

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

Dallas Field Services Group
Plaza of the Americas, North Tower
700 North Pearl Street, Suite 525
Dallas, TX 75201

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

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Rangeland Management Specialist
GS-454-11

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

OPM decision: Rangeland Management Specialist
GS-454-11

OPM decision number: C-0454-11-01

Robert D. Hendler
Classification and Pay Claims
Program Manager

August 11, 2005

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).

As indicated in this decision, our findings show that the appellant's official position description (PD) does not meet the standard of adequacy described in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected PD and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 60 days from the date of the decision.

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name and address]

Human Resources Officer
[servicing office address]

Director of Human Resources
[regional office address] 0127

Director of Human Resources Management
USDA-OHRM-PPPD
U.S. Department of Agriculture
J.L. Whitten Building, Room 302-W
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9603

Introduction

On November 4, 2004, the Dallas Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant]. His position is currently classified as Rangeland Management Specialist, GS-454-11. The position is assigned to the [name] District of the [name] National Forest, [name] Region, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, in [location]. The appellant believes it should be classified at the GS-12 grade level. We received the final agency administrative report on December 6, 2004. We have accepted and decided this appeal under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

To help decide the appeal, we conducted a telephone audit with the appellant on January 6, 2005, and interviewed his immediate supervisor on January 7, 2005. We also interviewed the regional group leader for rangeland vegetation on January 27, 2005. In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description (PD) which we incorporate by reference into our decision.

Background information

In 2002, the agency decided to combine the duties of the rangeland management specialist for the North Zone (made up of three Forest districts), with the responsibilities for the rangeland management program at the Forest level. A new PD was written and classified in March 2002. The appellant did not agree with the initial classification determination and appealed to the Forest Service's [name] Regional Office. That appeal decision, dated January 30, 2003, sustained the agency's initial determination. The appellant subsequently filed an appeal with this office.

General issues

The appellant compares his position to several other Rangeland Program Manager positions in other Forest Service Regions that are classified at the GS-12 grade level or higher. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM 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 as a basis for deciding his appeal.

Like OPM, the appellant's agency must classify positions based on comparison to OPM standards and guidelines. However, the 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 headquarters. In doing so, he should specify the precise organizational location, 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 also makes various statements about his agency and its evaluation of his position. In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of this position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing his current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107 and 5112). Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statement only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison. Because our decision sets aside all previous agency decisions, the appellant's concerns regarding the agency's classification review process are not germane to this decision

Position information

The [name] National Forest in Northwestern [state] lies on the eastern edge of [name] National Park and is part of the [name] Ecosystem. The [Forest], which covers nearly 2.5 million acres, including more than 1.5 million as designated wilderness area, is within the [name] Region, and is managed under the principles of multiple-use, i.e., timber, grazing, and minerals. The Forest Supervisor leads a team of seven staff officers and approximately 100 total employees dispersed between the supervisor's office and the five district offices. The Forest is divided geographically into five ranger districts, i.e., the [five names]. The [three names] Districts cover the northern half of the forest, are administratively served from one office in [city and state], and are referred to as the North Zone.

The appellant is assigned to the [name] District in a position that combines responsibility for the Forest's range management program (50%) with responsibility for the range management and noxious weed programs in the North Zone (50%). The appellant is supervised by the North Zone District Ranger, a GS-340-13 position. Other zone personnel include a Biological Scientist (NEPA Coordinator), GS-401-11; a Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-11; three Forester positions, GS-460-11, responsible for timber, recreation, and fire management; and two Range Management Specialists, one GS-454-9 and the appellant's position. There are also two forestry technicians, a range technician, and administrative support staff.

As the Forest range program manager, the appellant participates with the Forest Resource Staff Officer and other staff in program planning and long-range budget development and integration of the range program into the overall program of work for the Forest. He provides technical expertise to specialists within the forest, tracks program efforts, and reports on problems/accomplishments. He develops programs and guidelines relating to the assigned functions; analyses data, statistics, and budgets; and provides training and guidance to Ranger District personnel. He recommends actions to correct deficiencies observed, and recommends policy and program changes. He keeps the Forest Supervisor informed as to whether units are meeting approved production goals and management plans. He reviews the Forest range program to determine adherence to regulations, standards and instructions; and the accomplishment and progress made in meeting plans,

program objectives and opportunities of cooperative endeavors. He makes interpretations of existing instruction and prepares reports of findings including recommendations for correcting deficiencies. Rangeland management program guidance is provided by the Regional Rangeland Management Group Leader.

