

EVALUATION STATEMENT STANDARD POSITION DESCRIPTION

Introduction/Background

The primary purpose of this position is to coordinate, review, and assist with the development and implementation of the National Wildlife Refuge System's *Land Management and Research Demonstration Program (LMRD)*. Established for use Service-wide as a Standard Position Description this position provides technical advice and assistance to land and wildlife resource managers in Regions throughout the Service in implementing habitat management plans. Technical assistance is also provided to State and Federal land management agencies, flyway councils, and private conservation organizations. The position identifies, coordinates and conducts wildlife and habitat management research addressing the needs of the Refuge or Refuge Complex on a broad geographical scale as it relates to long-term Regional management planning.

References

- (a) Position Classification Standard for Professional Work in the Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Group, 0400, September 2005.
- (b) Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, TS-134 July 1995, TS-107 August 1991.
- (c) The Classifier's Handbook, TS-107 August 1991.

Classification

Natural Resources Biologist, GS-401-12/13
Wildlife Biologist, GS-0486-12/13
Ecologist, GS-0408-12/13

Title and Series Determination

The position description identifies a wide range of professional and scientific knowledge required. Specifically: wildlife biology; conservation biology; wildlife and ecosystem management; and natural resources and habitat management. Expert knowledge is also required in related disciplines, including, taxonomy, botany, ecology, zoology, and biological diversity.

Reference (a) "provides series definitions, titling instructions, and grading criteria for nonsupervisory professional work in the Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Group, GS-0400." Specific series covered by reference (a) relevant to this position are: Wildlife Biology, GS-0486; Ecology, GS-0408; Wildlife Refuge Management, GS-0485; Zoology, GS-0410; General Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences, GS-0401.

Reference (b) and (c) provide guidance on positions requiring professional knowledge in multiple professional disciplines. These positions, referred to as *interdisciplinary* positions, involve closely related duties and responsibilities which could be classified to two or more professional occupational series. The biological sciences of wildlife biology, conservation

biology, wildlife and ecosystem management, along with natural resources and habitat management, are specifically cited by the position description as paramount for this position. Discussion with the Region 6 Regional Biologist, who participated in the development of this position description confirmed the relevance of selecting the three series comprising this interdisciplinary position: natural resource biology, GS-401; ecology, GS-408; and, wildlife biology, GS-486.

Accordingly, title and series selected for this interdisciplinary position are: *Natural Resource Biologist, GS-401; Ecologist, GS-408; and Wildlife Biologist, GS-486.*

Grade Determination

Factor 1 – Knowledge Required by the Position

The paramount knowledge required by this position is “mastery of the principles, theories, methods and practices of wildlife biology, conservation biology, wildlife and ecosystem management, research and a comprehensive knowledge of their application in the field as it relates to management of National Wildlife Refuges. Expert knowledge of a variety of natural resource and biological disciplines, especially as they relate to management of national wildlife refuges. This includes taxonomy, botany, ecology, biological diversity, zoology, and natural resource and habitat management. Must be able to work effectively with others in implementing complex and extensive programs.”

This fully and clearly meets the requirement for factor level 1-8 of reference (a), where a “mastery of, and skill in applying, advanced theories, principles, concepts, practices, standards, and methods of the field” is required “sufficient to: design projects that represent a major segment of the agency’s operating programs; perform assignments that involve initiating, formulating, and planning, as well as executing major studies, or continuing specialized projects; use findings of specialized studies, new analytical developments, and modified processes to resolve novel, obscure, or highly controversial problems that affect the program area; provide significant and innovative recommendations for advancing programs and/or methods; and serve as a recognized authority in a specialized area or program.”

Factor level 1-8 is assigned with 1550 points.

Factor 2 – Supervisory Controls

Guidance is provided by the supervisor in broad terms, outlining general objectives and direction. The incumbent independently determines the validity and applicability of activities and carries out complex and nationally significant programs, projects, and investigations. Supervisory guidance is only necessary when projects involve highly controversial issues or when decision outcomes may have significant and far-reaching implications. The incumbent interprets and applies program policy in terms of established objectives and keeps the supervisor informed of progress and potentially controversial problems, concerns, and issues of major magnitude. Incumbent’s recommendations, decisions and products are considered technically and scientifically authoritative...are usually accepted or implemented without modification.

When work is reviewed, it is primarily in relation to broad policy requirements and administrative controls.

