigned construction operations exceed, or do not quite measure up to, one of the defined levels. The timeframes considered under this element are limited to actual construction requirements presented by the technical demands of the project. They do not consider planning and design or other functions addressed under Parts II and IV of the GS-810 PCS.

The agency credited Element 2, Scope and complexity of construction operations, at Level 3 with a point value of 30 points with which the appellant agrees. Based on careful review of the record, we concur and have so credited the position.

The combined number of points for both elements is 70. According to the PCS grade conversion table, a total of 70 points equates to the GS-11 level.

*Part IV, Facilities management*

This part covers positions in programs that have an end product of construction facilities, and make judgments and recommendations as to what facilities to build, with what resources, where and in what order, and take actions to insure that approved facilities are built and maintained. Positions are evaluated principally in terms of: (1) scope and complexity of facilities for which the position has engineering responsibility; (2) range of facilities engineering activities managed; and (3) level of responsibility assigned. The grade-level definitions address these elements and include examples that assist in determining the grade-level definition a covered position meets.

Facilities engineering management falls into three broad groups found often in separate organizational settings: Guidance, Development, and Coordination. Facilities engineering programs are in agencies with three general types of engineering responsibility defined in the standard as Construction agency, Control agency, and Sponsor agency. We find that the appellant performs various degrees of guidance, development, and coordination tasks for a construction agency at the operating level of the agency (the lowest level responsible for carrying out a full range of facilities engineering activities in a locality or area).

The appellant believes his position meets the GS-12 grade level based on the fact that the bridge and dam program spans northern [state], and involves coordination with five internal District Rangers, the Fisheries and Wildlife managers, the State Department of Natural Resources, and the State Department of Transportation, constituting a facility of substantial complexity and variety. In addition, the incumbent believes he has the freedom to do all technical work and that his supervisor does not give any technical advice on how to manage the bridge and dam construction projects. As with GS-12's, he is expected to obtain supervisory guidance or clearance on actions that may be of controversial nature, or that represent a new approach or course for the organization. The appellant is also subject to very general supervision. The appellant states that due to the various jurisdictions he must work with, internally and externally, and the differing activity standards in his diversity of engineering work in bridges, dams, facilities and health and safety, he clearly meets the GS-12 level.

The appellant's position compares favorably to the GS-11 level where facilities engineering management assignments typically concern facilities in one locale or installation. The record shows that he does work only in one locale within the meaning of the PCS; a National Forest in [location], and reports to a higher level engineer, the Forest Engineer. While facilities are varied in type and purpose, there exist ample precedents for their planning, design and construction. The engineer at the GS-11 level performs work such as (1) development of programs and coordination of project accomplishment with respect to maintenance, repair and minor construction for an installation or activity that has facilities to carry out a variety of operations, or that has facilities used by a number of different kinds of activities or organizations; or (2) program development covering proposed construction of a variety of new facilities for an installation or activity similar to (1) above. The engineer usually performs such assignments under the supervision of a higher grade engineer who administers the entire facilities engineering program for the managing activity. The facilities engineering management functions are performed under comprehensive standards and guidelines issued by a higher organizational echelon. There is relatively limited contact with the public because of the limited facilities program.

The first example provided in the standard is a favorable match to the appellant's position in which the engineer serves as assistant to the engineer who is responsible for all engineering activities in a National Forest. In that capacity, the engineer develops annual program proposals and work plans, and coordinates with design, construction, and operations personnel to assure their accomplishment, for maintenance, improvement, and additions to facilities to support timber operations, fire protection, water conservation, and recreation activities, including roads and bridges, drainage structures, buildings, towers, equipment shops and yards, small dams and reservoirs, and recreation area structures.

