

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

Atlanta Field Services Group  
75 Spring Street, SW., Suite 1018  
Atlanta, GA 30303-3109

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

**Appellant:** [appellant]

**Agency classification:** Supervisory Forester  
GS-460-11

**Organization:** [name] Ranger District  
National Forests in [location]  
[name] Region  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
[location]

**OPM decision:** GS-460-11

**OPM decision number:** C-0460-11-06

/s/ Virginia L Magnuson  
Virginia L. Magnuson  
Classification Appeals Officer

January 12, 2004  
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:**

PERSONAL

[appellant]

[name] Ranger District

National Forests in [location]

[address]

[location]

Director

Human Resources Management

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

[name] Region

[address]

[location]

Director of Human Resources Management

USDA-OHRM-PPPD

U.S. Department of Agriculture

J.S. Whitten Building, Room 302W

1400 Independence Avenue, SW.

Washington, DC 202504

## **Introduction**

On May 9, 2003, the Atlanta Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant] who is employed as a Supervisory Forester, GS-401-11. The appellant is assigned to a position located in the [name] Ranger District, National Forests in [location], [name] Region, Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, [location]. The appellant requests that his position be reclassified to Supervisory Forester, GS-401-12. He believes that his agency did not properly credit the judgmental demands placed on his position, the scope and effect of the work he performs, and the difficulty and complexity of his supervisory responsibilities. We received the complete appeal administrative report from the agency on August 12, 2003. The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **General issues**

The appellant's servicing human resources organization initially audited his position in March 2001 and notified the appellant that the position warranted classification as Supervisory Forester, GS-401-12. However, the [name] Region, Forest Service, subsequently reviewed the position and in February, 2002, issued a decision classifying the position as Supervisory Forester, GS-401-11. The appellant then appealed to his agency and on March 21, 2003, it issued a decision substantiating the position's existing classification. The appellant subsequently appealed to OPM.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellant, his supervisor, and the Contracting Officer for the Eastern Administration Zone.

## **Position information**

The appellant is assigned to position description number [#]. He and his supervisor certified the accuracy of the position description.

The primary function of the appellant's position is to serve as a supervisory operations team leader to the District Ranger. In this capacity, he coordinates, organizes, and directs the implementation of all normal field projects and work activities for the District. These include timber sale preparation and administration, contracts and contract administration, recreation operations and maintenance, motorized and non-motorized trails maintenance, reforestation, timber stand improvement, and wildlife and fisheries habitat maintenance and creation. This work includes watershed improvement projects, capital investment project work, vehicle fleet and facilities maintenance, road maintenance and construction, and prescribed fire and fire management.

The appellant also coordinates the timing, scheduling, and implementing of field projects and work activities. He arranges for, coordinates, and approves the purchase of all project supplies, materials, and contracts and monitors and ensures that all project-related work is performed to agency quality standards and requirements. He serves as Contracting Officer (CO) for District-

level timber sales controlled by the District Ranger and as Forest Service Representative (FSR) for timber sales controlled at the Forest-level. The appellant serves as a member of a Forest-level management team involved in setting resource program levels and priorities and determining budget distributions to districts. He also serves on the District management team involved in formulating and implementing policies, programs and matters significantly impacting the District. He spends 70 percent of his time involved in these activities.

The remaining 30 percent of his time is devoted to providing administrative and technical direction of 10 permanent, full-time positions (three Forestry Technicians, GS-462-9, five Forestry Technicians, GS-462-7, one Forestry Technician, GS-462-5, and one Forestry Technician, GS-462-4) responsible for fire management and suppression, timber sales activities, recreation management, roads, trails and facilities, timber stand improvement, reforestation, minerals, soil, watershed and rights of way, surveys, landline location and maintenance, and law enforcement. The appellant also supervises enrollees in government funded employment programs and coordinates the activities of members of volunteer groups and contractor personnel engaged in work that benefits the District. These activities include maintenance, repair, and restoration of recreation facilities, hiking, mountain bike, off-highway vehicle (OHV) and all terrain vehicle (ATV) trails and roads, undergrowth clearance and control, hazardous tree mitigation, pest management and monitoring, etc.

