

EVALUATION STATEMENT

Position Number: S000348

Proposed Title/Series/Grade: Wildlife Biologist, GS-0486-12

Location: Various

References: OPM Job Family Standard (JFS) for Professional Work in the Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Group, GS-0400, dated September 2005

BACKGROUND

The proposed action is to reclassify multiple GS-0486 Wildlife Biologist positions by standardizing the position descriptions for grades GS-5 through GS-12 throughout the National Refuge System. This proposed position reflects the standard PD for Wildlife Biologist, GS-0486-12.

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The purpose of this position is to design, analyze, plan, develop, coordinate, implement, and advise on the biological programs for a refuge/complex, or a major segment of biological programs that involve natural resources (to include the conservation and protection of habitats and populations) on Federally-owned National Wildlife Refuges. The position is responsible for developing biological study proposals, survey designs, and scopes-of-work and conducting biological field investigations involving wildlife species and habitats, including population and harvest surveys, biological sampling, population health studies, animal collecting, food habit studies, population modeling, and other wildlife monitoring activities. The incumbent is responsible for interaction with other federal agencies, county, state and other country officials, native Americans, special interest groups and/or private organizations, providing advice, guidance and resolution of biological and wildlife/habitat management issues. When applicable, the position supervises employees. However, it is less than 25% of the time.

Within the GS-0400 Natural Resources series, the GS-0486 Wildlife Biologist series covers positions that “manage, supervise, lead, or perform professional, research, or scientific work that involves conserving, propagating, managing, protecting, and administering wildlife species”. “Wildlife biology involves dealing with the ecology, behavior, and conservation of wild animals and coordinating wildlife management programs with other natural resources activities, such as land use planning and forest and range management”.

This proposed position clearly meets the GS-0400/486, Wildlife Biology series definition. The duties require the training and education of a wildlife biologist to oversee, plan, and carry out all the wildlife biology conservation and protection programs, actions and activities at a National Wildlife Refuge. The position may supervise employees, however, it is less than 25%, and therefore, does not meet the criteria for placement as a supervisory position. Based on the above discussion, the title and series of this position is Wildlife Biologist, GS-0486.

GRADE LEVEL DETERMINATION

The OPM Job Family Standard (JFS) for Professional Work in the Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences Group, GS-0400P, dated September 2005 provides grade level criteria through the use of nine factors in accordance with the OPM Factor Evaluation System. The GS-0400 P job family

standard also provides factor level criteria for individual GS-0400 occupations (i.e., Wildlife Biologists, GS-0486) at certain grades and certain factors. The following is a determination of assigned levels and corresponding points per factor for the proposed Wildlife Biologist, GS-0486 positions.

Factor 1 – Knowledge Required by the Position

The duties of this position require education and training in the theories, principles, concepts, and methods of wildlife biology and wildlife management and in habitat, status, ecology, and conservation of wildlife species and related biological and physical science disciplines in order to plan, design, develop, analyze, modify standard techniques, implement and advise on the biological programs and/or scientific studies at a national wildlife refuge, or complex over two or more refuges; ability to analyze, evaluate and modify biological programs involving natural resources of significant national or international importance; and the ability to perform statistical analysis of biological data, interpret results, draw rational and objective conclusions, prepare clear, concise technical and administrative reports and oral presentations on the results, and ability to transform/modify findings of studies into practical applications for wildlife species. The position is also responsible for reviewing scientific proposals and reports; evaluating the hypotheses of such proposals/reports; study objectives; and researching, drawing conclusions and determining the overall design, appropriateness of methods, probability of success, and overall importance to management or science. The position is responsible for developing, modifying and recommending comprehensive management plans and strategies covering the biological programs (to include conservation and protection of habitats and populations of threaten, endangered and/or migratory species). The position provides biological advice and guidance to senior-level management and stakeholders in the development of comprehensive management plans and environmental issues. The position develops biological study proposals, survey designs, and scopes-of-work and conducts complex biological field investigations involving wildlife species and habitats, including population and harvest surveys, biological sampling, population health studies, animal collecting, food habit studies, population modeling, and other wildlife monitoring activities.

The knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the duties of this position exceed FL 1-6 which applies to positions requiring “knowledge of and skill in applying the concepts, principles, practices, and methodology of the field; the organization’s programs and their governing laws and regulations; related mathematical and/or biological disciplines; and Federal, state, local, and/or tribal laws and regulations; and/or: recognized reference standards; medical and legal requirements; and regulatory agency requirements sufficient to: independently perform recurring, well-precedented projects using standard methods and techniques; identify and resolve problems; provide technical advice to laymen; evaluate requests for access and use of public lands; and prepare routine reports and make presentations; and/or to: set up and implement new procedures; establish quality controls; ensure proper collection and preservation of specimens; perform and monitor the full range of specialized tests and non-routine procedures for which there are standard methods and techniques”.