The appellant participates with the Forest's timber, wildlife, watershed, fisheries, and heritage program managers in the development of overall Forest Range and Ecology Program. This includes formulating policy objectives, correlating and integrating various activities, establishing priorities, and program planning and budgeting. Within the limits of service-wide, regional, and Forest policies, he develops short and long-term programs and plans relating to use and management of grazing resources that reflect local requirements and conditions. He represents the Forest supervisor as a member of various Forest teams, working groups from State natural resource departments, and live stock organizations. He participates with the Bureau of Land Management on range issues such as elk/livestock conflicts, brucellosis, grizzly bear and wolf predation, and wildlife winter range utilization. The appellant serves as range specialist and team leader for the interdisciplinary team developing the environmental analysis for range permit issuance and allotment management plan.

At the zone level, the appellant is responsible for planning, budgeting, coordinating, reviewing, and reporting on the range and noxious weed programs within the zone. He reviews range conditions with permittees to resolve management problems and inspects range allotments for conformance to allotment management plans and distribution of livestock. He completes action on permit transactions, and ensures compliance with permittees. He studies, inspects, and analyzes range conditions to determine effectiveness of management and possible alternatives to management practices, recommending adjustments in forest grazing in response to ecological changes; particularly drought and fire.

Both the appellant and his supervisor have certified the accuracy of the official PD of record [number]. However, while we find it contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned to and performed by the appellant, it does not clearly define the personal contacts required of the position. The agency must revise the PD accordingly, and provide a copy of the revised PD and the Standard Form 50 showing the effective date of the action. A report must be submitted to this office within 60 days of the date of the decision.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency classified the position using the Position Classification Standard (PCS) for the Rangeland Management Series, GS-454, and titled it, Rangeland Management Specialist. The appellant agrees with the series and title assigned. After a careful review of the record, we concur and will use the GS-454 series to evaluate the position.

Grade determination

The GS-454 PCS uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which employs nine factors. Each factor is evaluated separately and is assigned a point value consistent with factor level definitions described in the standard. The total number of points for all nine factors is converted to a grade by use of the standard's grade conversion table. Under the FES, each factor level description 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 the next lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at the higher level. Under FES, positions which significantly exceed the highest factor level or fail to meet the lowest factor level described in a classification standard must be evaluated by reference to the Primary Standard, contained in Appendix 3 of the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*.

The appellant filed a classification appeal with this office, questioning the agency's evaluation of Factors 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. He does not disagree with the evaluation of Factors 3 and 4. We have reviewed their determination for these factors and concur with their findings. Therefore, we will not discuss those two factors any further. Our evaluation of the remaining factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts the employee must understand to do acceptable work, for example, steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principle, concepts, and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply the knowledge.

Level 1-7 requires professional knowledge of a wide range of rangeland management principles, concepts, and theories to perform duties related to development and implementation of multiple-use rangeland management plans. The knowledge and skills are sufficient to solve problems covering diverse situations. Assignments require sound professional knowledge and skill sufficient to modify or adapt standard processes and procedures and assess, select, and apply appropriate precedents and devise strategies to overcome significant resource problems. This level requires working knowledge of related disciplines such as wildlife biology, forestry, soil conservation, plant taxonomy, and hydrology and their interrelationships to plan multiple-use, sustained yield programs. This level requires knowledge of ecological processes and the skill to assess the environmental impact of management practices and the skill to resolve differences among diverse groups with competing goals to recommend and justify appropriate rangeland management programs. It requires a thorough knowledge of agency and/or tribal policies and procedures, and applicable Federal statutes and legislation governing rangeland management programs.