The appellant works under the general supervision of the District Ranger who provides administrative and policy direction in the form of broadly defined annual and long term objectives and limitations resulting from budgetary and land use considerations or areas of special sensitivity (commercial timber sales, designated OHV and ATV trails, agency ownership of lands, etc.). Review of the appellant's work is in terms of agreement with overall policies, defined direction, and attainment of the district program of work. The supervisor relies on the appellant's analyses, recommendations, and suggestions as technically correct.

The position description of record contains more information about how the position functions and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

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

The agency classified the appellant's position in the Forestry Series, GS-460, and titled it as Supervisory Forester. The appellant does not disagree with the agency's series and title determinations. We concur.

The appellant's nonsupervisory forestry program work is evaluated using the GS-460 position classification standard. The General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG) is used to evaluate the supervisory duties.

### **Grade determination**

#### *Evaluation using the GS-460 standard*

The GS-460 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are assigned for each of nine factors. The total is

converted to a grade level by use of the grade conversion table provided in the standard. 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.

The appellant disagrees with his agency's determinations for two factors and believes that his position should be credited at Levels 3-4 and 5-4. He agrees with his agency's crediting of Levels 1-7, 2-4, 4-4, 6-3, 7-3, 8-2, and 9-2. After careful review of the record, we concur with the uncontested agency determinations.

### *Factor 3, Guidelines*

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

At Level 3-3, guidelines include action plans for related programs or activities, manuals of standard procedures and practices, textbooks, research reports, and other literature. Most assignments have aspects which require the forester to select, adapt, or interpret existing methods, practices, and instructions or to generalize from several guidelines and techniques in carrying out the activities in solving the more complex problems. Some assignments require frequent departures from standardized procedures in completing assignments. The employee determines when problems require additional guidance.

Level 3-3 is met. The guidelines available to and generally used by the appellant primarily consist of a variety of laws, regulations, agency policies, manuals and handbooks, standard procedures and practices, precedents, reports, literature, and other detailed guidance. The District Ranger provides general guidance and additional guidance is available in the form of the Forest Plan, Forest Policy and Direction, the Forest and District annual work program, and guidance from the agency's Regional Office. Much of the appellant's work requires that he select, adapt, interpret, or generalize from the guidance available to resolve the more complex problems encountered in carrying out his assignments. The appellant has responsibility for determining when it is appropriate to seek additional guidance from the District Ranger, the Regional Office staff, or subject-matter experts on and off the Forest.

At Level 3-4, guidelines are often inadequate to deal with the more complex or unusual problems or problems concerned with novel, undeveloped, or controversial aspects of forestry. There may be relatively few precedents or guides that are pertinent to the specific problems or proven methods of treating problems under varying conditions are lacking or incomplete. The forester is required to deviate from, or extend traditional forestry methods and practices, or to develop essentially new or vastly modified techniques and methods for obtaining effective results.

Level 3-4 is not met. Unlike this level, the programs and problems with which the appellant deals are generally not new or experimental in nature or as complex as indicated at this level. The appellant is not required to develop totally new or significantly modified methods and techniques to obtain effective results. Level 3-4 includes an element of uncertainty or ambiguity in making technical decisions, either due to the novelty or experimental nature of the work involved or because of conflicting precedents or guidelines. The appellant cited three instances

where he believes that he developed experimental methods of dealing with problems as intended at Level 3-4. The first was the development of a method to emplace traps and barriers between OHV trails and adjacent creeks to prevent silt from being washed into these waterways and causing pollution. The second involved the development and placement of a guardrail system to ensure that OHVs were confined to trails designated for such use while in the District. The third involved the development of a specialized type of fee box where the fees of users of facilities in remote areas could be securely deposited until collected by District personnel. Although these activities were undertaken in the absence of precedents, guides, or proven methods, this does not meet the intent of Level 3-4 in that these activities were solutions developed to resolve problems specific to the District and did not involve the novel or experimental aspects of forestry or conflicting guidelines typical of Level 3-4. They did not involve deviating from, or extending traditional forestry methods and practices or developing essentially new or vastly modified techniques intended at this level. The responsibility for deviating from, or extending traditional forestry methods and practices, or developing new techniques and methods rests with higher level positions and other organizations within the Forest Service, such as the Forest Service research stations.