Factor Level 1-7 is assigned to positions that require a wide range of principles, concepts, and practices of wildlife biology and wildlife habitat management; related disciplines, such as conservation biology, soil science, botany, ecology, hydrology, and statistics; agricultural practices; and agency policies and procedures. These knowledge, skills and abilities at FL 1-7 are needed to develop and implement wildlife and habitat inventory, monitoring, and research protocols; analyze and evaluate the impact of a wide range of intensive resource management techniques on wildlife; modify standard techniques, processes, and procedures to overcome significant resources problems related to species production, protection, and habitat restoration; develop habitat management prescriptions that significantly depart from previous approaches to achieve habitat and wildlife population goals; prepare, execute, and evaluate annual and long-range wildlife management plans; and prepare scientific reports and presentations.

The duties of this position do not meet Factor Level 1-8 which is assigned to positions that have a mastery of, and skill in applying, advanced theories, principles, concepts, practices, standards, and methods of the wildlife biology 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 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. The duties of this position do not represent a major segment of the agency's operating program but rather the biological programs at two or more refuges within a Complex or at a national wildlife refuge. Problems are usually not obscure or highly controversial but rather are significant requiring the incumbent to design, develop, modify, recommend and implement changes to the biological program at assigned refuge/refuges.

Position exceeds FL 1-6 and meets FL 1-7 in that the biological projects are often significant, new and without precedent; reports and presentations are not usually routine, and the scientific studies/projects involve/include new techniques, methods, processes and procedures designed by the incumbent. The work involves the entire wildlife biology program at refuge/refuges (involving conservation and protection of habitats and populations of threaten, endangered and/or migratory species); developing study proposals, survey designs, and scopes-of-work and conducting complex biological field investigations involving wildlife species and habitats, including population and harvest surveys, biological sampling, population health studies, animal collecting, food habit studies, population modeling, and other wildlife monitoring activities. Such work requires education and training in the theories, principles and concepts of wildlife biology and wildlife habitat management; related disciplines, such as conservation biology, soil science, botany, ecology, hydrology, and statistics; agricultural practices; and agency policies and procedures.

This position meets Factor Level 1-7 which is assigned 1250 points.

Factor 2. Supervisory Controls

The incumbent reports to the Refuge Manager or Complex Refuge Manager. The incumbent and Refuge Manager together develop work to be accomplished, scope of work, and deadlines. The incumbent is responsible for planning and carry out work performed. Day-to-day activities are performed with considerable independence. The work is reviewed for adherence to policies and attainment of objectives. Completed work is reviewed by the Refuge Manager for compatibility with Refuge, Complex, Regional and national refuge system goals, guidelines, and effectiveness in achieving objectives.

Positions are assigned FL 2-3 where the supervisor provides general guidance on program goals and objectives. The incumbent works independently to establish timelines, develop a work schedule, accomplish required tasks and submit finished work products to the supervisor for final review and approval. Decisions, recommendations, and commitments are evaluated for conformity to policy. Completed work and recurring reports are reviewed for conformance to requirements and technical soundness.

The position exceeds FL 2-3 and meets FL 2-4. The position meets FL 2-4 in that within a framework of priorities, funding and project objectives, the supervisor and incumbent develop a mutually acceptable plan, which includes the identification of work to be done, as well as the scope and deadlines for its completion. The incumbent is delegated complete responsibility and authority to plan, schedule and carry out major biological projects. The incumbent is subject only to review of meeting overall objectives.

The level of responsibility falls significantly short of Level 2-5. This level reflects administrative

supervision only, will full technical authority delegated to the incumbent. At this level, positions do not receive supervision in the form of general guidance on program goals/objectives, mutually agreed upon scope and deadlines.

This position meets Factor Level 2-4 which is assigned 450 points.

Factor 3 – Guidelines

The guidelines for this position include the theories, principles and concepts of wildlife biology and related science disciplines; basic laws (National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act), and national and regional FSW management and administrative policy. These guidelines are broad and the incumbent is expected to develop new methods, procedures, reports, and scientific hypotheses and incorporate them into the refuge's biological programs and plans. The incumbent provides interpretive guidance on policy decisions with reliance generally placed upon established policies. Often times, incumbent may refine or develop more specific guidelines, procedures, methods and processes and make recommendations that may have considerable impact on multiple refuges. The incumbent uses ingenuity in the implementation of program requirements due to guidelines, which are frequently broad, necessitating interpretation for use at the Regional level.

Position exceeds FL 3-3 where the employee uses a wide variety of reference materials and manuals; however, they are not always directly applicable to the work or have gaps in specificity. Available precedents outline existing approaches to more general problems or issues. At this level the employee uses judgment in selecting, interpreting, and applying available guidelines for adaptation to specific problems or issues.

