



2024

Intern Toolkit

Welcome to the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service!

Congratulations on earning an early career opportunity with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Your internship experience is set to be a rewarding journey. You will gain hands-on experience and directly contribute to conservation efforts. Be prepared for a venture that is both challenging and educational!

During your time with us, you will work closely with dedicated Service employees, who are eager to share their knowledge and expertise. We encourage you to ask questions, seek out learning opportunities, and participate actively in all that is available to you.

We are thrilled to have you join us as an intern or fellow and we look forward to the fresh perspective you will bring to our team. Please thoroughly review this toolkit to learn more about our agency and your opportunities for career growth.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<https://www.fws.gov>
June 2024



Our Mission

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Our Purpose

To protect the natural world so current and future generations can live with, live from, and find awe in lands, waters, and wildlife.

Our Vision

We envision a future where people and nature thrive in an interconnected way and where every community feels part of and committed to the natural world around us.

Intern Toolkit

Purpose

This Intern Toolkit serves as a starting point for every intern or fellow's career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and beyond. Its contents were crafted by Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinators, Headquarters staff, and interns and fellows from the field.

This toolkit does not serve as a replacement for on-site training with your supervisor and team. It is a living document that will be updated annually to respond to changing needs of interns, fellows, and their supervisors.

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Organization Overview

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is a Cabinet-level agency that manages America's vast natural and cultural resources. DOI is subdivided into technical **bureaus**, including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS). FWS is organized by operational **programs**.

Updated: June 2024



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Regions



The Service has eight different geographic regions with our headquarters located in Washington, D.C.



Region 1 - Pacific

The Pacific region includes American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, and Washington.

Regional office: Portland, Oregon

Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinator:

Chelsea McKinney, chelsea_mckinney@fws.gov

Region 2 - Southwest

The Southwest region includes Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Regional office: Albuquerque, New Mexico

Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinator:

Phillip Stephenson, phillip_stephenson@fws.gov



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Regions



Region 3 - Midwest

The Midwest region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Regional office: Bloomington, Minnesota

Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinator:

Megan Wandag, megan_wandag@fws.gov

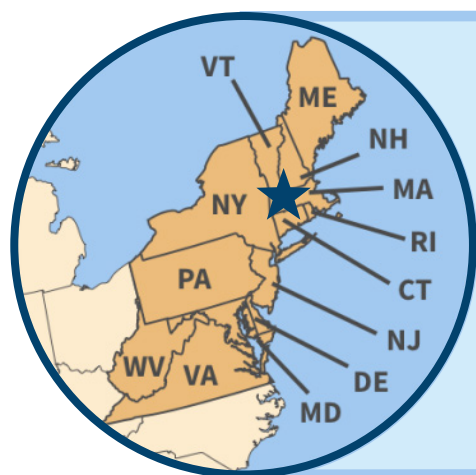
Region 4 - Southeast

The Southeast Region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Regional office: Atlanta, Georgia

Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinator:

Mara Lopez, mara_lopez@fws.gov



Region 5 - Northeast

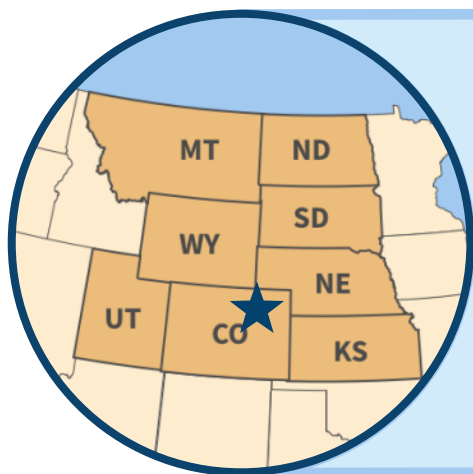
The Northeast Region includes Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Regional office: Hadley, Massachusetts

Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinator:

Sue Wojtowicz, susan_wojtowicz@fws.gov

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Regions



Region 6 - Mountain-Prairie

The Mountain-Prairie region includes Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

Regional office: Lakewood, Colorado

Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinator:

Joel Vos, joel_vos@fws.gov

Region 7 - Alaska

The Alaska region includes the state of Alaska.