Level 3-3 is credited for 275 points.

#### *Factor 5, Scope and effect*

This factor covers the relationship between 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 purpose of the work is to investigate and analyze a variety of conventional resource problems and environmental conditions and to recommend and/or implement solutions to overcome them to meet resource management objectives. The work affects the efficient development, protection, and use of a particular resource, the public's impression of the adequacy of the management of the particular resource and the other resources it impacts upon, and the socio-economic welfare of dependent communities.

Level 5-3 is met. The appellant is responsible for coordinating, directing and leading the implementation of the management of the resources of the District. He deals with a wide variety of resource issues and problems that are generally of a conventional nature. The appellant does deal with certain issues and situations that are controversial in that they generate conflicts among various groups regarding the development and use of the District's resources. The decisions that he makes impact the District resource management objectives, the acceptance of those objectives by the general public and interest groups, and the social and economic well-being of local communities and property owners in the District.

At Level 5-4, foresters develop essentially new or vastly improved techniques or solutions to specific problems in a resource or subject matter program or program area, and coordinate results with related resource activities. They furnish advisory, planning, or review services on specific problems, programs, or functions. They are typically concerned with problems which occur at a number of locations within a broad geographic area, or affect the continued existence of a

resource unique to a geographical area. The results of the work directly influence the effectiveness and acceptability of agency goals, programs and activities.

Level 5-4 is not met. In contrast to activities relating to a broad geographic area with a number of operating units typical of this level, the appellant's activities are primarily concentrated within the boundaries of, and concerned with, the assigned District. The primary purpose of the appellant's work does not typically involve developing essentially new or vastly improved techniques or solutions to problems having comparable Level 5-4 scope. It does not directly impact agency goals, programs, and activities as envisioned at this level.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

### *Summary*

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-7	1250
2. Supervisory controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts	6-3	60
7. Purpose of contacts	7-3	120
8. Physical demands	8-2	20
9. Work environment	9-2	20
<i>Total</i>		2570

A total of 2570 points falls within the GS-11 grade level point range of 2355 -2750 points on the Grade Conversion Table.

### *Evaluation using the GSSG*

The GSSG uses a point-factor evaluation method that assesses six factors common to all supervisory positions. To grade a position, each factor is evaluated by comparing the position to the factor level definitions for that factor and crediting the points designated for the highest factor level which is met, in accordance with the instructions specified for the factor being evaluated. The GSSG is a threshold standard. A defined level must be fully met before it can be credited. The total points accumulated under all factors are then converted to a grade using the point to grade conversion chart in the GSSG.

The appellant specifically disagrees with the agency's consideration of Special Situations under Factor 6, *Other Considerations*, in determining the grade for his supervisory work. The agency credited Level 6-3 and also credited Special Situations 3 and 8. The appellant does not contest the agency's initial Level 6-3 determination, but believes that Special Situations 3, 4, 5, and 8 all should be credited and thus raise the final factor determination to Level 6-4. After careful review of the agency determinations, we concur with the agency's crediting of Levels 1-2, 2-1, 4A-2, and 4B-2, as well as its initial evaluation of Level 6-3. We also concur with its crediting

of Special Situations 8. We will, therefore, discuss the special situations contested by the appellant and Special Situation 3, with which we agree with the final determination, but do not wholly agree with the agency rationale. We will also discuss Factors 3 and 5 which, though we agree with the agency determinations, warrant further analysis.

The appellant also believes that he directly and indirectly supervises program participants and volunteers in accomplishing the organization's work. These primarily consist of recreation and trail volunteers, Senior Citizen Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) participants.

