

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: Resource Technician
GS-1101-6

Organization: [name] Ranger District
[name] National Forest
[name] Region – Region [number]
Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
[city and state]

OPM decision: GS-1101-6
Title to be determined by agency

OPM decision number: C-1101-06-03

/s/ Robert D. Hendler

Robert D. Hendler
Classification and Pay Claims
Program Manager
February 27, 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).

As indicated in this decision, our findings show that the appellant's official position description (PD) does not include some of her duties. The servicing human resources office should submit a copy of the revised PD and a Standard Form SF-50 showing the personnel action taken. The report should be submitted within 60 days from the date of the decision.

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name and address]

Human Resources Officer
[name] National Forest
Forest Service - USDA
{address}

Human Resources Specialist (Classification)
[name] Region – Region [number]
Forest Service – USDA
[address]

Director of Human Capital Management (USDA-OHCM)
U.S. Department of Agriculture
J.L. Whitten Building, Room 302-W
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Introduction

The Dallas Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant] on October 11, 2005. The appellant's position is currently classified as Resource Technician, GS-1101-6, but she believes it should be classified at the GS-7 level. The position is assigned to the [name] Ranger District, [name] National Forest, [name] Region – Region [number], Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, in [city and state]. We received the agency's administrative report on November 4, 2005. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

Background

A Resource Technician, GS-1101-6, position is assigned to each of the five ranger districts on the Forest. The appellant, along with her counterparts located at the [names of four districts] Districts, requested the agency review their positions. A team consisting of the District and Forest Supervisor's Office (SO) resource technicians and a union representative revised the position descriptions (PD) to better reflect the current work assignments. The Forest's Human Resources Office, working with a contract classifier, evaluated the positions. Their evaluation statement, dated May 13, 2003, concluded the positions are appropriately classified as GS-1101-6. The Resource Technicians forwarded classification appeals to the [name Region – Region [number] Office]. The Region's evaluation, dated June 21, 2004, sustained the Forest's findings. The group subsequently forwarded their appeals to OPM. We accepted their appeals, but we are evaluating the appellant's work separately from the others as the appellant is assigned and performs significantly different duties.

Position information

The appealed position is assigned to the Timber and Information Resources Program of the District which includes responsibility for timber management, sale preparation, contract preparation and administration, computer systems, communications systems, geographic information system (GIS) resources, and database management. The position was designed to perform technical support work related to timber sale appraisals and contracts for the District. In addition to the appellant's position, the timber program staff includes one GS-460-9 Forester (Sale Preparation), two GS-462-6 Lead Forestry Technicians (Sale Preparation), one part- and one full-time GS-462-7 Forestry Technicians (Sale Preparation), and two GS-462-10 Forestry Technicians (Sale Administration). The appellant's position is directly supervised by a Supervisory Forester, GS-460-11 position, which has primary responsibility over the timber and information resources management programs.

The appellant's main role in the timber sales process is to ensure the sales contract is consistent with all sale documents and the actual sale is executed appropriately. The appellant thoroughly reviews all sale documents including the timber sale and transaction evidence appraisal report, road packages, silvicultural prescriptions, and marking guides. While primarily reviewing the reports to determine their impact and relevancy to the contract, the appellant also audits the documents to ensure they comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, current direction, procedures, volume computations, and timber sale calculations.

The appellant notifies the appropriate staff member of any errors, inconsistencies, or potential issues with the documents reviewed. She then drafts a contract using the sale documents as a guide to determine which provisions and clauses to include. The contract is then shared with the timber management staff to ensure it complies with findings captured in the sale documents.

The appellant is also responsible for administering the timber sale. She prepares newspaper notices advertising the sale, which typically includes the location, estimated volume, description of timber designated for cutting, bidding provisions, and other special considerations. The appellant mails postcard notices, bid packages with the prospectus, and maps to prospective bidders. It is the district's decision whether to conduct the sale via sealed bid and/or oral auction, but the appellant's district has adopted oral auctions as the preferred sale method. The appellant sends award letters to the successful bidder, but her role in the sale process continues as she is also responsible for drafting contract modifications, if needed, and calculating the ensuing rate adjustments; recalculating rates for market changes; determining adequacy of performance bonds; maintaining sale data in the Timber Information Management system; and running and reviewing various sale reports. She specifically pulls reports from the Automated Timber Sales Accounting System throughout the life of a sale to ensure, e.g., the correct rates are levied and payments are being made as agreed upon in the contract. The appellant administers approximately 10 – 15 timber sales annually. In addition, she issues a variety of permits including firewood, Christmas trees, flowers, grasses, pine, mushrooms, and rocks.