This position exceeds this level and meets FL 3-4 in that work may often be unprecedented, where guidelines do not apply. Incumbent must develop new methods/procedures and processes to address problems, ensure research studies address refuge specific wildlife biology issues/concerns, and develop plans and strategies for the biological program of the refuge/refuges.

Position does not meet FL 3-5 where guidelines consist of basic administrative policy statements concerning the issue or problem being studied.

This position meets Factor Level 3-4 which is assigned 450 points.

Factor 4 – Complexity

The work of this position involves a variety of duties requiring many different and unrelated processes applied to a broad range of activities that cover a wide geographic area, or substantial depth of analysis (i.e., planning, researching, analyzing, coordinating, implementing, designing, monitoring, developing, etc.) and broad and diverse biological programs often involving sensitive and complex migratory bird and endangered /threatened species issues and evaluation of habitat classification and ecological production functions. Problems encountered may involve unprecedented, undeveloped, or complex aspects of wildlife biology and related disciplines often due to such characteristics as the abstract nature of the concepts, or the existence of serious conflicts among scientific requirements, program direction, and administrative requirements. Incumbent develops new approaches, techniques and methods and must be able to develop strategies based on trends/patterns in natural resource uses and demands.

The position exceeds FL 4-3, which involves performing research, testing, or natural resources management functions and duties that require unrelated steps, processes, methods, or procedures. Tasks may include: analyzing and evaluating diverse environmental conditions and proposed natural resources

management actions changing habitat conditions; and/or inspecting activities for conformance with standards and compliance with regulatory requirements; and/or: applying well established breeding methods and concepts; conducting soil surveys; and compiling special farm planning maps. To decide what needs to be done, the employee analyzes, evaluates, and selects an appropriate course of action from many known alternatives that concern, impact, or involve: the condition of the environment; the value of various practices; compliance with legally mandated actions and conditions; risk to the environment and to the local economy; proposed sites for revegetation, reforestation, roads, and other uses; and commercial or recreational use of natural resources; and/or: biological or other scientific properties of substances or items; test instrument performance; acceptability of control samples; special sterilization procedures; and assessing the effectiveness of known control measures. The employee identifies, interprets, analyzes, and applies a range of established approaches and solutions to tests, problems, or issues.

This position exceeds this level and meets level 4-4 in that in addition to applying well established methods and concepts, incumbent develops and utilizes new methods/techniques to accomplish scientific work; selects, analyzes and evaluates courses of actions from not only known alternatives but new/unprecedented alternatives to resolve issues; and utilizes new approaches to develop solutions to complex wildlife biology problems or issues where scientific data may be conflicting/lacking.

Position does not fully meet FL 4-5 where work involves performing a variety of research, testing, or natural resources management duties requiring: in-depth analysis of problems and issues that cover a wide geographic area or an environmentally varied area; integrated resource analysis and coordinating and planning activities that cover multiple resource programs; and developing new methods and techniques for problem and issue resolution; and/or in-depth analysis and use of various control methods and techniques possibly including those in the experimental stage. To decide what needs to be done, the employee analyzes issues involving: abstract concepts; major uncertainties with regard to the most effective approach or methodology to apply; serious conflicts among scientific requirements and environmental program direction or administrative and legal requirements; continually changing program or work requirements or technological developments; novel and obscure problems involving complicating factors and requirements; and intricate, inconclusive, variable data, and unrelated or conflicting data. The employee: develops standards, methods, and techniques to extend existing methodological capability; proposes solutions that have highly visible political consequences; formulates solutions to unyielding or controversial problems; and anticipates future trends and requirements. This position does not perform wildlife biology work that includes experimental stages; involves serious conflicts among scientific requirements; and proposes solutions to problems that have highly visible political consequences.

This position meets Factor Level 4-4 which is assigned 225 points.

Factor 5 – Scope and Effect

The purpose of the work is to plan, design, develop, analyze, coordinate, implement, manage, and provide scientific and management guidance in the conservation and protection of species, populations, and habitats under the jurisdiction of the Service in an assigned area for a refuge or two or more refuges. The refuges may border either Canada or Mexico, and may overlap into other counties and/or states. The incumbent's work significantly enhances the conservation of wildlife and habitats for assigned areas. In addition, when performing scientific work in association with easements, interacts extensively with stakeholders (i.e., native American Indians, business leaders, county and state officials, etc.) in the identification and resolution of easement environmental issues and problems.