The appellant's organization provided documentation reflecting that, for the previous year, the organization utilized a number of volunteer and special program participants. Based on workload data, the organization had approximately 21 staff years of non-permanent work which included two staff years of volunteer campground host work, two staff years of YCC and 17 staff years of SCSEP program work. The SCSEP and YCC program participants and volunteer campground hosts are primarily involved in work that supports the District's conservation and recreation programs. Campground hosts live in developed camping areas during camping season, approximately four months in length, and provide visitors and users with information regarding the various areas such as available facilities, directions, user rules and other requirements. They are also responsible for notifying district staff and law enforcement officials of violations of user rules and other serious problems. They engage in light maintenance work (picking up trash, cleaning picnic areas, replacing light bulbs in recreation buildings, etc). Participants in the SCSEP and YCC programs are utilized in a wider variety of support activities in the District. Their work includes facilities maintenance and upkeep (repainting recreation area buildings, replacing and recaulking windows, replacing light bulb and door closers, removing mildew from buildings, cleaning picnic areas and restrooms, mowing grass, trimming weeds, etc. Some SCSEP participants are assigned to assist the District's staff by performing basic administrative duties (serving as receptionists, answering telephones, referring callers and visitors to appropriate staff members, handing out printed materials on District facilities, etc.). Other program participants perform work related to timber management (planting trees, prescribed brush burning, clearing grass from around saplings, and related activities).

To determine the extent of the supervisory authority over non-permanent special program participants assigned to the appellant, we used the GSSG. The GSSG defines in Factor 3-2c the minimum authorities and responsibilities a supervisor must exercise over work in order for that work to be considered under the GSSG. To receive credit for the responsibilities and authorities for work, the supervisor must carry out at least three of the first four, and a total of six or more of the following 10 authorities and responsibilities.

1. Plan work to be accomplished by subordinates, set and adjust short-term priorities, and prepare schedules for completion of work - The appellant is responsible for planning work assigned to non-permanent personnel. He meets with the personnel each week to outline weekly and, based on the nature of the assignments, sometimes longer assignments. The appellant's position meets this authority.

2. Assign work to subordinates based on priorities, selective consideration of the difficulty and requirements of assignments, and the capabilities of employees - The appellant assigns work



based on District priorities, skills and previous experience of individuals. The appellant matches individuals and groups to the work that needs to be done according to their mastery of specific tasks. The appellant's position meets this authority.

3. Evaluate the work performance of subordinates - The evaluation of the work of SCSEP and YCC participants generally consists of making on-the-spot corrections of their performance of the particular tasks with which they are involved. A pass/fail summary is completed on YCC participants at the end of their four month appointments. The appellant's position meets this authority.

4. Give advice, counsel, or instruction to employees on both work and administrative matters - The appellant provides guidance on agency policy issues such as appropriate use of agency vehicles. He counsels YCC participants on work expectations and accomplishments. He ensures that they receive on-the-job training. The appellant's position meets this authority.

5. Interview candidates for positions in the unit and recommend appointments to such positions - The appellant interviews individuals participating in the SCSEP and YCC program, and volunteer campground hosts. The only appointments involved are the excepted service appointments of the YCC participants, lasting approximately four months per person each year, and he makes these appointments. The appellant's position meets this authority.

6. Hear and resolve complaints from employees, referring group grievances and more serious unresolved complaints to a higher level supervisor or manager - Although the nature of the complaints are not typically such that they result in group grievances or present difficulties in resolving, the appellant is responsible for resolving routine, work-related complaints from program participants. Issues beyond his ability to resolve are referred to his immediate supervisor. The appellant's position meets this authority.

7. Effect minor disciplinary measures, such as warnings and reprimands, recommending other action in more serious cases – The appellant has authority to directly intervene and issue letters to non-permanent personnel on safety-related issues. He may also verbally counsel individuals or recommend termination from the program. The appellant's position meets this authority.

8. Identify developmental and training needs of employees, providing or arranging for needed development and training - Training of non-permanent personnel is generally limited to that related to agency safety and certification requirements (operating chainsaws), and on-the-job-training on the proper way to perform specific tasks (how to put in a cross ditch to prevent road flooding). Individuals who have mastered certain tasks will generally perform those tasks whenever the need arises. Since there is no formal process, including identification of monetary resources, to identify developmental needs of non-permanent personnel and training is primarily safety-related or task-specific, the appellant's position does not meet this authority.