Level 1-8 requires a mastery of the rangeland management profession to apply new scientific findings, developments, and advances and to resolve critical problems of a

unique, novel, or highly controversial nature. This includes problems where current information is inconclusive or is in the form of theories as to effectiveness in treating resource problems. This knowledge is used to develop solutions or recommendations to complex problems, take actions that have significant impact on existing agency policies and programs, project developmental trends and future needs, and extend existing techniques or develop new approaches for the use of other managers or private landowners. Typically, the employee is recognized as the technical authority in the particular subject matter or rangeland resource program.

The knowledge required by the appellant to perform his duties meets Level 1-7. He must apply knowledge of rangeland management along with a working knowledge of related sciences to plan and manage the range resources for the zone and at the Forest level. The appellant serves as the technical specialist in rangeland management for the Forest; and provides training in range allotment analysis, collection of condition and trend data, and development of grazing allotment management plans to staff. Comparable to illustrations at Level 1-7, he provides advice to District Rangers and their staff and serves as team leader for the Forest's interdisciplinary team developing Environmental Analysis for range permit issues and allotment management plans. The appellant develops the budgets, strategies, and procedures for rangeland improvements, the gathering and analysis of rangeland data, and other functions relating to grazing administration. The rangeland program is integrated with other resource programs such as wildlife, wilderness, and fisheries and endangered species to achieve multiple resource management goals. Also comparable to Level 1-7, the appellant works with Regional range staff, other Federal and State agencies, and conservation organizations to establish and accomplish common resource management objectives.

The appellant believes that Level 1-8 is appropriate as he functions as the technical expert in relation to the rangeland management program of the Forest, and that his knowledge and expertise is consulted at times by rangeland program managers on other Forests and in different Regions. Although the appellant may possess a high level of knowledge of rangeland management because of his experience in the field, the work of his position does not require the knowledge characteristic of Level 1-8. The illustrations at Level 1-7 describe assignments at both the first line operating level as well as intermediate program coordinating work. Positions at Level 1-8 involve serving as a program expert, advising principal program managers at the agency level interpreting broad rangeland management related legislative requirements and developing policy guidelines for their implementation. We understand that livestock grazing on public lands generates controversy, particularly when conflicts arise concerning bears, wolves, and other wildlife. However, these conflicts are not unique to the [name] Forest. The appellant operates under agency policy and guidelines on these issues. While there are no prescribed formulas, the appellant works with interdisciplinary teams to determine the best approach to address all issues within the specific allotment areas for his areas of responsibility. He is not required to interpret legislation and develop implementing guidelines for agency use, as typical of Level 1-8.

The knowledge required by both the Forest and zone-level assignments is comparable to Level 1-7.

Factor 1 is evaluated at Level 1-7 and credited with 1250 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor measures the nature and extent of the controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work.

At Level 2-4, the supervisor outlines the overall goals and resources available and confers with the specialist on development of objectives, projects, and deadlines. The employee is responsible for planning and executing assignments, selecting appropriate techniques and methodology, and determining the approach to be taken. The employee is expected to resolve most problems that arise, and to coordinate the work with others within the same and other disciplines, as necessary. The employee also interprets and applies program policy in terms of established objectives and keeps the supervisor informed of progress, potentially controversial problems, concerns, issues, or other matters having far-reaching implications. The completed work is reviewed for general adequacy in meeting program or project objectives, expected results, and for compatibility with other projects.

At Level 2-5, supervisory guidance or control is exercised through broad, general objectives that have been approved for the assigned program. The specialist operates within the context and constraints of various national legislation, agency policy, and overall agency objectives as they relate to rangeland resources. Within these broad areas of direction, the employee is responsible for independently determining the validity and soundness of programs and plans, and for carrying out programs, projects, studies, and investigations. The results of the work, including recommendations and decisions, are accepted as technically authoritative and normally accepted without significant change. When the work is reviewed, it is primarily in relation to broad policy requirements and administrative controls such as budget.