Position clearly exceeds FL 5-3 which includes positions responsible for investigating, analyzing, or advising on a variety of conventional resource or refuge problems and environmental conditions in

accordance with established criteria; identifying common problems involving plant and animal diseases, habitat conditions, or environmental impacts from recreational, commercial, and industrial operations; and ensuring the effective development and use of multiple-use resources areas at the local level. The work results affect the: agency credibility with internal and external customers; and adequacy, accuracy, and effectiveness of activities, such as field investigations, research studies, or laboratory services; and/or efficient utilization, development, protection, and management of natural resources and socioeconomic well-being of lease and permit holders and other users of natural resources. This position is responsible for identifying, analyzing and resolving a variety of complex not conventional refuge problems and environmental conditions involving the use of new criteria the incumbent has development which maybe precedent setting. In addition to work affecting the agency credibility with internal/external customers, the work can impact multi-counties/states, and/or other countries (i.e., Mexico/Canada).

Position does not fully meet FL 5-5 which involves isolating and defining critical conditions and problems within a program or part of a project; resolving critical problems of limited scope impacting natural resources that affect multiple stakeholders; determining the validity and soundness of theories, standards, and guides for improving resource uses or research activities; coordinating activities to meet economic needs while promoting sound resource conservation; and providing guidance and assistance to public and private organizations procedures. Work results affect: development of major aspects of agency programs, long-range plans, and/or missions; well-being of a large number of people on a short-term basis; major activities of private organizations; operations of other Government agencies; and/or the state-of-the-art in the area of functional responsibility. Although the work of this position may impact other counties, states and/or countries, it does not impact the development of major aspects of the FWS programs, long-range plans or mission. In addition, the work of this position does not usually involve state-of-the-art criteria/methodologies.

This position meets Factor Level 5-4 which is assigned 225 points.

Factors 6 & 7 – Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts

Personal Contacts. Position clearly meets FL 6-3 in that contacts for this position are biologists, project leaders and supervisors at field stations, complexes, regional offices, and the Washington, D.C. office staff; professionals and elected officials in other county, state and federal wildlife and natural resources agencies; members of non-governmental organizations, scientific groups and various local governments and businesses such as city and regional corporations, American Tribal representatives; academia and the general public.

Purpose of Contacts. Position clearly meets FL 7-c as contacts are to influence and persuade persons involved with highly visible biological programs and activities who may be skeptical or uncooperative in gaining compliance or acceptance of established, methods, policies or procedures when approaching, negotiating or resolving issues of concern regarding changes to biological programs.

This position meets Factor Level 6/3 and 7/c which is assigned 180 points.

Factor 8 – Physical Demands

Position exceeds FL 8-1 and meets FL 8-2 in that the work of this position involves a substantial amount of field work. When engaged in field activities, the work is at times strenuous, requiring exertion such as walking over wet, rough, uneven or rocky surfaces; bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, reaching, or similar activities. The work requires average agility and dexterity. Travel to remote study sites will be required via boats, small aircraft, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, and/or on foot. Extended periods of camping in tents or cabins in remote field camps may occur. Incumbent must be able to cope with the

pressure of short time deadlines, responsibilities of logistics to remote areas, cultural conflicts, and adverse weather conditions. The incumbent may be required to lift objects weighing up to 50 pounds.

This meets Factor Level 8-2, which is assigned 20 points.

Factor 9 - Work Environment

Position exceeds FL 9-1 and meets FL 9-2 in that the work requires both office and outdoor work. The office is adequately lighted, heated and ventilated. Frequent travel by various means of surface and air transportation is required to attend meetings and to conduct field work. A variety of temperature and weather extremes may be encountered while in the field. The incumbent may be subject to large numbers of biting insects and may be required to work in close proximity to large animals such as bear and moose. He/she may need to carry a firearm for personal protection from wildlife. The incumbent is expected to conduct duties in a safe and orderly manner so as not to endanger self, fellow workers, or property.

This position meets Factor Level 9-2 which is assigned 20 points.

The following is a break down by Factor Levels assigned and corresponding points.

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
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	5-4	225
6. Personal Contacts and	3-C	180
7. Purpose of Contacts		
8. Physical Demands	8-2	20
9. Work Environment	9-2	20

TOTAL POINTS 2820

A total of 2820 points is assigned and falls within the GS-12 range (2755 – 3150) in accordance with the point to grade conversion charts in the GS-0400 standard.

Based on the assigned factor levels and points, this position is evaluated at the GS-12 level.

CONCLUSION: The appropriate classification for this position is Wildlife Biologist, GS-0486-12.

Other position information

BUS ^{ck}

FLSA: 8888

FLSA: Exempt

Financial Disclosure: No

Sensitivity: Moderate

Drug Testing: ~~Yes~~/No (Dependent upon the position's requirement to carry and use a handgun) ^{ck}

8/25/09 - Corrected Drug Testing requirement to No and 1st FLSA to BUS. CKing