



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20415

Human Capital Leadership  
and Merit System  
Accountability Division

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

**Appellant:** [Appellant's name]

**Agency classification:** Supervisory Forestry Technician  
GS-462-7

**Organization:** [Appellant's organization/location]  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

**OPM decision:** Supervisory Forestry Technician  
GS-462-7

**OPM decision number:** C-0462-07-06

/s/ Robert D. Hendler

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Robert D. Hendler  
Classification and Pay Claims  
Program Manager  
Center for Merit System Accountability

December 7, 2006

\_\_\_\_\_  
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 mailing address]

[Address of appellant's servicing human resources office]

[Address of appellant's regional classification office]

U.S. Forest Service

U.S. Department of Agriculture

[Address of appellant's regional human resources office]

U.S. Forest Service

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Director, Human Resources Management  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Rosslyn Plaza  
1621 N. Kent Street, Room 900  
Arlington, VA 22209

Director of Human Capital Management  
USDA-OHCM  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
J.L. Whitten Building, Room 302-W  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

## **Introduction**

On July 18, 2006, the San Francisco Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [name of appellant]. On September 12, 2006, we received the agency's complete administrative report. The appellant's position is currently classified as Supervisory Forestry Technician, GS-462-7, but he believes, due to the complexity of his supervisory duties and responsibilities, it should be upgraded to GS-8. The appellant works at the [appellant's organization/location] U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **General issues**

The appellant makes various statements about the classification review process conducted by his agency, and compares his duties to similar but higher graded positions in his agency, thus indicating that his position should be considered for a higher grade. In adjudicating this 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 position classification standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's position to others, which may or may not be classified correctly, as a basis for deciding his appeal. In addition, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison. Because our decision sets aside all previous agency decisions, the classification practices used by the appellant's agency in classifying his position are not germane to the classification appeal process.

The appellant mentions experience and responsibilities that he recently gained when on detail to another position at a different ranger district. However, 5 U.S.C. 5112 indicates that we can consider only current duties and assigned responsibilities in classifying positions. Therefore, we could not consider the appellant's duties which he performed in another position at a different ranger district, except insofar as they were required to perform his 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 his agency, including his official position description.

## **Position information**

Both the appellant and his supervisor have certified to the accuracy of the appellant's official position description (PD) [number]. However, in the appeal the appellant expanded on the duties listed in his PD including those covering his responsibilities for fire suppression, fire behavior predictions, prescribed fire planning, and personal contacts. We have considered all of the additional information in this decision. The appellant performs a combination of supervisory and nonsupervisory duties relating to fire control, prescribed burning, and fuels management at the District. His main duties are to (1) execute the fire use (wild land fire use and prescribed fire application) and fuels management plans, (2) provide forestry technician support to the resource protection and resource management programs, and (3) manage the Fire Use Module (FUM). He

spends approximately fifty-five percent of his time on nonsupervisory functions such as performing field reconnaissance to determine future fire burn site preparations and timber stand improvements; performing brush piling or thinning techniques; collecting data for resource projects; and plotting and identifying areas of sensitive habitat or wildlife damage. While conducting prescribed burn projects and fire activities, the appellant is responsible for its technical execution to ensure compliance with Forest Service and interagency guides, plans, and environmental regulations such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The appellant spends approximately forty-five percent of his time supervising, training, and managing a crew of forestry technicians. He ensures the crew is trained on technical duties, equipment and safety protocols, including the maintenance, ordering and proper functioning of equipment. He provides direct administrative and technical supervision to one permanent seasonal Lead Forestry Technician, GS-462-6, two permanent seasonal Forestry Technicians, GS-462-5, two temporary seasonal Forestry Technicians, GS-462-5, two permanent seasonal Forestry Technicians, GS-462-4, and two temporary seasonal Forestry Technicians, GS-462-4. The appellant performs the full scope of basic supervisory duties and responsibilities over his crew.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official PD which we find is sufficient for purposes of classification, and incorporate it by reference into this decision. In addition, to help decide the appeal we conducted separate telephone interviews with the appellant and his supervisor.

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

The agency has classified the appellant's position in the Forestry Technician Series, GS-462, titling it Supervisory Forestry Technician, and the appellant does not disagree. We concur with the agency's title and series determination. The appellant's position fully meets the basic coverage requirements for titling and grading by application of the criteria in the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG). Therefore, we have evaluated his supervisory duties by application of the GSSG. To evaluate the grade level of his non-supervisory duties, we have applied the Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-400. Our application of both guides is addressed below.

