

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

San Francisco Field Services Group
120 Howard Street, Room 760
San Francisco, CA 94105-0001

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

Appellant: [Name of appellant]

Agency classification: Range Technician
GS-455-7

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

OPM decision: Range Technician
GS-455-7

OPM decision number: C-0455-07-02

/s/ Robert D. Hendler

Robert D. Hendler
Classification and Pay Claims
Program Manager

February 14, 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 name and address]

[Address of appellant's servicing human resources 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

Acting Director of the Office
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Introduction

On August 26, 2005, the San Francisco Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [name of appellant]. On October 24, 2005, we received the agency's complete administrative report. The appellant's position is classified as Range Technician, GS-455-7, but he believes that the complexity of his duties and responsibilities warrant upgrading to the GS-9 level. He works at the [appellant's organization/work location], U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

This decision is based on a thorough review of all information submitted by the appellant and his agency. In addition, to help decide the appeal we conducted separate telephone interviews with the appellant, his immediate supervisor, and his third level supervisor.

General issues

The appellant does not believe that his current official position description (PD) [number] is completely accurate because he does more than just "assist" in the administration of the range program, and independently performs his range administration allotments with little technical supervision. The records show that his supervisor has certified to the accuracy of the PD.

A PD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position by an official with the authority to assign work. A position is the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by the employee. Classification appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a position and decide an appeal on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities currently assigned by management and performed by the employee. An OPM appeal decision classifies a real operating position, and not simply the PD. Therefore, this decision classifies a real operating position, and not simply the PD. This decision is based on the work currently assigned to and performed by the appellant.

The appellant makes various statements about the classification review process conducted by his agency, and compares his work to other similar but higher graded positions within the U.S. Forest Service. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing current duties and responsibilities to OPM position classification standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of his position. 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. Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison. Because our decision sets aside any previous agency decision, the classification practices used by the appellant's agency in classifying his position are not germane to the classification appeal process.

The appellant's agency has primary responsibility for ensuring that its positions are classified consistently with OPM appeal decisions. If the appellant considers his position so similar to others that they all warrant the same classification, he may pursue the matter by writing to his

agency's human resources office. In doing so, he should specify the precise organizational location/installation, classification, duties, and responsibilities of the positions in question. If the positions are found to be basically the same as his, the agency must correct their classification to be consistent with this appeal decision. Otherwise, the agency should explain to him the differences between his position and the others.

The appellant believes he should receive retroactive compensation for performing what he states were higher graded duties and responsibilities. However, the U.S. Comptroller General states that an "... employee is entitled only to the salary of the position to which he is actually appointed, regardless of the duties performed. When an employee performs the duties of a higher grade level, no entitlement to the salary of the higher grade exists until such time as the individual is actually promoted. This rule was reaffirmed by the United States Supreme Court in *United States v. Testan*, 424 U.S. 392, at 406 (1976), where the Court stated that '... the federal employee is entitled to receive only the salary of the position to which he was appointed, even though he may have performed the duties of another position or claim that he should have been placed in a higher grade.'... Consequently, backpay is not available as a remedy for misassignments to higher level duties or improper classifications" (CG decision B-232695, December 15, 1989).

Position information

As the only range technician on the staff of the [appellant's organization], the appellant has responsibility for technical support and assistance in the areas of range management, range improvement, and range conservation. The appellant initiates range use upon receipt of grazing applications from private landowners (hereafter referred to as permittees) who have cooperative agreements with the U.S. Forest Service. He administers the approved grazing permits through assigned allotments on the [appellant's organization], and annually prepares and revises annual operating instructions for presentations to permittees at annual allotment meetings. The appellant ensures that terms and conditions of grazing permits/allotments under his area of responsibility are in compliance with U.S. Forest Service Plan Standards and U.S. Forest Service Grazing Permit System. When necessary, he implements flexible corrective action on grazing trespass cases, including investigation of unauthorized livestock use, identification, forms completion, and settlement. He makes recommendations to his supervisor or the Acting District Ranger on the types of corrective action for misuse or unauthorized use cases, and prepares appropriate correspondence for signature informing the permittee of the necessary corrective action.

The appellant works closely with permittees to advise and assist with information on the grazing application process; to achieve resource objectives and implement flexible provisions concerning livestock amount, time, and use, (after consulting with his supervisor and/or the Acting District Ranger); and to achieve compliance and prevent current and future unauthorized use on rangeland. If resource conditions dictate, the appellant recommends to the District's rangeland management specialist changes in class/number of livestock and allotment boundaries.