The above describes the work performed by the appellant and her counterparts at other districts. However, unlike her counterparts, the appellant prepares maps for timber sales using ArcGIS desktop software products, including ArcView for geographic data and ArcInfo for data building, modeling, analysis, and map display. ArcGIS is a standardized mapping system commonly used by the Forest Service to inventory the sale units and capture stand data information such as types of trees, their diameter, and location. She downloads information from handheld Global Positioning System receivers of data entered by field personnel. The appellant also performs fieldwork usually associated with forestry technicians. For example, the appellant prepares timber for sale by determining timber volumes and marking timber for sale. She gathers and records field data on the size, content, and condition of the timber, as well as basic information such as species and population of trees. The appellant monitors timber sale operations to ensure compliance with contract requirements including location, specific cutting designations, and construction of appropriate trails, landings, and roads. She inspects construction and logging equipment, prior to entering the sale area, for any soil, plant parts, seeds, or other debris that could hold seeds and spread noxious weeds. The official PD does not describe these fieldwork duties, but the appellant's past and current performance standards, as well as discussions with the appellant and her supervisor, confirmed her performance of on-going and progressively difficult fieldwork. The agency should include these duties into her PD.

The appellant and immediate supervisor certified to the accuracy of the duties described in the PD of record, number [number]. This PD and other material of record furnish much more information about the appellant's duties and responsibilities and how they are performed, and we incorporate it by reference into this decision. To help decide this appeal, we conducted telephone audits with the appellant on December 15, 2005, and February 1, 2006, and a telephone interview with the immediate supervisor on December 22, 2005. We also conducted a

telephone interview with the SO's Supervisory Resource Specialist who is involved with the Resource Technicians' work, on December 22, 2005. In deciding this appeal, we carefully considered all of the information obtained from these interviews, as well as written information furnished by the appellant and her agency, including the PD of record.

Series, title, and standard determination

The GS-1100 Business and Industry Group includes all classes of positions that involve advising on, administering, supervising, or performing work requiring a knowledge of business and trade practices; characteristics and use of equipment, products, or property; or industrial production methods and processes. Work may include the conduct of investigations and studies; collection, analysis, and dissemination of information; establishment and maintenance of contracts with industry and commerce; provision of advisory services; examination and appraisal of merchandise or property; and the administration of regulatory provisions and controls.

The appellant's position is currently classified to the General Business and Industry Series, GS-1101, which covers all classes of positions administering, supervising, or performing (1) any combination of work characteristic of two or more series in the GS-1100 Business and Industry Group where no one type of work is series controlling and where the combination is not specifically included in another series, or (2) other work properly classified in this group for which no other series has been provided. GS-1101 positions may perform either one- or two-grade interval work.

The appellant's work matches one-grade interval support work. Like the appellant's work, one-grade interval support work requires following established methods, procedures, and guidelines, and may require a high degree of technical skill, care, and precision. The work can be performed based on a practical knowledge of the purpose, operation, procedures, techniques, and guidelines of the specific program area or functional assignments. Two-grade interval administrative positions are involved in work primarily requiring a high order of analytical ability. In contrast, the appellant's position requires applying a practical knowledge of the purpose, operation, procedures, techniques, and guidelines set forth by the timber management program. The appellant provides services that are of a continuing, repetitive nature, and performed on the basis of her acquiring a familiarity with the timber sales process after more than 10 years of experience. The work does not involve making the sort of judgmental decisions characteristic of two-grade interval positions. The appellant exercises some judgment in reviewing sale documents and preparing contracts, but the record shows that she normally deals with recurring types of projects. This work is analogous to assistance work. The appellant's tenure in the position has resulted in her being an expert in this process, but, unlike two-grade interval positions, her duties do not require her to analyze or use evaluative methods and techniques. As a result, the appellant's position must be classified under the one-grade interval structure.

The appellant does not disagree with the GS-1101 series assigned, but she believes her work is best evaluated against the GS-1102 Contract Specialist position classification standard (PCS). Work in this series includes positions that manage, supervise, perform, or develop policies and procedures for professional work involving the procurement of supplies, services, construction, or research and development using formal advertising or negotiation procedures; the evaluation

of contract price proposals; and the administration or termination and close out of contracts. The work requires knowledge of the legislation, regulations, and methods used in contracting; and knowledge of business and industry practices, sources of supply, cost factor, and requirements characteristics.