### **Grade determination**

#### *Evaluation of nonsupervisory duties and responsibilities using the Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-400*

The GS-400 Guide uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor-level 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 aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. Each factor level has a corresponding point value. The total points assigned are converted to a

grade by use of the grade conversion table in the guide. The appellant does not disagree with his agency's assignment of the levels for the nine FES factors covering his nonsupervisory work. The focus of his concern is on his agency's evaluation of his supervisory duties. After careful review, we concur with his agency's assignment of the nine factor levels for his non-supervisory duties which are summarized below. As indicated later in this evaluation, we find these duties are not grade-controlling.

*Summary of FES factors*

<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. & 7. Personal Contacts/Purpose of Contacts	6-2/7a	45
8. Physical Demands	8-3	50
9. Work Environment	9-2	<u>20</u>
<i>Total</i>		1215

A total of 1215 points falls within the GS-6 range (1105-1350) on the grade conversion table in the GS-400 Guide. Therefore, the appellant's nonsupervisory duties are graded at the GS-6 level.

*Evaluation of supervisory duties using the GSSG*

The GSSG is a cross-series guide used to determine the grade level of supervisory positions in the General Schedule. The GSSG has six evaluation factors, each with several factor- level definitions and corresponding point values. Positions are evaluated by crediting the points designated for the highest level met under each factor, and converting the total to a grade by using the point-to-grade conversion chart in the guide. Our evaluation with respect to the six GSSG factors follows.

*Factor 1, Program scope and effect*

This factor assesses the general complexity, breadth, and impact of the program areas and work directed, including its organizational and geographic coverage. It also assesses the impact of the work both within and outside the immediate organization. To assign a factor, the criteria dealing with both scope and effect, as defined below, must be met.

*Scope*

This element addresses the general complexity and breadth of the program (or program segment) directed; or the work directed, the products produced, or the services delivered. The geographic

and organizational coverage of the program (or program segment) within the agency structure is included under this element.

*Effect*

This element addresses the impact of the work, the products, and/or the programs on the mission and programs of the customers, the activity, other activities in or out of government, the agency, other agencies, the general public, or others.

At Level 1-1, the work directed is procedural, routine, and typically provides services or products to specific persons or small, local organizations. The work directed facilitates the work of others in the immediate organizational unit, responds to specific requests or needs of individuals, or affects only localized functions.

At Level 1-2, the program segment or work directed is administrative, technical, complex clerical, or comparable in nature. The functions, activities, or services provided have limited geographic coverage and support most of the activities comprising a typical agency field office, an area office, a small to medium military installation, or comparable activities within agency program segments. The services or products support and significantly affect installation level, area office level, or field office operations and objectives, or comparable program segments; or provide services to a moderate, local or limited population of clients or users comparable to a major portion of a small city or rural county.

Level 1-1 is met. Like that level, the appellant directs routine work which typically provides services or products to support a small local organization, e.g., silviculture and timber sections. For example, the appellant directs routine work for fuel treatments or data collection for the silviculture section, and exercises prescribed burns for resource management. The appellant's activities as a supervisor overseeing controlled burns is to assist in fire use for his District. Accomplishment of his duties facilitates the work of others in the immediate unit, responds to specific requests of District staff, and affects only local functions within the District.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-2. Although some of the services provided are technical in nature and sometimes have limited geographic coverage, unlike Level 1-2, the services or products do not support most of the activities of a typical agency field or area office, or comparable activities within agency program segments. Unlike Level 1-2, the appellant's services or products do not significantly affect area or field office operations and objectives, or comparable program segments. He is responsible for a single unit (Fuel Use Module) within the resource protection and fuels program. He does not provide services to a moderate, local or limited population of clients or users comparable to a major portion of a small city or rural county.

Both scope and effect are evaluated at Level 1-1 and 175 points are credited.

*Factor 2, Organizational setting*

This factor considers the organizational situation of the supervisory position in relation to higher levels of management.

At Level 2-1, the position is accountable to a position that is two or more levels below the first (i.e., lowest in the chain of command) Senior Executive Service (SES,) flag or general officer, equivalent or higher level position in the direct supervisory chain.