9. Find ways to improve production or increase the quality of the work directed - The appeal record does not indicate significant responsibilities for production or quality of work improvement with respect to non-permanent employees. The appellant's position does not meet this authority.

10. Develops performance standards - The appellant does not develop formal performance standards for non-permanent personnel. The appellant's position does not meet this authority.

The appellant carries out the first four and a total of seven of the 10 identified responsibilities and authorities relative to the non-permanent special program work which is equivalent to 19 staff years. This work is appropriate for consideration as work supervised by the appellant.

The appellant's responsibilities for the volunteer camp hosts are limited and do not include significant work planning and assignment functions characterized in the first four required authorities above. The work of the volunteer camp hosts is not considered in the appellant's supervisory workload.

In addition to the volunteer camp hosts, documentation provided by the appellant's organization reflected that 238 volunteers participated in trail, sign, and road maintenance activities involving the District's hiking, horseback and mountain bike riding, and off-highway-vehicle (OHV) trails during the previous year. Trail volunteers work on weekends and engage in activities such as cutting tree branches, clearing undergrowth, erecting and replacing signs and signposts, cleaning out sediment traps and water bars, filling mud holes, etc. Additionally, volunteers who work on the 43 miles of OHV trails engage in activities involving replacing bridge timbers and culverts, installing cross ditches to prevent road flooding, and other work related to preventing or repairing damage by OHV use. Trail volunteers typically work in groups and notify the appellant of the number of people who may show up to work on a project. The appellant's supervisor stated that volunteer group leaders normally inform the appellant of the number of people who were involved and the number of hours worked. This information is normally accepted without question.

The minimum coverage requirement for use of the GSSG requires that a supervisor accomplish work through combined technical and administrative direction of others. The appellant or subordinate technicians do not provide direct technical supervision over individual volunteers, but rather make determinations that a project has or hasn't been completed adequately and that a volunteer has been trained or certified to use specific equipment such as chain saws. The appellant does not establish performance standards, evaluate individual technical proficiency, or perform other functions indicative of full administrative and technical responsibility over volunteers. Therefore, the volunteer work is not considered as part of the supervisory workload and is not further considered in applying the GSSG to the appellant's position.

The appellant also monitors the work of contract personnel. The District uses contractors on a project-by-project basis throughout the year for work that the District cannot perform due to the lack of personnel, equipment, or expertise. Some of these projects are facility-related, e.g., wastewater plant operation, road repair and grading, gravel, roofing, etc., and professional engineers or certified personnel at the Forest-level serve as Contracting Officer's technical representatives for them. Since the appellant does not have full technical responsibility over this type of contracted work, it is not appropriate for consideration under the GSSG.

The appellant has administrative and technical responsibilities for contractors' work on timber-related projects, e.g., tree planting, site preparation, release of seedlings, etc., that are done off and on during the year and for varying amounts of time ranging from one week to several months. The appellant is responsible for determining which projects it would be more effective to contract out based on availability of staff or capability to perform the work. This information is forwarded to the Forest-level for approval and the solicitation of bids. The appellant provides statements of work for the timber-related contracts by identifying the district's specific requirements, e.g., the area, number of acres, tree species to be planted, planting depth and distance between seedlings, deadlines, etc., and the standards for work to be completed. The contractor plans for work accomplishment within established timeframes and the appellant concurs or proposes alternatives. The appellant, either personally or through subordinates, monitors the work of contractors while in progress to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions specified in the contracts, and the appellant directs concerns to the contractor or contract supervisor. The appellant can reject any work that he believes does not meet contract specifications.