The appellant performs duties similar to Contract Specialists in that she prepares, advertises, and awards timber sales contracts. Despite surface similarities, the appellant's position does not require applying the full scope of knowledge and skills, nor does she carry out duties typical of positions classified in the GS-1102 series. For example, unlike Contract Specialists, the appellant does not solicit, evaluate, and negotiate contracts; terminate contracts; analyze and evaluate costs or price proposals and accounting systems data; plan, establish, or review contracts, programs, policies, or procedures; develop acquisition strategies and direct or manage procurements; and provide staff advisory services in one or more of the specializations in the contract specialist occupation. Work classified to the GS-1102 series generally requires completion of a four-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree with a major in any field *or* at least 24 semester hours in any combination of fields including, but not limited to, accounting, business, finance, law, or contracts. The work performed by the appellant does not entail the need for or application of these requirements.

The criteria for the GS-1102 series may not be used to evaluate one-grade interval work, as the qualifications required, the purpose of assignments, the work situations described, and the criteria for the knowledge, skills, work controls, guidelines, and complexity do not parallel the one-grade interval work performed by the appellant.

The appellant's position is a mixed series position involving work covered by more than one occupational series. The appellant's duties require a practical knowledge of contract preparation; advertising; accounting of financial payments; and the purpose, processes, and procedural requirements governing the agency's timber management program. This work is appropriately classified to the GS-1101 series. The GS-1101 series has no published grade level criteria. To evaluate this work, we cross-referenced the grade level criteria in the Procurement Clerical and Technician Series, GS-1106, PCS.

In their appeal request, the Resource Technicians said the GS-1106 PCS did not fully address their positions. However, positions properly classified in the GS-1106 series perform work that includes reviewing pre-sale documents, preparing contracts with appropriate provisions, modifying contracts, and participating in the bidding. These duties are equivalent to the appellant's work, so the knowledge required for GS-1106 work is comparable, if not identical, to that required by the appellant's position. The appellant said her position provides support in selling, rather than in procuring, timber. Both processes require the same type of work, from preparing contracts to conducting the sale, so, regardless of whether the position is procuring or selling, the steps taken on either end of the process are undeniably alike. As a result, the GS-1106 PCS is the best match for determining the grade level of this work.

Since 2004, the appellant has been performing increasingly more difficult and time-consuming fieldwork for pre-sale and harvest inspection activities. This work is difficult to calculate due to fluctuating seasonal workloads, but the appellant said she spends approximately 40 to 60 percent

of her time on fieldwork from May to October; 20 to 40 percent from November to January; and no time from February to April. This on-the-ground work fits the GS-462 Forestry Technician Series which covers positions primarily requiring a practical knowledge of the methods and techniques of forestry and other biologically based resource management fields. Forestry technicians provide technical support in forestry research efforts; in the marketing of forest resources; or in the scientific management, protection, and development of forest resources.

Similar to positions properly classified in the GS-462 series, the appellant's work requires applying a practical knowledge of the methods and techniques of forestry and other biologically based resource management fields. The appellant participates in timber cruises, which are inspections of the timber stand to estimate the volume and quality of the trees. The appellant records maturity, condition, size, location, and species of the trees, as well as the trees' diameters and heights in order to estimate the sale volume. Even in the contract preparation work, the appellant's position requires knowledge of the characteristics, conditions, and interrelationships of the forest resources to be able to independently evaluate its impact as they relate to the contract. If, for example, the appellant identifies a fence to be removed on the sale map, per NEPA requirements, she will ensure the appropriate pre-sale report and contract include adequate measures to replace the displaced fence. Work covered under the GS-462 series is properly evaluated using the Grade Level Guide for Aid and Technical Work in the Biological Sciences, GS-400.

In addition, the appellant reviews account statements to ensure the proper collection of revenues; ensures deposits are known, collected, and deposited to the correct account; and reviews sale accounts prior to close out to verify balances are paid in full. This work is properly evaluated by applying the grading criteria in the Job Family Position Classification Standard for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work GS-500 (JFS), which covers nonsupervisory clerical and technical work concerned with supporting accounting, budget, and other related financial management work. We applied the GS-500 JFS to the appellant's applicable work and determined that those duties and responsibilities are graded lower than her contract preparation work. Since these duties are not grade-controlling, we will not discuss them further.