At Level 2-2, the position is accountable to a position that is one reporting level below the first SES, flag or general officer, or equivalent or higher level position in the direct supervisory chain.

The appellant's position meets Level 2-1. He reports directly to a Supervisory Forestry Technician, GS-462-9 (Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist Fuels Officer) who is two or more levels below the first SES position (i.e., Regional Forester, ES-340).

This factor is credited at Level 2-1 and 100 points are assigned.

*Factor 3, Supervisory and managerial authority exercised*

This factor covers the delegated supervisory and managerial authorities which are exercised on a recurring basis.

Level 3-2 requires that the position must meet one of the paragraphs a, b, or c. Paragraph a discusses production-oriented work and is not appropriate for this position. Paragraph b describes situations where work is contracted out, but the appellant currently does not encounter this situation.

At Level 3-2c, the position must have responsibility for carrying out at least three of the first four and a total of six or more of the ten authorities and responsibilities listed in the guide. Our analysis of the ten authorities and responsibilities follows.

Responsibility 1 is credited. It involves planning work to be accomplished by subordinates, setting and adjusting short-term priorities, and preparing schedules for completion of work. The appellant performs all of these duties.

Responsibility 2 is credited. Like number 2, the appellant assigns work to subordinate forestry technicians based on priorities, selective consideration of the difficulty and requirements of assignments, and the experience and capabilities of employees.

Responsibility 3 is credited. It involves evaluating work performance of subordinates. The appellant's position is the rating official for all subordinate employees.

Responsibility 4 is credited. It involves giving advice, counsel, and instruction to employees on both work and administrative matters. The appellant instructs his subordinate staff on operating equipment and technical methods for data collection, leave usage, and career advancement.

Responsibility 5 is credited. It encompasses interviewing candidates for positions in the unit; recommending appointment, promotion, or reassignment to such positions. The appellant interviews candidates and makes recommendations through the District's chain of command.



Responsibility 6 is credited. Like number 6 the appellant hears and resolves complaints from employees, referring group grievances and more serious unresolved complaints to a higher level supervisor or manager.

Responsibility 7 is credited. It involves the authority to effect minor disciplinary measures, such as warnings and reprimands, recommending other action in more serious cases. The appellant's position has the authority to warn subordinates and recommend other more serious disciplinary measures to higher level managers.

Responsibility 8 is credited. Like number 8, the appellant identifies developmental and training needs of employees appropriate for Fire Use Module operations and in accordance with the Interagency Fire Use Module Operations Guide. The appellant conducts formal classroom instruction and on-the-job training and approves other training courses.

Responsibility 9 is credited. The appellant's position is concerned with finding ways to increase the quality of the work directed.

Responsibility 10 is not credited. The opportunity to develop performance standards is not available because the Forest Service develops and provides generic performance standards for the appellant's subordinate positions.

The appellant is responsible for carrying out the first four and a total of nine of the ten authorities and responsibilities listed at Level 3-2c. Therefore, the position meets Level 3-2.

To meet Factor Level 3-3, a position must meet either 3-3a or 3-3b as described below:

At Level 3-3a, a position exercises delegated managerial authority to set a series of annual, multi-year, or similar types of long-range work plans and schedules for in-service or contracted work. These positions assure implementation (by lower and subordinate organizational units or others) of the goals and objectives for the program segment (s) or function(s) they oversee. They determine goals and objectives that need additional emphasis; determine the best approach or solution for resolving budget shortages; and plan for long range staffing needs, including such matters as whether to contract out work. These positions are closely involved with high level program officials (or comparable agency level staff personnel) in the development of overall goals and objectives for assigned staff function(s), program(s), or program segment(s). For example, they direct development of data; provision of expertise and insights; securing of legal opinions; preparation of position papers or legislative proposals; and execution of comparable activities which support development of goals and objectives related to high levels of program management and development or formulation.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 3-3a. This position does not have the managerial authority to set a series of annual, multi-year, or similar types of long-range work plans and schedules for in-service or contracted work. The appellant is not closely involved with high level program officials (such as agency-level staff personnel) in the development of overall goals and objectives for assigned staff functions, programs or program segments. The position does not meet the intent of Level 3-3a to credit significant decision-making involvement in bureau-

wide staffing, budgetary, policy, and regulatory matters. Such matters are addressed at higher levels within the Forest Service.