This is consistent with factor level 2-4 of reference (a) where “the supervisor outlines overall objectives and available resources,” and the employee plans and carries out the assignment; resolves most conflicts that arise; coordinates work with others as necessary; interprets policy and regulatory requirements; keeps the supervisor informed of progress and potentially controversial problems, concerns, issues, or other matters; develops changes to plans and/or methodology; and recommends improvements to meet program objectives. Completed work for soundness of overall approach, effectiveness in meeting requirements or producing expected results, the feasibility of recommendations, and adherence to requirements. The supervisor usually does not review methods used.

Factor level 2-4 is assigned with 450 points.

3. Guidelines

Guidelines for this position include “Service and Departmental regulations, policy memoranda, administrative, Service, and refuge manuals, specific operating guidelines, oral and written communication from supervisors, and annual work plans.” The incumbent may promote the development of new policies to deal with specific program issues. While written guidelines are generally applicable, the incumbent will at times make independent judgments to modify or develop new techniques for accomplishing objectives. These adaptations are often dependent upon the degree of complexity or controversy involved and may require developing new methods for obtaining effective results on issues that are unique and of regional, national, and ecosystem significance.

This compares favorably to factor level 3-4 where guidelines and precedents used “are very general regarding agency policy statements and objectives [and] “guidelines specific to assignments are often scarce, not applicable, or have gaps in specificity that require considerable interpretation and/or adaptation.” This exceeds

Level 3-3 differs in that available guidelines are not “always applicable to the work or have gaps in specificity.” However, there are “available precedents [which] outline existing approaches to more general problems or issues.”

Factor level 3-4 is assigned with 450 points.

4. Complexity

Duties of the position “involve *promoting sound fish and wildlife management, conservation biology, and habitat management principles, theories, practices and methods on National Wildlife Refuges throughout the Region. Assignments “require highly developed and experienced judgment and a great deal of originality and resourcefulness.”* The incumbent “works on matters involving controversy, inadequate data, inconsistent procedures, or lack of

guidelines.” Develops *new approaches, methods, and techniques* compatible with other planning efforts to achieve program goals and objectives. The incumbent “*work[s] with a variety of other Service personnel, state and private conservation personnel, the public, and academic community.*” The work involves “developing justifications, objectives, experimental designs and appropriate methodologies for research and or field investigations to help *solve complex management problems of regional and national significance in sometimes highly contentious environments.*” Many “*phases of the job are complex, requiring originality, initiative, and good judgment* in execution. Projects often *require application of advanced technology in wildlife biology and habitat management, innovation and original project design* to acquire reliable and scientifically credible knowledge.”

This compares favorably with level 4-5 where the work involves “performing a wide variety of research, testing, or natural resources duties requiring “in-depth analysis of problems and issues that cover a wide geographic area; integrated analysis, coordinating, and planning that covers “multiple resource programs; and developing new methods and techniques for problem and issue resolution.” This exceeds level 4-4 where new work is related to precedent situation and work is limited to “extending, adapting, or modifying existing techniques.”

Level 4-5 is also appropriate when addressing issues which involve major uncertainties, are continually changing, and involve novel and/or obscure problems which present complicating factors and requirements. Level 4-4 speaks to conducting special studies, evaluating unusual circumstances, and contenting with new methods and/or equipment.

At level 4-5, the employee develops standards, methods, and techniques to extend existing methodologies, and formulates solutions to controversial problems. By contrast at level 4-4 the employees “plans the sequence, direction and progress of work” and “modifies standard methods, practices, or techniques to address current and evolving problems.”

Level 4-6 is not appropriate for assignment in that at this level the work involved “exceptionally broad and intensive efforts,” and “problems of such scope and complexity that they requiring dividing work into components or using multi-disciplinary teams.” This level exceed the requirement for this position.

Factor Level 4-5 is assigned with 325 Points

5. Scope and Effect

According to the position description the “scope of the work involves developing new or improved techniques, validating existing and proven techniques, and / or criteria for the conduct of resource conservation and management projects.” Furthermore “because of the diversity of National Wildlife Refuges... [the] incumbent activities may have local, regional, national, and international implications.” Specifically activities “influence biological management actions on Refuges, and... the entire biological program, throughout the Region.” Incumbent works with other Service personnel and others outside the Service. Close contact with other institutions and State agencies affects the professional image of the Service. “Major emphasis is placed on planning, developing, and executing habitat management research which allows the best

contribution toward wildlife resources to be realized on refuges within the Region.”

In addition “[r]esults of research investigations and management studies may result in major revisions of habitat and population management plans and are published in both popular and peer-reviewed technical outlets and oral presentations are delivered at local, national, and international symposia and conferences.”