Based on the grade-level analysis that follows, we found the appellant's GS-1101 covered duties are grade-controlling and predominant in terms of the basic purpose of the position and the paramount knowledge required. However, if the appellant's position continues performing increasingly difficult and time-consuming fieldwork, the position will require reclassification as the series and grade will likely be impacted. At the present, the appellant's position is properly classified to the GS-1101, General Business and Industry Series, and the agency may assign a title following the guidance in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*.

Grade determination

The GS-1106 PCS and the GS-400 Guide both use the Factor Evaluation System format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are assigned for each of the nine factors. The total is converted to a grade level by use of the grade conversion table provided in each standard. Under this system, each factor-level description demonstrates the minimum characteristics

needed to receive credit for the described level. 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.

Evaluation using the GS-1106 PCS

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that the employee must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, regulations, and principles) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

At Level 1-4, which is the highest level in the PCS, the work requires an in-depth or broad knowledge of a body of procurement regulations, procedures, and policies involving (1) specialized requirements and/or (2) large purchases. Examples of work at this level are work situations that require knowledge of a *wide* variety of interrelated steps and procedures required to assemble, review, and maintain procurement files related to *complex* contracts (e.g., large purchases for specialized supplies, services, or construction).

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 1-4. The appellant's position requires knowledge of the interrelationship between NEPA requirements, management objectives and expectations, and the various parts of contract administration. The PCS includes an example of work at Level 1-4, where the employee applies knowledge of the requirements of various contract clauses and special laws to ensure the inclusion of necessary information in bid and solicitation packages, and to monitor contractor compliance with contracts that contain these or similar provisions. This is a match to the appellant's duties. The appellant is responsible for advertising timber sales, which includes notifying bidders of the location, tree species, estimated quantity, rates per unit of measure, and the minimum guarantee required. At Level 1-4, employees are typically dealing with complex contracts similar to those for large purchases for specialized supplies, services, and construction. Although the appellant prepares only one type of contract for timber sales, this work, comparable to Level 1-4, deals with a wide variety of interconnected steps and actions in order to combine the findings from the pre-sale fieldworkers, road engineers, silviculturalists, environmentalists, and fire prevention staff into a legal and binding contract. While some of the work deals with small contracts, a number of the appellant's contracts involve a large amount of money and/or may take several years to execute.

The appellant ensures bidders meet certain requirements, including providing an adequate bid guarantee and not having terminated a breach or default on a timber or forest product contract within a three-year period preceding the bid. If the sale is advertised as one set aside for competitive bidding by small businesses, the appellant will determine if the highest bidder is qualified as a small business and has not been identified by the Small Business Administration as ineligible for the preferential award. If there are no qualified small business bidders, the appellant will open the sale to all. Similar to Level 1-4, the appellant makes award decisions based on a review of all offers to determine legitimacy and reasonableness of offer. She also uses knowledge of post-award procedures to draft contract modifications or responses to extension requests, monitor purchaser compliance, identify delinquencies in payment, and calculate any refund amounts at the sale closure.

Level 1-4 is credited for 550 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor. Employee responsibilities, as well as the review of completed work, are included. Employee responsibility depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives. The degree of review of completed work depends upon the nature and extent of the review.

At Level 2-3, which is the highest level in the PCS, the supervisor provides guidance for unusually involved situations. Employees at this level plan and carry out successive steps necessary to accomplish their work and to resolve problems and deviations where standard operating procedures do not apply. Work is reviewed for technical soundness, appropriateness, and conformity to policy and requirements.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 2-3. As at this level, the appellant's supervisor assigns work with standing instructions on objectives, priorities, deadlines, and provides guidance for unusually involved situations. Furthermore, many milestones in the contract preparation work are controlled by legal or agency-prescribed time constraints, but the appellant may plan and prioritize her work within these parameters. The supervisor occasionally shifts the appellant's priorities under special circumstances, e.g., if a pending lawsuit requires suspending a timber sale, but he does not involve himself in the day-to-day contract preparation work. As expected at Level 2-3, the appellant's work is carried out without direct supervision but in accordance with general instructions and standard operating procedures. Other than the issuance of permits, the agency has not designated any authority to the appellant to commit the district to a course of action; instead, contracts, modifications, and extensions are signed by Contracting Officers, who have been identified as the District Ranger for small contracts and the SO's Resource Specialist for larger ones.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

As at Level 3-2, the appellant's duties require she understand and interpret basic and well-established timber management procedures and guidelines. She must decide which precedents or guidelines are most pertinent and use some judgment and initiative in situations not completely covered by guidance to resolve limited problems. Available guidelines are abundant and include laws and regulations, Forest Service policies and guidelines, handbooks, manuals, and instructional supplements from the regional office or SO. Comparable to Level 3-2, the appellant typically refers situations requiring significant judgment to the supervisor or higher-level officials at the SO for resolution.