Regional office: Anchorage, Alaska

Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinator:

Shelly Lawson, michelle_lawson@fws.gov



Region 8 - Pacific Southwest

The Pacific Southwest region includes California, Nevada, and the Klamath Basin in southern Oregon.

Regional office: Sacramento, California

Regional Intern and Fellow Coordinator:

Matt Nakaya, matthew_nakaya@fws.gov

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Overview of Programs

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is organized into programs with specific areas of focus to allow the Service to collaboratively fulfill our mission. If you are interested in working for a particular program, take time to express your interest and make connections during your internship.

National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) is a network of FWS-managed lands and waters. There are 571 refuges and counting across all 50 states and 5 U.S. territories composed of 95 million land acres and 755 million marine acres. The NWRS also includes 38 wetland management districts and 5 marine national monuments. Refuges provide important habitat for more than 380 threatened or endangered species. Many refuges also conserve Congressionally designated wilderness and a range of historical and cultural resources. The NWRS is the largest program in the Service.



Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management

The Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management (ODIWM) advances the Service's mission by providing recommendations, guidance, and consultation in the development and implementation of strategies to promote and maintain a diverse and inclusive workforce that thrives in an environment accessible to all and free of employment discrimination. This program ensures equal employment opportunity and public civil rights, advances diversity and inclusion, and conducts targeted recruitment.

Conservation Science and Innovation (Formerly Science Applications)

Conservation Science and Innovation (CSI) tackles large-scale and complex conservation issues like climate change that require the cooperation of more than one Service program or government agency. They bring together partners with shared conservation ideals, collate scientific evidence gathered by FWS and others, and use creative and technical thinking to tackle important subjects. CSI focuses on landscape conservation science without regulating, which allows the professionals in this program to mobilize a variety of solutions including technical support, policy guidance, and on-the-ground scientific research.

Fish and Aquatic Conservation

The Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) program leads aquatic conservation efforts for the FWS. FAC tackles the nation's highest priority aquatic conservation and recreational challenges to conserve, restore, and enhance fisheries for future generations. FAC manages the National Fish Hatchery System, which includes 70 locations across the country. Hatcheries are instrumental in the science of aquatic ecology, including endangered species recovery, invasive species science and management, and promoting public access to fishing opportunities.

Ecological Services

The Ecological Services (ES) Program works to restore and protect healthy populations of fish, wildlife, and plants, and the environments upon which they depend. ES works with partners and private landowners, to avoid, minimize, and mitigate threats to natural resources. ES provides national leadership in the conservation of coastal areas and wetlands; restoration of natural resources injured by hazardous substances; environmental reviews of federal projects; threatened, and endangered species; and management of decision support and mapping tools.

Conservation Investment (Formerly Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration)

Conservation Investment (CI) administers and distributes funds associated with multiple grant programs related to habitat restoration and hunting, sport fishing, and recreational boating. These grants are available to state, tribal, and territorial governments. The revenue for these grant programs is paid for by taxes related to hunting, sport fishing, and boating recreation equipment.

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International Affairs

International Affairs (IA) supports world-wide conservation efforts by providing financial and technical support to wildlife managers in other countries and implementing laws and regulations surrounding wildlife trade and conservation. IA provides policy leadership on international wildlife trade to combat wildlife trafficking, issue permits for legal and sustainable trade, and advocates for wildlife conservation to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases and adapt to climate change. International Affairs also administers funds associated with the African Elephant Conservation Act, Great Ape Conservation Act, and the Marine Turtle Conservation Act, among others.

Migratory Birds

The Migratory Bird (MB) program researches and protects some of the most mobile animal populations. The program monitors bird populations, conserves habitat, manages permits and regulations (ex. falconry, incidental take, wildlife rehabilitation), administers federal grants for bird habitat conservation, and provides educational programs like the Federal Duck Stamp and Junior Duck Stamp competitions.