The position meets Level 2-4. Like Level 2-4, the appellant works with the supervisor to set overall objectives, program emphasis, and priorities. He is responsible for independently planning his own work, coordinating work with other staff and resource specialists, resolving technical problems and making decisions based on the need for and the nature of technical compromise required by particular situations, coordinating them with other disciplines as necessary. The appellant keeps the supervisor informed of progress, potentially controversial problems, concerns, issues, or other matters having far-reaching implications. Work is reviewed for agreement with overall policies and attainment of land management objectives.

Level 2-5 is not met. The appellant is supervised by the North Zone's District Ranger. Directives related to the rangeland program for the Forest are communicated to the appellant from the Regional Rangeland Resource Officer. In addition, all work products,

related both to the zone and Forest responsibilities, are coordinated and reviewed through supervisory channels for technical soundness and accomplishment of objectives, comparable to Level 2-4. The appellant receives more technical direction and guidance than that typical at Level 2-5 where supervision is primarily administrative. While the Forest range program work is accomplished with somewhat more independence, there is review and guidance from the resource staff at both the Forest and Regional program level. Supervisory controls exercised over the appellant are comparable to Level 2-4 for both aspects of his work.

Factor 2 is evaluated at Level 2-4 and credited with 450 points.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor measures the relationship between the nature of the work, as measured by the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignments, 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: (1) investigate and analyze conventional rangeland resource problems and/or environmental conditions to recommend or implement solutions that satisfy resource management objectives; or (2) ensure the effective development and utilization of a multiple-use rangeland resource area. Typically, the work requires the employee to identify conventional problems, and to devise plans or recommend procedures to alleviate the problems. The work affects the efficient utilization, protection, and development of the resources involved, and the social and/or economic well-being of users of the resources.

At Level 5-4, the specialist develops essentially new or vastly improved techniques or solutions to specific problems in a resource management program or program area and coordinates results with related resource activities. They advise on, plan, or review specific problems, programs, or functions. They are typically concerned with problems that occur at a number of locations within a broad geographic area of responsibility. The work directly influences the effectiveness and acceptability of agency goals, programs, and/or activities.

Comparable to Level 5-3, the appellant's work affects the long and short term supply of forage and the socioeconomic well being of grazing permittees, many of whom are wholly or partially dependent on grazing on National Forest land for their livelihood. This aspect directly applies to the Zone responsibilities. As the Forest's range program manager, he is responsible for both North and South Zone programs, developing budgets, and tracking funds for projects, and working with other resource specialists to make assessments and plans for the best use of range resources for the overall good of the Forest. We agree that the difficulties encountered by the appellant because of the grazing program as impacted by wolf and bear habitat do go somewhat beyond the conventional problems encountered at Level 5-3. However, the full intent of Level 5-4 is not met.

The appellant believes Level 5-4 should be credited because of the broad geographic area of responsibility of the forest range management program. He also refers to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Forest and a grazing permit holder, which he states has been adopted region-wide. This MOU provides that the Forest will approve non-use of the present grazing allotment for a period of 10 years to be used as a forage reserve. This will provide grazing forage to permittees when normal grazing units are not available because of wildfire, prescribed fires, to allow for resource recovery, provide temporary resolution of conflicts created by bear or wolf predation, or to supplement forage in times of drought. The MOU indicates that while the term “forage reserve” is new, the practice is long standing.

Level 5-4 is not met. As indicated above, there are two aspects to this factor, i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the work, and the effect of the work products or services within and outside the organization. While the appellant must adapt and sometimes modify conventional practices to deal with the particular problems within the Forest, that is not enough to fully meet Level 5-4. The specialist at Level 5-4 must develop new techniques or solutions and coordinate results with related specialists. They are typically concerned with problems that occur at a number of locations within a broad geographic area of responsibility. The Primary Standard, which is the basis for all FES standards, defines the second aspect of Level 5-4 as “the work product or service affects a wide range of agency activities, major activities or industrial concerns, or the operation of other agencies.” The appellant’s work in the range program at Forest level does not have the impact on the agency level (Forest Service) program or the broad geographic area of responsibility envisioned at Level 5-4. Level 5-3 accurately describes both aspects of the appellant’s duties.

Factor 5 is evaluated at Level 5-3 and credited with 150 points.