At Level 3-3, guidelines are the same as Level 3-2 but are not completely applicable to *many aspects* of the work because of the problem solving or complicated nature of the assignments. Employees must use judgment to interpret guidelines, adapt procedures, decide approaches, and resolve specific problems. They analyze the results of applying guidelines and recommend changes. The appellant's position does not regularly incur problems or situations where she must rely on analysis and judgment rather than specific guides and precedents to identify sources of information, determine what transpired, or make similar judgments. Unlike Level 3-3, her work is covered by timber sale process procedures and is supplemented by comprehensive checklists covering documentation requirements, timber appraisal and road package reviews, sale closures, and contract clauses. Consequently, the appellant's contract preparation work does not routinely require interpreting guidelines, adapting procedures, or deciding on approaches to the extent found at Level 3-3. She instead contacts the SO on situations requiring an interpretation of guidelines or adaptation of procedures.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125 points.

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.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 4-3, which is the highest level in the PCS. At this level, work involves performing duties with varied and unrelated procedures and methods. Employees analyze issues or problems and obtain additional information where necessary in order to determine the appropriate course of action when several alternatives may apply. Illustrative of this level, the appellant's duties are varied and require considerable coordination. Her work also requires analyzing and discerning interrelationships such as reconciling incompatible information where many choices exist. The best example is the appellant's work in auditing sale documents for consistency with NEPA requirements and the contract. The main purpose of the document review is to extract information for inclusion into the contract, but the appellant must first understand and review the sale document itself to determine whether it is accurate and adequate in the use of measurement methods, prescribed format, appropriate calculations, etc. Beyond that, the appellant also ensures the findings in one document do not contradict those in another and that they are all consistent with the contract.

Level 4-3 is credited for 150 points.

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. Effect measures such things as whether the work output facilitates the work of others, provides timely services of a personal nature, or impacts on the adequacy of research conclusions.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 5-3, which is the highest level in the PCS. At this level, the purpose of the work is to apply conventional practices to treat a variety of problems. The work results in recommendations, solutions, or reports directly affecting customer or vendor relations or operations. Comparable to Level 5-3, the appellant's position applies standard procedures to maintain and monitor timber contract files. She also treats a variety of conventional problems that arise during the life of each contract. These include dealing with requests to modify contract specifications, explaining contract clauses and provisions, working with constant changes to the automated computer programs, determining bid authenticity, and allocating collections into the correct fund. The appellant handles these situations by following established procedures and instructions from the agency, regional office, or SO. Situations deviating from established procedures are typically referred elsewhere for guidance. For example, the appellant contacts the SO's Resource Specialist with questions on levying liquidated damages, verifying bonding instruments, preparing a new contract in light of significant changes, etc. Like Level 5-3, the appellant's work has a direct effect on the quality, accuracy, and adequacy of timber sale records and operations. Her work also affects the relationship with the purchasers of forest products and the likelihood of their doing business with the district in the future.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 6 and 7, Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts

Personal contacts include face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place. These factors are interdependent. The same contacts selected for crediting Factor 6 must be used to evaluate Factor 7. The appropriate level for personal contacts and the corresponding level for purpose of contacts are determined by applying the point assignment chart for Factors 6 and 7.

Personal Contacts

As at Level 2, which is the highest level in the PCS, the appellant's regular and recurring personal contacts are with employees outside the immediate organization including purchasers, purchasers' representatives, potential bidders, forest visitors, and/or the general public, in moderately structured settings. Contact with employees may be from various levels within the agency such as timber management staff, her counterparts at other districts, SO resource

technicians and specialists, and the regional office. The appellant's personal contacts meet but do not exceed Level 2.