Similar to that example, the appellant is responsible for various bridge and dam projects located throughout the five districts. Most of these projects are considered conventional. The appellant performs design analysis on all bridge and dam projects in the Forest. He determines, for example, what type of structure would be most cost effective or whether to repair an existing bridge or dam instead of building a new one. He analyzes sites, conducts surveys, performs the necessary foundation, flood, water flow, and hydrologic and hydraulic analysis, prepares design

plans and specifications, develops contracts, negotiates changes, inspects construction activities, coordinates work to maintain schedules, and signs off on finished work. The appellant is concerned with the safety and health aspects of these programs forest-wide. He must apply professional judgment and knowledge in applying guidelines. He may deviate or modify guidelines to fit the planned projects by recommending approval or disapproval of existing standards. The appellant is considered the expert for bridge and dam design, construction, and inspections.

The appellant's position works under the general guidance of the GS-13 Forest Engineer who assigns overall program work. He works with considerable freedom in coordinating functions for design and providing guidance to contractors, or individuals assigned to projects, and independently accomplishes the work. The appellant has contact with regional and forest employees, state and local officials, the general public, and contractors for the purpose of obtaining and furnishing information, resolving problems, addressing concerns regarding the land, and making decisions concerning the work. His designs are reviewed at the Regional level. Completed work is accepted as technically accurate and is reviewed by the supervisor and Contracting Officer only in terms of overall program objectives. Although he works under limited supervision, the record shows that the supervisor has ultimate responsibility for the overall program. Therefore, the appellant's facilities management duties compare favorably to the GS-11 level.

The appellant's position does not fully meet the GS-12 level where the engineer is fully responsible for development or coordination functions relating to facilities of substantial complexity and variety, possibly in a number of locations, or under the control of a number of different activity managers. This means that facilities engineering management must be accomplished under a number of statutory, regulatory and procedural restrictions and jurisdictions. The GS-12 engineer at the operating level of a construction agency coordinates construction activities for a few large projects (such as for a multiple purpose dam, power plant, reservoir, and associated relation and construction of utilities and community facilities) or for an extensive group of smaller projects (such as levees, channel improvements, bank stabilization, flood control reservoirs, and floodways). The GS-12 engineer must apply experienced professional judgment in dealing frequently with specialized facility requirements. This often requires that the engineer search out and develop new or greatly modified methods and approaches to accomplish the facility engineering management function. The engineer works with considerable freedom from technical guidance, and recommendations for action in matters of normal engineering practice are considered authoritative. The engineer is expected to obtain supervisory guidance or clearance on actions that may be of a controversial nature, or that represent a new approach or course for the organization. The presence of problems or the requirement to respond to different activity requirements or standards, and the requirement for compliance with differing legal and technical requirements under various jurisdictions, differentiates this level from grade GS-11.

Most of the facilities the appellant is responsible for are not substantially complex within the meaning of the PCS and are not at a variety of locations under the control of different activity managers. The appellant's position is located at the operating level of a construction agency as defined in Part IV of the PCS. Like the assistant in the PCS' illustrations, the appellant reports to

the Forest Engineer who is responsible for all engineering activities. The appellant develops program proposals and work plans. He coordinates with design, construction, and operating personnel to assure their accomplishment, for maintenance, and improvement to bridges and dams.

Similar to GS-12 grade level, the appellant must apply experienced professional judgment in dealing with a number of statutory, regulatory, and procedural jurisdictions and restrictions, e.g., dealing with various funding restrictions and State, local and Federal environmental, land use, and related requirements. However, the variety of regulations and procedures that he must consider with each project is more limited than that intended at GS-12 since most of the activities and facilities supported by the appellant are similar within each district and do not routinely involve projects considered to be of substantial variety and complexity requiring the engineer to search out new or greatly modified methods. With most projects considered to be comparable in complexity to those typically found at the GS-11 level plus the presence of a supervisor with ultimate authority for all engineering functions in the appellant's area of responsibility, the appellant's position is credited at GS-11.

### **Summary**

The appellant's position has been evaluated at the GS-11 grade for each of the three parts of the PCS that apply: Parts II, III, and IV.

### **Decision**

The position is properly classified as Civil Engineer, GS-810-11.