To meet Factor Level 3-3 b a position must exercise all or nearly all of the delegated supervisory authorities and responsibilities described at Level 3-2c of this factor and, in addition, at least eight of the fifteen responsibilities listed at that level. Our analysis of those responsibilities follows:

Responsibility 1 is not credited. It involves using subordinate supervisors, team leaders, group coordinators, committee chairs, or comparable personnel to direct, coordinate, or oversee work; and/or providing similar oversight of contractors. The appellant has no subordinate supervisors and only one team leader. Responsibility 1 requires exercising authority using more than one subordinate leader.

Responsibility 2 is not credited. It involves exercising significant responsibilities in dealing with officials of other units or organizations, or in advising management officials of higher rank. Although the appellant keeps his supervisor (District Fuel Officer) informed on fire incident conditions and recommends fire suppression strategies and tactics, this is limited to his own organization and does not involve significant responsibilities with officials of other units outside his organization. In addition, he does not directly advise management officials of higher rank.

Responsibility 3 is not credited. It involves ensuring reasonable equity (among units, groups, teams, projects, etc.) of performance standards and rating techniques developed by subordinates, or assuring comparable equity in the assessment by subordinates of the adequacy of contractor capabilities or of contractor completed work. This responsibility is precluded because standards and rating techniques are generic and developed agency wide, rather than by his subordinate employees. Contractor work is not assessed by subordinates.

Responsibility 4 is not credited. It involves direction of a program or major program segment with significant resources (e.g., one at a *multi-million* dollar level of annual resources). The appellant is responsible for a small segment, less than half a million, of the District's annual operating budget. These funds are allocated for the specific functions of training and equipment, and changes in use must be approved from a higher level supervisor.

Responsibility 5 is not credited. The appellant has only one subordinate team leader assigned, while this responsibility envisions more than one subordinate supervisor or leader.

Responsibility 6 is not credited. It involves evaluating subordinate supervisors or team leaders and serving as the reviewing official on evaluations of non-supervisory employees rated by subordinate supervisors. This responsibility envisions multiple supervisors or team leaders. The appellant does not have any subordinate supervisors, and only one team leader.

Responsibility 7 is not credited. It involves making or approving selection of subordinate nonsupervisory positions. The appellant's position makes recommendations for selections to the Forest Supervisor who is the selecting official and holds final approval authority.

Responsibility 8 is not credited. It involves recommending selection for subordinate supervisory positions and for work leader, group leader, or project director positions responsible for coordinating the work of others. This responsibility covers positions having subordinate supervisory positions (plural) and work leader positions. The appellant has no subordinate supervisory positions and currently only one work leader.

Responsibility 9 is not credited. This involves responsibility for hearing and resolving group grievances or serious employee complaints. Such matters fall within the responsibilities of the District Ranger or Forest Supervisor.

Responsibility 10 is not credited. The appellant's position does not have authority to review and approve serious disciplinary actions such as suspensions involving non-supervisory subordinates. This authority is retained by the Forest Supervisor.

Responsibility 11 is not credited. It involves making decisions on non-routine, costly, or controversial training needs and training requests related to employees of the unit. The appellant's authority is to provide and arrange for basic qualifications and routine/reinforcement training and development for his employees. The appellant does not make decisions on training that is non-routine, costly or controversial in character. The District Resource Protection Officer holds the authority to approve such training.

Responsibility 12 is not credited. It involves determining whether contractor performed work meets standards of adequacy necessary for authorization of payment. The appellant is not responsible for reviewing contractor work performed at the District.

Responsibility 13 is not credited. It involves approving expenses comparable to within-grade increases, extensive overtime, and employee travel. The appellant exercises the authority to approve expenses like within-grade increases and employee travel related to non-prescribed fires and routine training. However, he cannot approve overtime expenses because that is the authority of the District Resource Protection Officer.

Responsibility 14 is not credited. It involves recommending awards or bonuses for non-supervisory personnel and changes in position classification, subject to approval by higher level officials, supervisors, or others. The appellant only has the authority to recommend cash awards or bonuses for personnel. Positions at the installation are on standard, service-wide position descriptions that have already been classified. Thus there is no opportunity to recommend changes in classification.