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

These combined factors match the level of the employee’s personal contacts with the directly-related purpose for those contacts. To evaluate these combined factors, the PCS says to match the levels of Factors 6 and 7 and credit the appropriate point value from the chart located in the PCS. The same contacts must be used for each factor.

Personal contacts

Level 2 contacts are with employees in the same agency but outside the immediate organization (e.g. higher level organizational units), or resource persons from State or local rangeland resource units, and the general public or users (e.g., livestock owners, private landowners). The contacts are usually established on a routine basis, but the specialist’s authority may not be initially clear to the persons contacted.

At Level 3, the highest level described in the standard, contacts are with subject matter specialists and managers within the agency, in other Federal agencies, universities, private foundations and professional societies, and influential local community leaders,

tribal governing bodies, State officials, private landowners, representatives of organized livestock, conservation, or environmental groups; newspaper, radio, and television reporters; and prospective and current permittees. The contacts may be on an ad hoc basis, and the role of each party is established and developed during the course of the contact.

The position description does not describe the appellant's personal contacts. Based on information provided by the appellant, his supervisor, and other persons contacted, we find the appellant's primary contacts are with other zone and Forest personnel within his specialization as well as other areas represented, e.g., biological, wildlife, foresters, technicians, and support services staff. His primary contacts include range management specialists within the Forest and Regional levels, and with counterparts at other Federal and State agricultural and environmental agencies. He also has contacts with environmental groups, livestock groups, and university personnel.

The appellant's personal contacts are primarily typical of Level 2 in that they are with persons both within and outside the agency and are established on a routine basis. The appellant indicates in his comments that he has established a communication network within State agencies to discuss developing issues. While some of the contacts described at Level 3 may be similar to the appellant's, the full requirements at Level 3 are not present; i.e., contacts may be on an ad hoc basis, the purpose and extent of each is different, and the role and authority of each party must be identified and developed during that contact. The appellant's primary contacts meet Level 2, but do not fully meet Level 3.

Factor 6 is evaluated at Level 2.

Purpose of contacts

At Level c, the highest level described in the standard, the purpose of the contacts is to negotiate controversial issues with various parties in a way that will achieve agency objectives and result in retention of good will; to influence or persuade various organizations or individuals who have conflicting interests and viewpoints on the use of various resources to reach an agreement that is consistent with technical and practical goals and objectives; to justify the feasibility of significant rangeland resource plans and proposals; or to influence or persuade other experts to adopt techniques or methods where there may be conflicting opinions. The agency has credited this level.

The appellant contends that he has to justify and defend the existence of the livestock grazing and rangeland management program for the Forest. As team leader of the interdisciplinary NEPA analysis for issuance of grazing permits and allotment management plan development, he contends that he deals with negotiations between the livestock industry, environmental groups, state wildlife agency, state university, sportsmen groups and others with very diverse viewpoints, goals and objectives. He feels that concurrence must be achieved between these groups to avoid lengthy appeals and/or litigation. He feels that this factor should be evaluated at Level d.

At Level d, as stated in the Primary Standard, the purpose of contacts is to justify, defend, negotiate, or settle matter involving significant or controversial issues. The work usually involves active participation in conferences, meetings, hearing, or presentations involving problems or issues of considerable consequences or importance. The people contacted typically have diverse viewpoints, goals or objectives, requiring the employee to achieve a common understanding of the problem and a satisfactory solution by convincing them, arriving at a compromise, or developing suitable alternatives.

Level d is not met. As the Forest range program manager, the appellant participates with the Resource Staff Officer and other staff officers in development of the various programs and plans for the Forest, including the environmental assessments. While the appellant's role is to negotiate controversial issues and persuade others, his role in the more formal settings typical of Level d, is more limited. The Forest Supervisor retains final responsibility for approval of plans, etc, and in cases of very controversial issues, that authority may be retained at a higher level within the agency. Therefore, the opportunity for the appellant to maintain such contacts described above Level c does not exist.

Factor 7 is credited with Level c.