The appellant identifies, prepares and/or initiates actions involving assigned allotment areas for various range improvement projects (e.g., fencing, water developments), based on [appellant's

organization] needs and objectives. He initiates project write-up for cooperative agreements for range improvements, including identifying specific range improvement measures, and monitoring progress of Allotment Work Plan range projects. He identifies maintenance needs through visual field inspections and provides written documentation and recommendations to appropriate individuals. The appellant ensures compliance on range improvement projects, serves as contract/project inspector, maintains project files, and acts as project coordinator.

The appellant also participates in Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) activities (i.e., Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessments and meetings) with District personnel to provide input to specialists for his assigned allotments during development of the Range National Environmental Protection Assessment. He prepares routine environmental documents for minor range management action. He conducts short-term utilization, long-term condition and trend monitoring, and assists other staff members in establishing and conducting various range studies, including utilization, trends, and photo points. The appellant updates and inputs noncomplex range information into the various range automated computer systems, including Grazing Bill Systems and Range Improvement Projects, and may also assist in the treatment of noxious weeds by identifying and removing them on the [appellant's organization].

The results of our interviews and other material of record furnish more information about the appellant's duties and responsibilities and how they are performed. We find that the appellant's PD is sufficient for classification purposes and have incorporated it by reference into this decision.

Series, title, and standard determination

The appellant's agency has classified his position in the Range Technician Series, GS-455, titling it Range Technician, and the appellant does not disagree. We concur with the agency's title and series determination. The position classification flysheet for the GS-455 series contains no grade level criteria. It indicates that positions in that series are to be graded by reference to the grading criteria in the Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-400. Consequently, we have applied that criteria below to the appellant's position.

Grade determination

The Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences (Guide), GS-400, is written in Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor-level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor-level description in any significant 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. Our evaluation by application of the nine FES factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor measures the kind and nature of knowledge and skills needed and how they are utilized in doing the work.

At Level 1-5, the employee uses knowledge of the technical methods and procedures related to the professional field(s) supported, of management practices, and of the agency's policy and programs to lay out, schedule, organize, and execute the details of either: (1) a wide variety of types of limited operational projects incorporating diverse technical knowledge, e.g., limited projects requiring the application of appreciably dissimilar specialized methods, procedures, and/or techniques; and/or (2) one-at-a-time (and often long range) multi-phased projects, at least some of which have *nonstandard* technical problems that the technician must coordinate with others to resolve, e.g., technical problems requiring the use of specialized, complicated techniques. Technicians at this level also characteristically apply a practical knowledge of the basic theories and practices of the scientific discipline(s) supported (though emphasis is on the numerous precedents repetitively employed in the organization) and must be adept at combining this knowledge with resourcefulness, initiative, and independent judgment in locating precedents and resolving the details inherent to the application.

Work illustrations at Level 1-5 include technicians who develop schedules and other plans for monitoring and inspecting timber stand improvement or reforestation operations, and report on contractor compliance with contract terms or standard specifications. The technician interprets and explains standard contract provisions, and either obtains compliance or refers noncompliance or unprecedented problems to higher levels. In another work illustration of Level 1-5, the technician schedules and executes a variety of responsible projects related to range conservation programs. Duties include planning and organizing projects, developing preliminary plans for implementing improvements to grazing allotments when a variety of range re-vegetation methods of installation are involved, working with permittees in preparing preliminary designs and plans, and ensuring the technical adequacy of the completed work.

At Level 1-6, the employee uses knowledge of the technical methods and procedures, management practices, agency policies and programs, and an extensive familiarity with the methods and practices of the science(s) or discipline(s) supported to: (1) design, coordinate, and execute complete conventional projects when the projects are well preceded in scientific literature and within the organization's technical and administrative guides, but require the exercise of judgment based on critical analysis and evaluation of project objectives, past practices, and alternatives among available work processes; or (2) participate responsibly with the scientist in most phases of the full research process and assume full technical and operational responsibility for three or more of the phases such as development of a study plan, resolving any administrative concerns, developing data through field or laboratory processes, refining, verifying and analyzing data, and preparing reports summarizing the progress of the project; or (3) administratively maintain a significant function or area of responsibility on an ongoing basis.