Responsibility 15 is not credited. It involves finding and implementing ways to eliminate or reduce significant bottlenecks and barriers to production, promote team building, or improve business practices, e.g., a large production or processing unit. This would apply to large organizations whose missions would be susceptible to the application of such methodological or structural improvements. The work supervised by the appellant does not lend itself to these types of management applications. The appellant's authority in this area would not exceed that described in responsibility nine of Level 3-2c.

The appellant's position exercises nine of the delegated supervisory authorities and responsibilities described at Level 3-2c of this factor, but none of the listed responsibilities under Level 3-3b. Therefore, the appellant's position does not meet Factor Level 3-3 a or 3-3b. Factor Level 3-2 is credited and 450 points are assigned.

*Factor 4: Personal contacts*

Factor 4 is divided into two parts: Subfactor 4A, Nature of contacts; and Subfactor 4B, Purpose of contacts. The nature of the contacts, credited under Subfactor 4A, and the purpose of those contacts, credited under Subfactor 4B, must be based on the same contacts related to supervisory and managerial responsibilities.

*Subfactor 4A: Nature of contacts.*

Contacts credited under Subfactor 4A cover the organizational relationships, authority or influence level, setting, and difficulty of preparation associated with making personal contacts involved in supervisory and managerial work. To be credited, the level of contacts must contribute to the successful performance of the work, be a recurring requirement, have a demonstrable impact on the difficulty and responsibility of the position, and require direct contact.

At Level 4A-1, contacts are with subordinates within the employee's organizational unit(s) supervised, with peers who supervise comparable units within the larger organization, with union shop stewards, and/or with the staff of administrative and other support activities when the persons contacted are within the same organization as the supervisor. Contacts are typically informal and occur in person at the work place of those contacted, in routine meetings, or by telephone.

At Level 4A-2, the position has frequent contacts comparable to any of those that follow: members of the business community or the general public; higher ranking managers, supervisors, and staff of program, administrative, and other work units and activities throughout the field activity, installation, command (below major command level) or major organization level of the agency; representatives of local public interest groups; case workers in congressional district offices; technical or operating level employees of State and local governments; reporters for local and other limited media outlets reaching a small, general population. Such contacts may be informal, occur in conferences and meetings, or take place through telephone, televised, radio, or similar contact, and sometimes require non-routine or special preparation.

Level 4A-1 is met. The appellant's routine contacts are with subordinates within his organizational unit and with administrative staff and peers who supervise units within the [name of appellant's Ranger District]. The appellant's supervisory contacts typically include his subordinates, and supervisors and technicians in the resource management and resource protection units of the District. He also has contact with union stewards. Contacts are typically informal and occur in person at the District or forest office, or by telephone.

The appellant's position does not have regular and recurring contacts with any of those listed at Level 4A-2, including the District Ranger. Unlike Level 4A-2, he does not have contacts with higher ranking individuals throughout the field activity, installation, or major organizational level as described at that level.

This subfactor is evaluated at Level 4A-1 and 25 points are credited.

*Subfactor 4B: Purpose of contacts.*

Subfactor 4B covers the purpose of the personal contacts credited in Subfactor 4A, including the advisory, representational, negotiating, and commitment making responsibilities related to supervision and management.

At Level 4B-2, the purpose of contacts is to ensure that information provided to outside parties is accurate and consistent; to plan and coordinate the work directed with that of others outside the subordinate organization; and/or to resolve differences of opinion among managers, supervisors, employees, contractors or others.

At Level 4B-3 the purpose of contacts is to justify, defend, or negotiate in representing the project, program segment(s), or organizational unit(s) directed, in obtaining or committing resources, and in gaining compliance with established policies, regulations, or contracts. Contacts at this level usually involve active participation in conferences, meetings, hearings, or presentations involving problems or issues of considerable consequence or importance to the program or program segment(s) managed.

Like Level 4B-2, the appellant's position ensures that accurate and consistent fire, fuels, safety, soil and air quality information is provided to others both within his subordinate organization, and with those who supervise other units of the District.

The position does not meet Level 4B-3. The appellant does not need to justify, defend, or negotiate in representing the project, program segments, or module and units directed, in obtaining or committing resources, and in gaining compliance with established policies, regulations, or contracts. When attending training and meetings the appellant may provide information on the Fire Use Module, but he does not actively participate in conferences, meetings, or presentations involving problems or issues of considerable consequence or importance to the program or program segment(s) managed.