This corresponds to level 5-5 where the work involves “isolating and defining critical conditions and problems within a program; resolving critical problems...impacting natural resources [affecting] multiple stakeholder; and determining the validity and soundness of theories, standards, and guides for improving resource uses or research activities.” The work affects “development of major aspects of agency programs, long-range plans, and/or missions;” and “operations of other Government agencies.”

As compared to level 5-5, level 5-4 is limited in scope to the immediate agency. Level 5-6 would not apply as it extends to activities of a “national scope and significance, and/or especially critical, sensitive, and controversial issues.”

Factor Level 5-5 is assigned with 325 Points

6. Personal Contacts

Contacts are with the regional office and field station staffs as well as Service staff from other Regions. Other contacts are technical subject matter specialists, contractors, State DNRs, special interest groups, Universities, the general public, Washington Office, and Congressional staff.

This exceeds Level 2 where contacts are at various levels within the same agency and with the public. Level 3 is met in that it identifies contacts as “individuals or groups inside and outside the employing agency” at various organizational levels, such as contractors, Federal agencies, academia, or professional organizations. Level 4 is excluded in that it includes national news media, State governors, Mayors, Presidential advisors and cabinet-level appointees, all of which clearly exceed the requirements of this position.

Level 3 is met.

7. Purpose of Contacts

Within the immediate organization: to plan, direct, implement programs, and to resolve problems or determine actions. Contacts are to exchange information, resolve problems, and to provide or seek technical assistance from other biologists or resource managers. With counterparts in local, State, and other Federal agencies: to share management and research information and problems related to interagency management issues and programs. With the public or media: to provide information and answer questions, often on controversial issues or situations. Overall: Contacts are for resolving immediate and long range problems, assuring effectiveness, and stimulating interchange of information and ideas. Contacts with university faculty and students, USGS/BRD, and other interested institutions are to review, coordinate and clarify research requests, help

design graduate research investigations, and provide seminars and tours regarding refuge management and research activities.

At level B purpose of contacts is to “plan, coordinate, or advise of work efforts, or to resolve issues or operating problems.” Additionally contacts “involve influencing people who are working toward mutual goals and have cooperative attitudes.” The purpose of contacts identified for this position exceeds this level in the diversity and of the contacts involved and the controversial issues and situations encountered which is more appropriate to level C, where gaining compliance with policies, acceptance of established methods, and establishing rapport to gain cooperation and information. Level D exceeds the purpose of contacts identified in this position.

Level C is met.

Factor Level 6-3 and Factor Level 7-C is assigned with 180 Points

8. Physical Demands

The work is conducted in both an office and field setting. Approximately 40% of the work is sedentary while the remaining 60% will involve physical activity to conduct field research and outreach activities. Work requires average agility and dexterity. The work requires some physical exertion such as walking in marshes and swamps, over wet rough or uneven terrain; bending, crouching stooping, stretching, climbing or similar activities.

These types of physical demands meet level 8-2 where moderate physical activity is sometime required, but does not rise to the “strenuous” level of activity identified at level 8-3.

Factor Level 8-2 is assigned with 20 Points

9. Work Environment

The office is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated. Outside work may involve temperature and weather extremes, The Incumbent may be required to travel to attend meetings, training, conferences, and workshops. The incumbent may at times be exposed to environmental hazards such as Lyme disease, or other insect nuisances.

Some level of exposure to environmental hazards in performing physical activities outdoors which correspond to level 9-2. These do not rise to level 9-3 which includes hazards such as working with lethal viruses, hazardous chemicals, and wildland fires.

Factor Level 9-2 is assigned with 20 Points

Summary and Conclusion

Factors		Level Assigned	Points Assigned
Factor 1.	Knowledge Required	1-8	1550
Factor 2.	Supervisory Controls	2-4	450
Factor 3.	Guidelines	3-4	450
Factor 4.	Complexity	4-5	325
Factor 5.	Scope and Effect	5-5	325
Factor 6.	Personal Contacts	6-3, 7-C	180
Factor 7.	Purpose of Contacts		
Factor 8.	Physical Demands	8-2	20
Factor 9.	Work Environment	9-2	20
Total Points			3320

Point Range 3155 – 3600 = GS-13

This position is properly classified as (*Interdisciplinary*), *Natural Resources Biologist, GS-0401-13, Wildlife Biologist, GS-0486-13, Ecologist, GS-0408-13.*



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Date