Technicians at Level 1-6 demonstrate recognized expertise in a narrow specialty area of a scientific field. They have administrative and/or technical assignments, projects, and

responsibilities that are hard to distinguish from those assigned to employees within the organization who perform standardized professional level research studies or projects. To illustrate, an employee at this level performs project planning activity, adapts a design, and coordinates and executes pest management field projects including developing a study plan, collecting data, organizing, justifying, and refining the data collected, studying and evaluating the data, and writing up recommendations for approval prior to implementing, independently, the eradication procedures selected. Another illustration of Level 1-6 concerns the technician who manages precedented types of study projects concerned with habitat analysis for wildlife, fish, or plant populations. The technician adapts a plan for executing the study, resolves administrative concerns, and collects, organizes and summarizes data on habitat conditions and diversity, and the extent of wildlife or fish use of forest, range, or aquatic habitats. Subsequently, the technician refines and justifies the data prior to preparing maps and other information for data base entry; studies the results to determine such things as distribution of endangered, threatened, sensitive, and other plant and animal species on assigned project areas or units; and generates conclusions or proposals.

Level 1-5 is met. The appellant's position requires knowledge of the principles of range management and the U.S. Forest Service grazing permit system. He uses knowledge of the technical methods and procedures related to the professional field supported (i.e., rangeland management), of management practices, and of the agency's policy and programs to lay out, schedule, organize, and execute the details of limited and/or multi-phased range projects, at least some of which have nonstandard technical problems that the appellant must coordinate with others (e.g., Forest Service personnel or permittees) to resolve. His position requires a technical knowledge of the principles, terminology, and concepts of range management, as well as the functions of the [appellant's organization] as they relate to other Forest Service organizations. He must be thoroughly knowledgeable of local livestock rules and regulations, and of the relationship between the forest plans and the range program, as well as apply a basic knowledge of the ecological effects of grazing on local vegetation and key forage species. This knowledge is used to monitor grazing on the allotments for which the appellant has responsibility, to prepare annual operating instructions to permittees, conduct range readiness inspections, and to schedule and execute a variety of responsible projects related to range conservation programs.

Similar to an illustration noted at Level 1-5, the appellant explains standard contract provisions and the technical methods to be employed by contract range users. He either obtains compliance or refers noncompliance or unprecedented problems to higher levels, and ensures that permittees comply with the terms and conditions of grazing permits and leases, referring unprecedented problems to his supervisor or the Acting District Ranger. The appellant performs work that is similar to another work illustration at Level 1-5 where the employee develops preliminary plans for implementing range improvements to grazing allotments, oversees implementation, works with permittees submitting yearly requests, assures permittees adhere to permit requirements, and identifies and removes noxious weeds on the [appellant's organization]. Such activities and the knowledge required to perform them parallel those applied in the appellant's position.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-6. Unlike that level, his position does not require the technical knowledge to design, coordinate, and execute *complete conventional projects* found at Level 1-6. While the appellant has limited responsibility for preparation of environmental

documents, he is not responsible for the coordination or preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS), an environmental assessment (EA), or the development of comprehensive range management plans. The appellant's role is limited to using a standard template covering project descriptions on a Project Initiation Sheet, providing input from the permittees and himself to the environmental planner, and submitting this sheet and input to the appropriate higher-level specialists or supervisors. Additionally, the appellant uses information from an EA to complete an Allotment Management Plan template. The higher level specialists (i.e., his supervisors or other specialist) prepare and complete such documents as the Categorical Exclusion (CE), EIS or the EA covering the project planning activity phase. Unlike Level 1-6, the appellant is not involved with supporting scientists in most phases of research, and is not responsible for maintaining a significant function or area of responsibility on an ongoing basis as described in the Guide.

This factor is evaluated at Level 1-5 and 750 points are assigned.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

This factor measures how the work is assigned, the employee's responsibility for carrying out the work, and how the work is reviewed.

At Level 2-3, the highest level for this factor described in the Guide, the supervisor or other designated authority initially provides direction on the priorities, objectives, and deadlines for types of work previously performed by the unit and therefore covered by precedent. Assignments new to the organization or unusual assignments may be accompanied with a general background discussion, including advice on the location of reference material to use. The technician identifies the work to be done to fulfill project requirements and objectives, plans and carries out the procedural and technical steps required, seeks assistance as needed, independently coordinates work efforts with outside parties, and characteristically submits only completed work. The employee also exercises initiative in developing his/her own solution to common technical and procedural problems such as changes in priorities, need for extended field time, minor need for additional equipment or personnel, and other such comparable issues. However, the employee seeks administrative direction or decision from higher authority on the course to follow when encountering significant technical or procedural problems with the work.