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

*Factor 5, Difficulty of typical work directed*

This factor measures the difficulty and complexity of the basic work most typical of the organization directed as well as other line, staff, or contracted work for which the supervisor has technical or oversight responsibility, either directly or through subordinate supervisors, team leaders, or others. The level is determined by identifying the highest grade which best characterizes the nature of the basic (mission oriented) nonsupervisory work performed or overseen by the organization directed; and which constitutes 25 percent or more of the workload

(not positions or employees) of the organization. In determining the highest level of work, developmental positions below the normal full performance levels are considered at the full performance levels. Certain positions are excluded from consideration in making the determination. These include work of lower level positions that primarily support or facilitate the basic work of the unit; any subordinate work graded based on criteria in the GSSG or the General Schedule Leader Grade-Evaluation Guide; work that is graded based on an extraordinary degree of independence from supervision, or personal research accomplishments; and work for which the supervisor or a subordinate does not have the responsibilities defined under Factor 3.

The appellant directly supervises one permanent seasonal Lead Forestry Technician, GS-462-6, two permanent seasonal Forestry Technicians, GS-462-5, two temporary seasonal Forestry Technicians, GS-462-5, two permanent seasonal Forestry Technicians, GS-462-4, and two temporary seasonal Forestry Technicians, GS-462-4.

We have excluded from base level consideration all supervisory and leader work assigned to positions whose grades are based on criteria in the GSSG or the General Schedule Leader Grade-Evaluation Guide. All other positions are included, and for purposes of this decision we are accepting the agency's classification of the subordinate positions, and the fact that all subordinate non-lead and nonsupervisory employees spend one-hundred percent of their time working at their respective grade levels. Based on our review, the highest grade level which best characterizes the nature of the basic (mission oriented) non-supervisory work performed under the appellant's supervision, and which constitutes 25 percent or more of the workload of the organization, is GS-5.

Using the conversion chart in the GSSG for Factor 5, a GS-5 base level equates to Level 5-3 and 340 points are credited.

#### *Factor 6, Other conditions*

This factor measures the extent to which various conditions contribute to the difficulty and complexity of carrying out supervisory duties, authorities, and responsibilities. There are two steps involved in assigning a level under Factor 6: (1) select the highest level that the position meets, and (2) if the level selected in step 1 is either 6-1, 6-2, or 6-3, refer to the Special Situations section of Factor 6. If the position meets 3 or more of the situations, then a single level is added to the level selected in the first step. If the level selected under step 1 is either 6-4, 6-5, or 6-6, the Special Situations section does not apply, and no level is added to the one selected in step 1.

At Level 6-1, the position supervises or oversees clerical, technician, or other work comparable in difficulty to the GS-6 level, or lower. This could vary from basic supervision over a stable workforce performing work operations that are routine, to a level of supervision which requires coordination within the unit to ensure that timeliness, form, procedure, accuracy, quality and quantity standards are met in individual cases.

Level 6-2 describes two sublevels (a and b) and the assignment of either one warrants crediting a position at Level 6-2, as follows: (1) at Level 6-2a, the work supervised or overseen involves

technician and/or support work comparable in difficulty to a GS-7 or 8 base level, or work at the GS-4, 5, or 6 level where the supervisor has full and final technical authority over the work, which requires coordination and integration of work efforts, either within the unit or with other units, in order to produce a completed work product or service. Full and final technical authority includes responsibility for all technical determinations arising from the work, without technical advice or assistance on even the more difficult and unusual problems, and without further review except from an administrative or program evaluation standpoint; and (2) at Level 6-2b, the position under review directs subordinate supervisors of work comparable to GS-6 or lower, where coordinating the work of the subordinate units requires a continuing effort to assure quality and service standards, limited to matters of timeliness, form, procedure, accuracy, and quantity.

Like Level 6-1, the appellant typically supervises subordinates performing technical work comparable in difficulty to the GS-5 level. He coordinates the execution of recurring work assignments such as piling brush and conducting field inventories and prescribed burns. He designates the location of the work, ignition method, equipment, manpower, and other resources to ensure accuracy of data, quality of field work, and that fire goals are met.