Evaluation summary for contacts

The evaluation of Factor 6 at Level 2 and Factor 7 at Level c matches the point value of 145 points for 2-c on the chart located in the PCS.

Factor 8, Physical demands

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

At Level 8-2, the highest level described in the standard, the work requires some physical exertion such as long periods of walking, standing, crouching, or riding horses over rough, uneven, swampy, or rocky terrain. The agency has credited Level 8-2.

The appellant contends that his performance of the Zone responsibilities require extensive field time (up to six months). Due to the nature of the Forest, nearly all field travel requires the use of livestock, often involving the lifting of objects such as saddles and panniers exceeding 50 pounds. The appellant believes that as a result of the long distances traveled by horseback, that exposure to extreme weather conditions is common. In addition, the danger and presence of grizzly bears necessitates the training and use of both animal deterrent pepper spray and, on occasion, firearms for self-defense.

At Level 8-3, the Primary Standard states that the work requires considerable and strenuous physical exertion such as frequent climbing of tall ladders, lifting heavy objects

over 50 pounds, crouching or crawling in restricted areas, and defending oneself or others against physical attack.

Comparable to Level 8-2, the PD indicates the work involves standing, walking, riding in vehicles and by horseback, any of which may be prolonged or intermittent. Some stooping, bending, lifting, and carrying are involved in performing field activities. The information provided by the appellant indicates field work, e.g., range readiness checks and livestock counts occur during June and July, permittee monitoring from June through August, and allotment inspections during July through October. A set number of such field projects are to be performed per year. Although field work is primarily confined to a five-month period, the supervisor indicated the duration of such work is two to three days at a time as the norm. We also confirmed that the danger from an encounter with grizzly bears, which is always a possibility in the Forest, is not as frequent as the intent of Level 8-3. The Forest has established procedures and training for the use of both animal deterrent pepper spray and firearms for self-defense. The intent of Level 8-3 is not fully met and the physical demands of the work are consistent with Level 8-2. Therefore, Factor 8 is evaluated at Level 8-2 and credited with 20 points.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor measures the risk and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings, or the nature of the work assigned and the safety precautions required.

At Level 9-1, work is performed in an office or similar setting involving everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precaution. The work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated. This level is creditable for the Forest range program work with limited exposure to other environments.

At Level 9-2, the highest level described in the standard, the work is performed outdoors and involves regular and recurring exposure to moderate risk such as travel in safety approved small air and water craft and off-highway vehicles; moderate discomforts such as exposure to wind and low or high temperatures; moderate exposure to environmental factors such as insects, poisonous plants, or irritating chemicals; or working in areas known to be frequented by hostile wildlife, e.g. poisonous snakes, wolves, bears. Special safety precautions are necessary, and protective clothing and equipment are required. The agency credited Level 9-2.

The appellant believes the risk of physical attack and the exposure to extreme weather conditions more closely fit Level 9-3.

At Level 9-3, as described in the Primary Standard, the work environment involves high risks with exposure to potentially dangerous situations or unusual stress that require a range of safety and other precautions, e.g., working at great heights under extreme outdoor weather conditions, subject to possible physical attack or mob conditions, or similar situation where conditions cannot be controlled.

Comparable to Level 9-2, the appellant's field work is conducted with exposure to weather and off-road travel in mountainous terrain. Level 9-2 considers weather conditions and working in areas known to be frequented by hostile wildlife. As indicated, the appellant has received training on safety precautions and safety equipment to use as needed. The risks involved in the field work do not fully meet the intent of Level 9-3 and Level 9-2 is appropriate. Therefore, Factor 9 is evaluated at Level 9-2 and credited with 20 points.

Summary

By application of the GS-454 PCS, we have credited the appellant's work as follows:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-7	1250
2. Supervisory Controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-4	450
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and Effect	5-3	150
6. and 7. Personal and Purpose of Contacts	2c	145
8. Physical Demands	8-2	20
9. Work Environment	9-2	<u>20</u>
<i>Total</i>		2710

A total of 2710 points falls within the GS-11 point range (2355 to 2750) according to the grade conversion table in the GS-454 PCS.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Rangeland Management Specialist, GS-454-11.