At Level 2-3, the supervisor's review of the employee's work is usually in the form of an assessment as to how the technician resolved technical and related administrative problems encountered. These reviews emphasize the quality of judgment used by the technician in resolving technical and administrative problems noted in reports or identified by those with whom the employee interacted. Accuracy of the data produced, quality of observations made, and the sufficiency of steps employed in planning and executing the work assigned are customarily accepted without detailed review.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 2-3. Like that level, the appellant works under the general supervision of a higher graded employee (Rangeland Management Specialist) or other designated authority (i.e., District Ranger, the appellant's second-level supervisor) who schedules and outlines projects in terms of objectives, priorities, and deadlines.

The appellant independently carries out his work, determines the approach to problems encountered, and resolves them based on established procedures and precedents. The appellant coordinates with his supervisor, a specialist, or other designated authority as needed, and seeks guidance only when unusual situations or significant technical problems occur, or interpretations are needed on application of new agency policies or regulations. Like Level 2-3, the supervisor reviews work to determine how the appellant resolved technical and administrative problems, but the accuracy of data and quality of observations are accepted without a detailed review.

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

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At Level 3-2, the procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are applicable. These guidelines may range from complex, standardized, codified regulations, to maps, blueprints, standard operating procedures, oral instructions, equipment or instrument manuals, or standard technical texts. The employee must use judgment in selecting the appropriate guideline because of the number, similarity, linkage, and overlapping nature of the guides. Most important, however, is that the guidelines contain criteria to solve the core question or problem contained in the assignments, though the applicability may not be readily apparent.

Level 3-3 differs from the previous level in that the employee works with new requirements or applications for which only general guidelines are available, or with assignments where the most applicable guides are limited to general functional statements or work samples which are not always directly related to the core problem of the assignments, have gaps in specificity, or are otherwise not completely applicable. The employee exercises independent judgment in applying the guidelines or extending their applicability to situations not specifically covered; uses guidelines as the basis for making procedural deviations from established administrative or technical methods; or otherwise adapts guidelines when judgment is exercised based on an understanding of the intent of the guidelines and reacting accordingly.

The appellant's position meets Level 3-2. Like that level, procedures for doing the work are established, and a number of specific guidelines are applicable including Forest Service manuals, handbooks, directives, technical publications, and agency procedures. Although he uses judgment in selecting the appropriate guideline because of their number, similarity and overlapping nature, they always contain the criteria to solve the core technical question or issue at hand.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 3-3. Unlike that level, he is not faced with assignments where the most applicable guides are limited to general functional statements not related to the core problem of the assignment. Because of the scope and applicability of the guidelines he has available and uses, he does not have to exercise the degree of judgment to apply the guidelines as described at Level 3-3, make procedural deviations from them, or adapt them based on an understanding of the intent of the guideline.

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

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

At Level 4-3, the highest level for this factor described in the Guide, the work requires the performance of various technical duties which involve differing and unrelated processes and methods. For example, the technician: (1) shifts frequently from one type of responsible technical assignment to other types which are substantially different in terms of equipment, techniques and methods used, specific data produced, and uses to which the data will be put; (2) has ongoing or long term responsibility for limited technical and administrative concerns in a limited program or operating function; or (3) independently executes defined portions of more comprehensive long range projects. There exist a number of possible courses of action for planning as well as executing the work and the employee is given leeway or is otherwise expected to exercise discretion in choosing from among them. However, the problems encountered with which the technician copes independently have some commonality with others previously encountered in the organization. The employee, at this level, is required to use judgment in applying a wide range of conventional, established approaches, methods, techniques and solutions to new situations. The technician: (1) identifies and recommends resolution of discrepancies in data based on a study of how the data interrelate; (2) adjusts work methods to accommodate unusual conditions; or (3) recommends or determines what data to use, record, or report.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 4-3. Similar to that level, his work requires the performance of various technical duties which involve differing and unrelated processes and methods. The appellant is assigned sixteen cooperative agreements (i.e., also known as grazing allotments/permits) between his agency and private ranchers. These cooperative agreements allow grazing of cattle on government land. His primary assignment involves administering his assigned grazing allotments, monitoring compliance by permittees on their use of government land and range resources, and making recommendations to permittees, Forest Service specialists, and sometimes local and State government organizations on improvements to areas and resources used within his allotment areas. The allotment assignments are substantially different in terms of the techniques and methods used to gather specific data, which impacts on the types of recommendations made to conserve and protect grazing areas. Like Level 4-3, the appellant's assignments involve a number of possible courses of action for planning and executing the work depending on the needs of permittees, forest plans and grazing rules, and he exercises discretion in choosing the most appropriate one. Additionally, the appellant's work requires consideration of the effect of proposed range actions on other resources and a determination of the conflicts with those resources. Like Level 4-3, he applies a wide range of conventional, established approaches and techniques to new situations, identifying and recommending methods for resolving discrepancies in range data based on his analysis of how data interrelate.