Unlike Level 6-2a, the appellant does not supervise technician and/or support work comparable in difficulty to the GS-7 or GS-8 levels. Although the base level of work supervised is GS-5, he does not have full and final technical authority to the extent that he is responsible for all technical determinations arising from the work, without technical advice or assistance on even the more difficult and unusual problems, and without further review except from an administrative or program evaluation standpoint. On the contrary, the appellant consults with his supervisor to change the work method used, and on more difficult and unusual problems.

Unlike Level 6-2b, the appellant does not direct subordinate supervisors of work comparable to GS-6 or lower, where coordinating the work of the subordinate units requires a continuing effort to assure quality and service standards, limited to matters of timeliness, form, procedure, accuracy, and quantity.

This factor is evaluated at Level 6-1.

### *Special situations*

When a position meets either Levels 6-1, 6-2, or 6-3 under Factor 6, the GSSG refers to the *Special Situations* section. Extra credit may be given to Factor 6 if the supervisory position meets three or more of the eight special situations described in the standard. Special situations are credited only if they significantly complicate a position's supervisory and oversight duties and responsibilities. We have addressed below the eight special situations as compared to the appellant's position.

#### *1. Variety of work*

This situation is credited when more than one kind of work, each kind representing a requirement for a distinctly different additional body of knowledge on the part of the supervisor, is present in

the work of the unit. A “kind of work” usually will be the equivalent of a classification series. Each “kind of work” requires substantially full qualification in distinctly separate areas, or full knowledge and understanding of rules, regulations, procedures, and subject matter of a distinctly separate area of work. To credit “Variety” (1) both technical and administrative responsibility must be exercised over the work, and (2) the grade level of the work cannot be more than one grade below the base level of work used in Factor 5.

The appellant’s position does not require him to possess a distinctly different body of knowledge in a separate area outside of the Forestry Technician, GS-462 series. All the positions supervised are in that series, thus not placing on the appellant a need for knowledge in a totally separate field. Therefore, this situation is not credited.

## *2. Shift operations*

This situation is credited when the position supervises an operation carried out on at least two fully staffed shifts.

The appellant’s position does not meet this situation. While there may be a need to occasionally oversee the changing of a shift or coordinate the start and end of shifts during a specific fire incident, these are not permanent situations and do not occur on a regular and recurring basis. Monitoring the changing of shifts does not require the appellant to conduct greater planning or coordinating of the work to ensure that tasks are successfully passed off from one shift to another. Therefore, this situation is not credited.

## *3. Fluctuating work force or constantly changing deadlines*

This situation is credited when the workforce supervised has large fluctuations in size (e.g., when there are significant seasonal variations in staff) and these fluctuations impose on the supervisor a substantially greater responsibility for training, adjusting assignments, or maintaining a smooth flow of work while absorbing and releasing employees. Also, this situation is credited when frequent, abrupt, and unexpected changes in work assignments, goals, and deadlines require the supervisor constantly to adjust operations under the pressure of continuously changing and unpredictable conditions.

During fire season which typically occurs from May through November, the appellant is responsible for an increase of seasonal and temporary staff consisting of eight forestry technicians and one leader. This influx of seasonal staff imposes on the appellant greater responsibility for training, adjusting assignments, and maintaining a smooth flow of work while increasing personnel at the beginning of the season, and releasing them at the conclusion of the fire season. Therefore, fluctuating work force is credited to the position. However, we have not credited the position with constantly changing deadlines as the appellant is not faced with frequent, abrupt, and unexpected changes as described in that sub-element.



#### *4. Physical dispersion*

This situation is credited when a substantial portion of the workload for which the supervisor is responsible is regularly carried out at one or more locations, which are physically removed from the main unit (as in different buildings, or widely dispersed locations in a large warehouse or factory building), under conditions which make day-to-day supervision difficult to administer.

Depending on the need for fuels management activities and wild fire suppression, portions of the appellant's workload may be carried out at two or three separate sites that can be miles apart. However, this geographic dispersion of employees does not make the appellant's day-to-day supervision more difficult because he provides a daily work briefing to all staff each morning before projects begin; typically he is within their vicinity during the work day and/or along with them during fire suppression operations; he is generally within hiking or driving distance of crews; and has regular, direct verbal contact with employees via radio or through the District dispatch center. Therefore, this situation is not credited.