Urban Wildlife Conservation Program

The Urban Wildlife Conservation Program (UWCP) improves lives by expanding access to green space, education, and outdoor recreation for Americans living in and around cities. Program members work to clear social and historical barriers and foster new connections that advance conservation and strengthen communities. This program centers on the idea that building strong, meaningful relationships with diverse communities is key to achieving equitable conservation outcomes.

Office of Communications

The Office of Communication (OC) engages with the public, partners, and Congress via social media, websites, and news releases. OC professionals also communicate internally, providing strategic communication counsel, reaching across programs and agencies. Creative communication is increasingly important, and OC helps to drive the conservation conversation. OC welcomes science communicators, social media experts, journalists, policy experts, and others well-versed in the communication field.

Office of Law Enforcement

The Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) investigates wildlife crime, regulates wildlife trade, enforces federal hunting regulations, protects endangered species and their habitat, and educates the public about federal wildlife and conservation laws. Special agents, wildlife inspectors, intelligence analysts, forensic scientists, information technology specialists, support staff, and partners in tribal, state, and foreign enforcement agencies make up this important and diverse program.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) program connects biologists with private landowners to help them restore and enhance wildlife habitat through technical and financial assistance. Field biologists are based locally and build relationships with landowners in their area. They plan, implement, and monitor restoration and conservation projects that are tailor-made to their location and ownership.

Joint Administrative Operations

The Joint Administrative Operations (JAO) is a national team that provides standardized administrative support services for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service via a shared service delivery model. The JAO provides customer service and support related to acquisitions and contracting, budget formulation and execution, economic and policy support, and human resources.

National Conservation Training Center

The National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) is an on-site training and education center for FWS employees and natural resource managers from other agencies on a 500-acre campus north of Shepherdstown, WV. NCTC's mission is to provide a place where the heritage of the Service is preserved and honored, to equip Service employees and conservation partners with tools to accomplish the mission of the agency, bring together diverse partnerships, and host an ever-evolving sustainable facility. Many Service classes, workshops, and conferences are held at NCTC.

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Shorthand & Acronyms

ARD	Assistant Regional Director
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
CCP	Comprehensive Conservation Plan
CD	Compatibility Determination
CDIP	Career Discovery Internship Program
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CoP	Community of Practice
Corps/ USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Director	Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
DFP	Directorate Fellows Program
DOI	Department of the Interior
DNR	Department of Natural Resources (State)
DRD	Deputy Regional Director
EA	Environmental Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPAP	Employee Performance Appraisal Plan
ERG	Employee Resource Group
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ES	Ecological Services
FAC	Fish and Aquatic Conservation
FS	U.S. Forest Service
FWCO	Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office
FWS/ Service/ USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HD	Human Dimensions
IDP	Individual Development Plan
JAO	Joint Administrative Operations
JHA	Job Hazard Analysis
MB	Migratory Birds
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCTC	National Conservation Training Center
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act

NFH	National Fish Hatchery
NPS	National Park Service
NWRS	National Wildlife Refuge System
OC	Office of Communications
OLE	Office of Law Enforcement
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
Pathways	Federal Pathways Program Internship
PFW/ Partners	Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
PL	Project Leader
PLC	Public Lands Corps
RRAR/ RAPP	Refuge Results Annual Report/Refuge Annual Performance Plan
RD	Regional Director
RO	Regional Office
Secretary	Secretary of the Interior
SA/CSI	Conservation Science and Innovation - formerly known as Science Applications
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SUP	Special Use Permit
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
WMD	Wetland Management District
WSFR/OCI	Office of Conservation Investment - formerly known as Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration
YCC	Youth Conservation Corps

For more acronyms, visit: <https://doimspp.sharepoint.com/sites/fws-portal/SitePages/Acronyms.aspx>

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Expectations for New Interns



Project Professionalism & Know When to Ask for Help

Project a professional, capable demeanor in your interactions with staff, volunteers, and visitors. While at your site, be sure to acknowledge all visitors with a smile, wave, or hello. At times visitors may inquire about something you don't know much about or try to engage you in controversial subjects. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance or refer them to your supervisor or your site's management. If something in a Visitor Center or outdoors seems unusual, out of place, or broken, refer it to an FWS employee as soon as possible.