This factor is evaluated at Level 4-3 and 150 points are credited.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

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

At Level 5-3, the highest level for this factor described in the Guide, the work involves applying conventional technical and administrative solutions and practices to a variety of problems. A major consideration for performing the work is to insure that established operations criteria, rules, or methods are adhered to in a production environment. For example, the employee may have ongoing responsibility for execution of a standardized project or program area cited in an annual or comparable work plan as a performance objective for the organization. At Level 5-3, the employee's work products directly affect the operation of systems, field investigations, or research conclusions.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 5-3. Like that level, his work involves applying conventional technical and administrative solutions and practices to a variety of problems. In monitoring grazing allotments, he ensures that established operations and grazing rules are adhered to by permittees. Similar to Level 5-3, he has ongoing responsibility for a group of allotments at a field site, whose operation is cited in annual forest work plans as a performance goal. Like Level 5-3, the appellant's work products directly affect the design and operation of the district's range conservation program, and the adequacy of that program in terms of the forest's long range work plans.

This factor is evaluated at Level 5-3 and 150 points are assigned.

Factor 6, Personal Contacts, and Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts

Personal Contacts

This factor assesses the level of regular and recurring face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with individuals outside the supervisory chain. The evaluation criteria are described in three paragraphs labeled 1 through 3.

Level 2 contacts include employees in the same agency, inside and outside of the immediate organizations. For example, contacts may be with personnel from higher level organizational units, or resource persons from State or local government units, or other Federal agencies. Level 2 contacts may also be with members of the general public, contractor personnel, or special users, e.g., private landowners, cooperators, or business persons. At this level, contacts are usually established on a routine basis, though the employee's authority may not be initially clear to the person contacted, e.g., the identity, role, and authority of the parties may have to be outlined before conducting business.

Level 3 contacts are made on a non-routine basis and may take place in a variety of settings. At this level, the role of each party is developed during the course of the meeting. The contacts are regularly established with a variety of noted subject matter experts from other Federal agencies, universities, private foundations and professional societies; influential local community leaders such as members of tribal governing bodies or comparable State or local government officials; newspaper, radio, and television reporters; legal representatives of private landowners; and representatives of organized landowner or special interest groups.

Level 2 is met. Like that level, the appellant's regular and recurring contacts include Forest Service personnel (i.e., employees within and outside of his organization, specialists, etc.), private landowners (e.g., range permittees), State or local government representatives, Federal agency representatives, contractor personnel, and the general public. These contacts are usually made on a routine basis, though the appellant's authority may not be initially clear to the person contacted. Level 3 is not met. The appellant does not have contact with a variety of noted subject matter experts from other Federal agencies, or other individuals and representatives as noted at Level 3.

Purpose of Contacts

This factor assesses the purposes of contacts, which can range from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives. The evaluation criteria are described in three paragraphs labeled a through c.

At Level b, the purpose of the contacts is to plan and coordinate work efforts; explain the need to adhere to laws, rules, contract, or lease provisions; discuss inspected work and contract requirements when monitoring activity of contractors; discuss technical requirements of equipment with manufacturers and resolve problems concerning the work or the peculiar needs of the organization; interpret data obtained and explain its purpose and significance; or to reach agreement on operating problems such as recurring submission of inaccurate, untimely, incomplete or irrelevant data. Also at this level, the persons contacted are usually working toward a common goal and generally are reasonably cooperative. At this level, some employees may be required to deliver information, such as how data were obtained and their opinion as to its accuracy, in court.