#### *5. Special staffing situations*

This situation is credited when: (1) a substantial portion of the workforce is regularly involved in special employment programs; or in similar situations which require involvement with employee representatives to resolve difficult or complex human resources management issues and problems; (2) requirements for counseling and motivational activities are regular and recurring; and (3) job assignments, work tasks, working conditions, and/or training must be tailored to fit the special circumstances.

This situation is intended to recognize the heavy demands on the supervisor's time in dealing with difficult and complex human resources issues and problems. The appellant's work is not characterized by the conditions described in this special situation. Therefore, it is not credited.

#### *6. Impact of specialized programs*

This situation is credited when supervisors are responsible for a significant technical or administrative workload in grades above the level of work credited in Factor 5, provided the grades of the work are not based upon independence of action, freedom from supervision, or personal impact on the job.

The base level credited under Factor 5 is GS-5. The appellant is not responsible for a significant technical or administrative workload in grades above the GS-5 level. This situation is not credited.

#### *7. Changing technology*

This situation is credited when work processes and procedures vary constantly because of the impact of changing technology, creating a requirement for extensive training and guidance of the subordinate staff.

The appellant indicates that technical improvements in weather and mapping equipment have an impact on his position. The weather and mapping systems used by the Forest Service require the appellant to become an expert on the individual equipment and conduct classroom and field training for the crew. In order to ensure accurate use of the equipment, the appellant must have the crew practice using the equipment and its software applications during non-fire suppression projects, and he presents classroom instruction of one to two days per equipment item during the season. The time spent practicing on the equipment is also pertinent to fuel management projects. While there have been technical improvements in weather and mapping equipment over the years, unlike this special situation they have not caused constant variations in work processes and procedures for the Fire Use Module. Although the equipment has been improved, it basically operates in the same way, and has not been replaced within the last two years. Therefore, this special situation is not credited.

#### *8. Special hazard and safety conditions*

This situation is credited when the supervisory position is *regularly* made more difficult by the need to make provision for significant unsafe or hazardous conditions occurring during performance of the work of the organization.

In directing the Fire Use Module and fuels projects for the [name of appellant's Ranger District], the appellant is responsible for ensuring the safety of his employees and areas they protect. Since safety concerns are an issue for all involved in prescribed fire and fire suppression work, the appellant is responsible for ensuring that all of his subordinates receive annual safety training before the onset of the fire season, and have all safety equipment necessary to perform their duties. The appellant's employees receive training that enables them to maintain current qualifications. This training is necessary for employees to advance in the fire field, safely suppress fires, and conduct prescribed burns.

The appellant's position meets this special situation. He presents an ongoing program of employee training (covering activities and special equipment) to deal with the hazards and safety concerns of fuels management and fire suppression. Regular planning is done and special safety training is provided to prepare employees for and deal with hazardous working conditions. He also provides ad hoc safety/hazardous duty training as needed during actual fire suppression activities. These additional supervisory responsibilities make the appellant's position more difficult by placing an extra training and safety monitoring burden on him.

#### *Special situations summary*

We have credited the appellant's position with two special situations. However, because it does not meet at least three of the special situations described above, Factor 6 is assigned Level 6-1 and 310 points are credited.

#### *Summary evaluation of supervisory duties*

By application of the GSSG, we have evaluated the appellant's supervisory duties as follows:

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. <i>Program scope and effect</i>	1-1	175
2. <i>Organizational setting</i>	2-1	100
3. <i>Supervisory and managerial authority exercised</i>	3-2	450
4. <i>Personal contacts</i>		
<i>Nature of contacts</i>	4A-1	25
<i>Purpose of contacts</i>	4B-2	75
5. <i>Difficulty of typical work directed</i>	5-3	340
6. <i>Other conditions</i>	6-1	<u>310</u>
 Total points		 1475

A total of 1475 points falls into the GS-7 grade range (1355-1600) by reference to the point-to-grade conversion chart in the GSSG. Therefore, the appellant's supervisory duties are graded at the GS-7 level.

#### *Summary*

By application of the grading criteria in the Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-400, we find that the appellant's nonsupervisory work meets the GS-6 level. However, by application of the grading criteria in the GSSG, we find that his supervisory duties meet the GS-7 level. Therefore, based on mixed grade principles the final grade of the appellant's position is GS-7.

#### **Decision**

The appellant's position is properly classified as Supervisory Forestry Technician, GS-462-7.