The GSSG defines in Factor 3-2b the minimum authorities and responsibilities a supervisor must exercise over work contracted out in order for that work to be considered under the GSSG. To receive credit for the responsibilities and authorities for work contracted out, the supervisor must perform all or nearly all of the following:

1. Analyze benefits and costs of accomplishing work in-house versus contracting; recommend whether to contract;
2. Provide technical requirements and descriptions of the work to be accomplished;
3. Plan and establish the work schedules, deadlines, and standards for acceptable work; coordinate and integrate contractor work schedules and processes with work of subordinates or others;
4. Track progress and quality of performance; arrange for subordinates to conduct any required inspections;
5. Decide on the acceptability, rejection, or correction of work products

The appellant does not perform a benefit and cost analysis as anticipated by Responsibility 1 and does not fully perform Responsibility 3. He coordinates project timeframes with the contractor or contractor supervisor and ensures that he or subordinates are available to inspect the work, but does not have significant responsibility for planning and establishing work schedules and standards for acceptable work beyond those identified in the technical requirements, e.g., distance between seedlings, area to be cleared, or percentage of trees that must live a specified period of time. He does fully perform Responsibilities 2, 4, and 5. Because the appellant does not perform all, or nearly all, of the identified responsibilities for crediting contracted work, that work is not considered as part of the supervisory workload in application of the GSSG.

Evaluation of the appellant's position, taking into consideration the supervised workforce and authorities as determined above, follows.

*Factor 3, Supervisory and managerial authority exercised*

This factor covers the delegated supervisory and managerial authorities that are exercised on a recurring basis. To be credited with a level under this factor, a position must meet the authorities and responsibilities to the extent described for the specific level. The agency credited Level 3-2c and the appellant does not contest it. We agree that Level 3-2c is met. Due to the large workforce, consisting of the Forest Technicians and assigned program participants, we explored the possibility of credit for Level 3-3.

Level 3-3, which may only be considered if Level 3-2 is met, consists of two possible sets of criteria. Level 3-3a reflects the exercise of direct managerial authority and relates essentially to program management rather than direct supervisory functions. Level 3-3a involves (1) exercising 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; (2) assure implementation (by lower and subordinate organizational units or others) of the goals and objectives for the program segments(s) or functions(s) they oversee; (3) determine goals and objectives that need additional emphasis; (4) determine the best approach or solution for resolving budget shortages; and (5) plan for long range staffing needs, including such matters as whether to contract out work. Positions exercising these authorities 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). The appellant performs some functions that approach this level, such as planning for his program and resolving budget issues. However, his position is supervisory rather than managerial. The appellant executes his assigned programs. In contrast, Level 3-3a covers program management work normally delegated to higher levels in the organization where the position is involved in making decisions related to overall program staffing, budgetary, policy, and regulatory matters.

To meet Level 3-3b, a position must exercise all or nearly all of the delegated authorities and responsibilities described at Level 3-2c and, in addition, at least eight of the 15 responsibilities listed at Level 3-3b. We agree with the agency that the position fully meets Level 3-2c in considering the technician positions supervised and we determined that he performs a majority of the responsibilities relative to nonpermanent positions. Our analysis of the responsibilities listed at Level 3-3b follows.

Responsibilities 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 are intended to credit only supervisors who direct two or more subordinate supervisors, team leaders or comparable personnel. To support these designations, these subordinate personnel must spend 25 percent or more of their time on supervisory, lead or comparable functions. The responsibilities may only be credited in situations where the subordinate organization is so large and its work so complex that it requires managing through these types of subordinate positions. While the appellant's organization is large and he uses subordinate Forestry Technicians to oversee work, review of the record did not identify two or more subordinates coordinating or overseeing work for at least 25 percent of their time. The appellant provides direction through weekly meetings to the YCC and SCSEP employees and

coordinates their work, but uses subordinate Forestry Technician positions to oversee the work based on the activity assigned to the non-permanent employees. The technicians provide on-the-job training or assistance as needed. Review of the subordinate forestry technician position descriptions indicates that one position, a GS-7 technician position, oversees approximately 20 (equivalent to 12 staff years) of the non-permanent positions. This situation involves limited leadership responsibilities on the part of the subordinates and does not reflect the difficulty and complexity that would require using multiple supervisors, leaders, group coordinators, or others who would devote at least 25 percent of their time to full leadership responsibilities. Therefore, responsibilities 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 are not credited.