At Level c, the purpose of the contacts is to influence, motivate, interrogate or control persons or groups. Persons contacted are characteristically fearful, skeptical, or uncooperative, and skill must be used in the approach made to obtain the desired results.

Level b is met. Like that level, the appellant meets with permittees and other Forest Service personnel, who are generally cooperative, to plan and coordinate work efforts, to review upcoming or in process work projects, to coordinate proposed projects, to resolve problems associated with his assigned grazing allotments, to reach an agreement with permittees on grazing allotments, to obtain or provide specialized input on projects, or on matters concerning range administration. Level c is not met. The appellant's contacts do not require the skill described at Level c where the contact involves influencing others to adopt methods about which

there are conflicting opinions; persuading others to participate in projects or organizational objectives when there is no requirement for doing so; or persuading technical and administrative personnel from outside the government to submit the information desired for a study when there is no official or legal basis for requiring submission of the information and there are conflicts with the parties involved; or gaining compliance with established policies and regulations by persuasion or negotiation. The appellant's standard, conventional projects do not entail this level of controversy or conflict.

These factors are credited at Level 2-b for a total of 75 points.

Factor 8, Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment.

At Level 8-2, the work requires some physical exertion, such as regular and recurring running, walking, or bending; walking or climbing over rocky areas, through plowed fields or other uneven surfaces, through dense vegetation and in mountainous terrain; etc.

At Level 8-3, the work requires regular and protracted periods of considerable and strenuous physical exertion such as carrying or lifting heavy objects (over 50 pounds); hacking passages through dense vegetation; or climbing ladders or scaffolds carrying heavy equipment used to install, maintain, or repair research installations.

The appellant's work requires physical exertion comparable to Level 8-2. Like that level, in the course of his field work he walks, bends, or climbs over rocky areas in remote locations (sometimes on horseback) which have uneven surfaces. The terrain varies from high desert grassland to uneven and rough terrain. He must be able to hike by foot and ride horses over rough and mountainous terrain in extremes of temperature and climatic conditions.

Level 8-3 is not met. The appellant's work does not require regular and protracted periods of considerable and strenuous physical exertion such as carrying or lifting heavy objects weighing over 50 pounds, hacking through dense vegetation, or climbing ladders or scaffolds.

This factor is evaluated at Level 8-2 and 20 points are credited.

Factor 9, Work Environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety and occupational health regulations required.

At Level 9-2, the work involves regular and recurring moderate risks or discomforts which require special safety precautions, e.g., working around moving parts, carts, machines, or working with irritant chemicals. Other positions require regularly working outdoors with exposure to extreme temperatures and adverse weather conditions. At this level, employees are

required to use protective clothing or gear, such as masks, gowns, coats, boots, goggles, gloves, or shields to moderate risks, or to follow procedures for minimizing risk.

At Level 9-3, the work environment involves high risks with regular and recurring exposure to potentially dangerous situations or unusual environmental stress where high risk factors exist which cannot be reasonably controlled. For example, working at great heights under extreme weather conditions.

As in Level 9-2, the appellant's work involves regular and recurring moderate risks or discomforts which require special safety precautions. Like that level, he regularly works outdoors with exposure to extreme temperatures and adverse weather conditions. Those conditions require the use of protective clothing and gear. Unlike Level 9-3, his work environment does not involve high risks with regular and recurring exposure to potentially dangerous situations or unusual environmental stress where high risk factors exist which cannot be reasonably controlled.

This factor is evaluated at Level 9-2 and 20 points are assigned.

Summary of FES factors

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. <i>Knowledge Required by the Position</i>	1-5	750
2. <i>Supervisory Controls</i>	2-3	275
3. <i>Guidelines</i>	3-2	125
4. <i>Complexity</i>	4-3	150
5. <i>Scope and Effect</i>	5-3	150
6&7. <i>Personal Contacts & Purpose of Contacts</i>	2-b	75
8. <i>Physical Demands</i>	8-2	20
9. <i>Work Environment</i>	9-2	<u>20</u>
Total		1565

A total of 1565 points falls within the GS-7 range (1355-1600) on the grade conversion table in the Guide. Therefore, the appellant's position is graded at the GS-7 level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Range Technician, GS-455-7.