Purpose of Contacts

As at Level b, which is the highest level in the PCS, the purpose of the appellant's regular and recurring contacts ranges from exchanging factual information to resolving issues by persuading people typically working towards the same goals. As the primary contact for timber sales, the appellant responds to questions from the public on the auction's date and location, sale unit location, bidding procedures, and billing questions. She, however, will refer engineering, silvicultural, environmental, and other specific technical questions to the appropriate staff. Also similar to Level b, the appellant will contact employees to discuss inconsistencies or errors in the sale document findings. These contacts, although requiring tact, generally involve individuals with helpful attitudes as both sides are working towards the mutual goal of selling timber. The appellant also deals with upset bidders, but this is not characteristic of her relationship with the significant majority of her contacts and, therefore, may not control the evaluation of this factor. The purpose of the appellant's contacts meets but does not exceed Level b.

Level 2b is credited for 75 points.

Factor 8, Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities, as well as the extent of physical exertion involved in the work.

As at Level 8-1, the only level described in the PCS, the appellant's work covered by this PCS is sedentary and free of special physical demands. The appellant may carry light items such as reports and files, but the work does not require any unusual physical effort. Level 8-1 is credited for 5 points.

Factor 9, Work Environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings. Additionally, any safety regulations related to the work assigned are considered.

As at Level 9-1, which is the only level described in the PCS, the appellant's work environment consists of an office setting and involves everyday risks or discomforts requiring normal safety precautions typical of an office setting. Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

Summary

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. <i>Knowledge Required by the Position</i>	1-4	550
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 and Purpose of Contacts</i>	2-b	75
8. <i>Physical Demands</i>	8-1	5
9. <i>Work Environment</i>	9-1	<u>5</u>
<i>Total</i>		1,335

A total of 1,335 points falls within the GS-6 range (1,105 to 1,350 points) on the grade conversion table in the PCS.

Evaluation using the GS-400 Guide

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

At Level 1-4, employees use knowledge of technical methods and procedures to carry out a variety of duties common to the specialty area. These duties use knowledge of the basic principles of the science to assess readings and measurements taken, tests executed, observations made, work completed, samples collected, etc., to understand and relate the significance of the results to the higher objectives of the activity. Also at this level, employees must have the knowledge required to operate complex equipment systems such as those with numerous components or parts which must be calibrated and synchronized to achieve desired results.

At Level 1-5, employees use knowledge of the technical methods and procedures related to the professional field 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 and/or (2) one-at-a-time and often long range multiphased projects, some which have nonstandard technical problems that must be coordinated with others to resolve.

The appellant's position requires knowledge equivalent to Level 1-4. Her work requires knowledge of standard forestry practices, methods and techniques, and indepth knowledge of a wide variety of interrelated steps, conditions, procedures, and processes to perform timber management work. As at Level 1-4, the appellant applies the marking guide and cruising plan to prepare timber for sale by calculating timber volumes, measuring tree height and diameter, marking trees for sale, and identifying sale boundaries. This work requires knowledge in identifying approximately 15 – 20 types of tree species, as well as age classes, soil classes, tree vigor, and obvious defects. The appellant reports this information on tally sheets and timber cruise reports. In addition, she assesses ground conditions for soil erosion; verifies truck tickets;

identifies damaged trees; checks to see if ditches are clear for road grading; inspects stumps to be sure only designated timber is cut; and ensures purchaser's yarding and skidding operations are consistent with contract requirements. The appellant's position compares favorably with an illustration in the guide where the technician assists in timber cruising and sample surveys to estimate the quantity of timber in a given area by species, type, and quality. The area, percent of cruise, and data to be collected have been predetermined and there are few complicating factors involved in determining marketable volume in any individual tree. Like the appellant, technicians at this level collect and summarize data and may prepare reports or rough topographic maps indicating the quantity of timber and other characteristics, the general condition of the area, and the logging difficulties to be encountered.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-5. An illustration at this level describes technicians planning *and* carrying out precedented types of timber cruises or surveys to estimate the quantity of commercial timber by determining sample cruise pattern; selecting sampling method; collecting and refining data; summarizing results, including preparation of maps and reports when there are complicating factors such as (a) varied types and conditions of timber stands; (b) a variety of products and defect types; and (c) different cutting practices. In contrast, the appellant does not have the responsibility for planning *and* carrying out timber cruises or harvest inspections. She executes fieldwork activities but only at the express direction from the supervisor or work leaders, who are ultimately responsible for the planning *and* carrying out of on-site work.