Responsibility 2 is credited. It involves exercising significant responsibilities in dealing with officials of other units or organizations, or in advising management officials of higher rank. The appellant participates on management teams and has a variety of contacts in coordinating and negotiating with other agencies, environmental groups, contractors, and state and local fire, wildlife, and other interest groups.

Responsibility 4 is not credited. It involves direction of a program or major program segment with significant resources (one at a multimillion dollar level of annual resources). The appellant's annual operating budget is over one million dollars, but falls short of the multimillion dollar level intended for this authority.

Responsibility 7 is credited. This responsibility involves making or approving selections for subordinate nonsupervisory positions. The appellant interviews candidates and recommends selections for both technician and non-permanent positions. His supervisor approves them.

Responsibilities 9, 10, and 11 are not credited. They involve significant authority to hear and resolve group grievances or serious employee complaints, review and approve serious disciplinary actions, and make decisions on non-routine, costly, or controversial training requests for employees of the unit. In order to be credited, these authorities must be exercised on a regular and recurring basis. The appellant does not have decision or approval authorities for these types of administrative actions and these issues do not arise frequently.

Responsibility 12 applies to supervisory and managerial positions that oversee organizations in which contractors perform a significant amount of line work. It involves determining whether contractor performed work meets standards of adequacy necessary for authorization of payment. Since the appellant's position does not meet the demands of contracting out work and subsequent contractor oversight described at Level 3-2b, it may not be credited under Level 3-3b.

Responsibility 13 is not credited. It involves approving expenses comparable to within-grades, extensive overtime, and employee travel. The appellant's supervisor approves within grade increases, overtime, and travel.

Responsibility 14 is not credited. It involves recommending awards or bonuses for nonsupervisory personnel and changes in position classification. This authority cannot be fully credited in that a large part of the appellant's workload is performed by program participants who are not eligible for the intended personnel actions. Authorities identified in Level 3-3b

relate to actions involving a large workforce, but only a small number of the appellant's staff are subject to the bonuses and position classification identified with this authority. These actions are not so frequent or regular as to impose significant supervisory demands.

Responsibility 15 is not met. It applies to supervisory and managerial positions that oversee organizations with workloads that are so large and complex as to require attention to team building or comparable methodological or structural improvements. The appellant's workforce is engaged in distinct program functions that do not lend themselves to these types of management applications and the appellant does not have responsibility for organizational and structural improvements.

In summary, we have credited the position with Responsibilities 2 and 7. Because the position is not credited with 8 or more of the listed responsibilities, it fails to meet Level 3-3b and must be credited at level 3-2c (450 points).

*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. It involves determining the highest grade of basic (mission-oriented) nonsupervisory work performed that constitutes 25 percent or more of the workload of the organization. Among the types of work excluded from consideration are work for which the supervisor does not have the minimum supervisory and managerial authorities defined under Factor 3 and lower-level support work that primarily facilitates the basic work of the unit.

The agency credited Level 5-5 and the appellant does not contest it. We concur. The appellant fully supervises both the Forestry Technician positions and the YCC and the SCSEP program work. However, since the YCC and SCSEP program work supports or facilitates the work of the organization, only the Forestry Technician positions may be considered in determining the appellant's base level of work supervised. Based on the mission-oriented workload of the organization, we find that 25 percent or more of the workload is at or above the GS-9 level.

Level 5-5 is credited for 650 points.

*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. Conditions affecting work for which the supervisor is responsible (whether performed by Federal employees, assigned military, contractors, volunteers, or others) may be considered if they increase the difficulty of carrying out assigned supervisory or managerial duties and authorities. When Levels 6-1, 6-2, or 6-3 are identified for this factor, the GSSG requires further consideration of eight Special Situations. If the position meets 3 or more of the situations, an additional single level is added to the initial Factor 6 level determination.

*3. Fluctuating Work Force or Constantly Changing Deadlines*

This situation is credited if 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. Alternately, it is also credited if 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.

The agency rationale includes credit for both situation elements. Based on the agency's rationale, uncontested by the appellant, and our review of the record, we concur in crediting *Constantly Changing Deadlines*. We disagree with crediting *Fluctuating Work Force*.

*Fluctuating Work Force* – In evaluating this element, consideration of the volunteer groups is not appropriate since they are not supervised, for the purpose of applying the GSSG, by the appellant. Responsibility for these work groups, as well as the work of the contractors, is part of the appellant's forester program duties. The appellant's work force does include the YCC and SCSEP participants, and movement of participants as they join or are released from the program and control over their restricted work hours and days creates considerable supervisory demands on the appellant. However, for credit of this element, the difficulty in supervising this workforce must be based on fluctuations in size and difficulties imposed by this type of fluctuation. While the program participants supervised by the appellant change regularly, the overall number of employees does not typically fluctuate to any significant degree. Therefore, this element of the Special Situation is not credited. However, since *Constantly Changing Deadlines* is credited, the Special Situation is credited.

#### *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.

The activities which the appellant is responsible for supervising are routinely carried out in remote areas that are physically removed from District office. Travel to these worksites entails travel periods of up to one hour over roads that are often difficult to traverse and require a degree of caution. Areas requiring fire management activities can be located anywhere within the District and in areas more distant and remote from the District Office. District personnel assigned to field activities in these areas often assemble at the District Office to receive assignments and work plans, obtain clarification or guidance related to work issues, etc. The appellant's subordinate Forestry Technicians are expected to use initiative and independently carry out assignments involving standard methods, practices, procedures, and concepts and precedents with which they are familiar. The higher grade technicians are expected to coordinate their work assignments with other technicians as appropriate and resolve immediate work issues or problems involving personnel at lower grades and non-permanent employees. They provide oversight of the work performed by non-permanent personnel as well as any contractors or

volunteers working in the area. The appellant is available by two-way radio, or cell phone, and can be reached for advice and guidance on situations where unusual or controversial problems arise or those requiring procedures or methods significantly different from those previously used. He also stated that he coordinates the work performed by volunteers and contractor personnel by assigning subordinates to monitor their activities while in field locations. This level of dispersion during the performance of field work within this agency is normal and expected and is an inherent part of forestry technician work. However, the degree of initiative and independence exercised by the higher grade subordinates in carrying out assignments minimizes the impact the physical dispersion might have on the appellant's position and does not result in the need for day-to-day technical supervision and oversight envisioned for this situation. This special situation is not credited.

#### *5. Special Staffing Situations:*

This situation is credited when a substantial portion of the work force 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, requirements for counseling and motivational activities are regular and recurring, and job assignments, work tasks, working conditions, and/or training must be tailored to fit the special circumstances.

This situation is not credited. The organization's workforce is not substantially comprised of individuals who were employed through or involved in special employment programs as intended for this situation. The appellant supervises participants in a low income senior citizen program and a youth work-earn-learn program. The appeal record does not show that the appellant routinely deals with difficult human resources issues and problems, or engage in regular and recurring counseling or motivational activities due to the special nature of the workforce supervised. It does not show that training, work assignments, or conditions have to be tailored to accommodate special (physical or mental disabilities, etc.) employee circumstances.

Because only two of the Special Situations are credited, an additional level for Factor 6 cannot be credited. Level 6-3 for 975 points is credited.

#### *Summary*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
Program Scope and Effect	1-2	350
Organizational Setting	2-1	100
Supervisory/ Managerial Authority	3-2	450
Personal Contacts		
Nature of Contacts	4A-2	50
Purpose of contacts	4B-2	75
Difficulty of Work Directed	5-5	650
Other Conditions	6-3	975
<i>Total</i>		2650



The total of 2650 points falls within the GS-11 range (2355-2750) on the grade conversion table provided in the GSSG.

The appellant's forester program work is evaluated at GS-11 and his supervisory responsibilities are also evaluated at GS-11.

**Decision**

This position is properly classified as Supervisory Forester, GS-460-11.