Level 1-4 is credited for 550 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

The appellant's position meets Level 2-2. At this level, the supervisor makes assignments using oral or written work orders with general explanations of what is to be done. The supervisor or work leader provides additional specific instructions for new, more difficult, or unusual assignments. Within established procedures, a technician independently executes the tasks associated with recurring and continuing work and makes adjustments to accommodate needed minor deviations in work methods. Similar to Level 2-2, the appellant's supervisor or work leader assigns work and she may decide priorities while coordinating her work with crewmembers. The appellant independently performs normal, routine tasks and resolves routine problems. The supervisor, forester, or lead forestry technician ensures the appellant's tasks are completed and that the application of guidelines is technically accurate.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 2-3, where the supervisor makes assignments by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines and where the technician exercises initiative in developing solutions within established guidelines to resolve common technical and procedural problems. At this level, the technician refers significant technical or procedural problems to the supervisor or a higher level employee. In such instances, the technician typically develops proposals, with supporting justification, for resolving problems. Completed work is reviewed for technical soundness, appropriateness, and conformity to policy and requirements. Unlike positions at Level 2-3, the appellant's on-site work is fairly routine and does not require or

permit taking initiative to develop solutions for significant technical or procedural problems as anticipated at Level 2-3.

Level 2-2 is credited for 125 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

At Level 3-2, procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are applicable. Guides may range from complex, standardized, codified regulations to maps, blueprints, standard operating procedures, oral instructions, equipment or instrument manuals, or standard scientific or technical texts. Judgment must be used in selecting appropriate guidelines because of the number, similarity, linkage, and overlapping nature of the guides. Guidelines contain criteria to solve the core question contained in the assignments, although the applicability may not be readily apparent.

The appellant's position meets Level 3-2. Typical of this level, the appellant must use judgment in selecting from a number of guidelines and oral and written instructions. Written guidelines include Forest Service manuals, handbooks, and procedures. These guidelines are detailed and, as expected at Level 3-2, are applicable to most of the problems encountered by the appellant. When faced with more complex questions or procedural problems not covered by the guidelines, the appellant refers to the appropriate forester and/or forestry technician for assistance.

At Level 3-3, technicians work 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 and/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. Unlike technicians at this level, the appellant is not required to exercise independent judgment in applying general guidelines, extending the guidelines, or making procedural deviations from established methods. Guidelines are available for nearly all areas of her fieldwork and do not require the appellant to extend, adapt, or deviate from guidelines as envisioned at Level 3-3.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125 points.

Factor 4, Complexity

The appellant's position is comparable to Level 4-2, where assignments consist of performing a variety of routine procedural tasks or one or more complex duties related to regular and recurring technical work, operating a variety of pieces of equipment or one or more complex equipment systems commonly associated with the work site, and/or performing a full variety of the standardized technical support and technical duties associated with the work. Technicians at this level are expected to exercise independence in choosing the right course of action and then selecting and executing the proper task sequences for completing the work. Similarly, the appellant prioritizes and completes assignments, coordinates work with others, and exercises judgment in selecting the best course of action. For example, the appellant inspects trees for

potential illnesses, and she assesses whether defects are specific to the tree and determines the likelihood of it spreading.

At Level 4-3, the work requires performance of various technical duties, which involve differing and unrelated processes and methods. The decision regarding what needs to be done depends upon the analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment, and the chosen course of action may have to be selected from many alternatives. At this level, technicians independently execute defined portions of more comprehensive long-range projects or assist with several complex experiments, which extend over several weeks. Judgment is also required in applying a wide range of conventional, established approaches, methods, techniques, and solutions to new situations. Unlike positions at Level 4-3, the appellant's fieldwork is relatively routine and new or unusual situations rarely occur where she would be required to apply the wide range of techniques and methods characterized at this level. Her work does not normally involve situations where there are several courses of action to choose from.

Level 4-2 is credited for 75 points.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

The appellant's position meets Level 5-2, where the work involves the execution of specific rules, regulations, or procedures, such as those found in common technical manuals, handbooks, and administrative manuals. Completed assignments typically constitute an entire segment of assignments with a broader scope. Work products affect the reliability or acceptability of further services. Like Level 5-2, the appellant carries out a variety of operations or project plans that typically make up a complete segment of an assignment or project in support of the timber program. She performs repetitive tasks associated with broader assignments that are the responsibility of others. The appellant's fieldwork constitutes only a portion of the assignments necessary to support the timber program. Her position is responsible for assisting in pre-sale and harvest inspection activities such as marking timber, laying out sale boundaries, determining timber volumes, and monitoring logging operations. This involves the execution of specific methods, techniques, and procedures commonly found in prescribed plans. Comparable to Level 5-2, her work affects the quality of day-to-day operations of the timber sales program.

At Level 5-3, the work involves applying conventional technical and administrative solutions and practices to a variety of problems. Work products directly affect the design and execution of experiments; the operation of systems, programs, or equipment systems; or the adequacy of such activities as long-range work plans, field investigations, testing operations, or research conclusions. In contrast, the appellant's day-to-day work is fairly routine, and she does not often confront the variety of problems envisioned at Level 5-3. Although the appellant's work affects the timber program, the fieldwork's influence on the overall effectiveness of the District goals or objectives is not comparable to Level 5-3, where the technician may have responsibility for an ongoing operation cited in an annual work plan as a performance objective for the organization.

Level 5-2 is credited for 75 points.

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

Personal Contacts

The appellant's contacts meet Level 2 where contacts are with employees in the agency, inside and outside of the immediate organization; the general public; purchaser's and their representatives; logging operators; or special users. As at Level 2, the appellant's contacts occur on a routine basis in a typically structured setting. Her contacts do not meet Level 3, where contacts are made on a non-routine basis and may take place in a variety of settings where the role of each party is developed during the course of the meeting. Contacts at Level 3 are regularly established with noted subject matter experts from other Federal agencies, influential local community leaders, or representatives of organized special interest groups. The appellant's forestry technician work does not require making regular contact with the type of individuals described at Level 3.

Purpose of Contacts

As at Level a, the purpose of the appellant's regular and recurring contacts is to exchange factual information about procedures, schedules, or operating problems. The appellant establishes contact with purchaser's, their representatives, and Forest visitors to interact with and answer general questions.

At Level b, the purpose of personal contacts is to plan and coordinate work efforts; explain the need to adhere to laws, rules, contracts, or lease provisions; discuss inspected work and contract requirements when monitoring activity of contractors; or discuss technical requirements of equipment with manufacturers and resolve problems concerning the work or the peculiar needs of the organization. The purpose of the appellant's contacts approaches that expected at Level b as she performs harvest inspection activities and interacts with logging operators. However, the purpose of her contacts does not fully meet Level b since she is not routinely called upon to resolve problems concerning the work or needs of the organization. If a purchaser violates contract provisions, e.g., by building an unauthorized landing, the appellant will notify the supervisor or work leader for resolution. The overall objective of the appellant's on-site field contacts is to provide and exchange factual information about the contract.

Level 2a is credited for 45 points.

Factor 8, Physical Demands

As at Level 8-2, the appellant's fieldwork requires some physical exertion such as regular walking, bending, kneeling, or climbing over uneven terrain. Long periods of physically demanding work is required when she is engaged in pre-sale and harvest inspection activities. The physical demands of the appellant's position do not meet those described at Level 8-3, where 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. Level 8-2 is credited for 20 points.

Factor 9, Work Environment

As at Level 9-2, the appellant's fieldwork environment involves regular and recurring moderate risks or discomforts requiring special safety precautions working around saws, tractors, and other equipment. The position is exposed to a range of hazards inherent in logging operations, so the appellant is required to use protective clothing or gear such as masks, vests, goggles, hard hats, and gloves to minimize moderate risks. She is especially cautious in approaching clipper operators as they typically cannot see or hear approaching individuals. The appellant may also work on steep and uneven terrain, and occasionally in uncomfortable weather conditions.

The appellant's work environment does not meet Level 9-3, where work is performed at great heights under extreme weather conditions, the employee works closely with toxins or dangerous animals, or safety precautions cannot completely eliminate potential danger. Level 9-2 is credited for 20 points.

Summary

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. <i>Knowledge Required by the Position</i>	1-4	550
2. <i>Supervisory Controls</i>	2-2	125
3. <i>Guidelines</i>	3-2	125
4. <i>Complexity</i>	4-2	75
5. <i>Scope and Effect</i>	5-2	75
6. & 7. <i>Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts</i>	2-a	45
8. <i>Physical Demands</i>	8-2	20
9. <i>Work Environment</i>	9-2	<u>20</u>
<i>Total</i>		1,030

A total of 1,030 points falls within the GS-5 range (855 to 1,100 points) on the grade conversion table in the guide.

Summary

The appellant's work with the timber sales documents and contracts is evaluated at the GS-6 level while the work involved in preparing timber maps and assisting in fieldwork are evaluated at the GS-5 grade level. Based on the application of the mixed grade classification principles, the final grade of the appellant's position is GS-6.

Decision

The position is properly classified as GS-1101-6. The title is at the agency's discretion.