Know the Lay of the Land

As a representative of your station, you will be asked where the restroom is, what can be seen on the trails, and myriad other basic questions regarding the site. Familiarize yourself with the site's trails, history, directions, and answers to common questions. If you observe visitors conducting illegal activity, contact your supervisor or law enforcement officer immediately.

Dress Code

Discuss dress code with your supervisor early in your term so you are able to prepare. Expect to wear the clothing and name tags that are provided to you by your hiring organization (ex. Mobilize Green, Student Conservation Association, American Conservation Experience, etc). In general, pants should be full length to avoid injuries from plants or biting insects. Khaki, denim, cargo, or black pants that are free of rips and tears are recommended. Shoes should be comfortable and may include sturdy sneakers, hiking shoes, or ankle boots. If you need support to obtain any of these items, communicate with your supervisor.

Use Your Time Wisely

Remember that your work is valuable. You have been hired because the station needs your help! When you are at work, focus on work. Avoid excessive use of your phone as much as possible and do not use headphones in spaces where visitors are present. Try not to let devices like your phone, headphones, or other electronics prevent you from engaging with your team. An internship is a fixed amount of time. Make the time count by creating meaningful connections with those around you. If you complete your tasks, ask your supervisor what to take on next, offer to assist a coworker, or spend some time tidying heavily used spaces.

Internship Term & Work Week

Full time positions are 40 hours per week unless another agreement has been reached. In addition, there is a minimum required number of hours associated with your position. Any missed time is required to be completed with agreement from both your supervisor at the site and your internship program representative. If you work additional hours, arrange with your supervisor to use them later for compensatory time. If the site is closed for any reason (i.e. federal holiday), you are also off work.

Your supervisor will inform you of your typical work schedule, though some sites may occasionally alter workdays to accommodate projects or events. Flexibility and early notice of any time constraints are appreciated. Changes in your schedule must be agreed upon in advance. Take the time to familiarize yourself with your site's meeting/event calendar & your personal calendar.

Calling Out / Late Start

Try your best to arrive on time each day. If are running more than 15 minutes late, please contact your supervisor immediately via call or text. If you are ill or suspect you may not be able to work the next day, notify your supervisor the night before or as early as possible that morning.

Lunch & Breaks

Lunch breaks are 30 minutes long. It is recommended that you pack a lunch on workdays due to this time limit. Ask your supervisor where lunches may be stored and be mindful to label your items in shared fridges. Breaks related to personal/religious needs should be discussed with your supervisor.

Updated: June 2024

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Policy

Harassment Free Workplace

The US Fish and Wildlife Service strives to create and maintain a work environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency, and respect, and are free from discrimination and harassing conduct.

Our workplace should be characterized by mutual trust and the absence of intimidation, oppression, and exploitation.

Therefore, the use of derogatory words, phrases, epithets, gestures, pictures, drawings, or cartoons that are based on an individual's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, genetic information (including family medical history), status as a parent, marital status, political affiliation, or protected activities, regardless of the means of delivery (e.g., verbal or electronic communication) **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

If you experience, or witness any form of discrimination, please report it immediately to your supervisor.



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What Should I Ask My Supervisor?

You've officially started your internship!

Now what? Be sure to sit down with your new supervisor to discuss some or all of the questions below. These topics will help to set expectations and work towards a productive, positive, and enjoyable internship experience for everyone involved.

Training & Support

- What trainings do I need to complete and how can I access them?
- Are there funds available to attend external trainings or meetings?
- If I need additional information to complete a task, what resources are available to me and where can I find them?

Building and Computer Access

- Which keys or alarm codes should I be aware of?
- Will I need access to government computers, or should I bring my own laptop? If I need government computer access, how should I go about obtaining a Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card?

Communication

- What is the best way to communicate with you?
- How do you prefer to communicate tasks and feedback? Can we schedule regular check-ins?

Work Planning & Evaluation

- What are your desired outcomes for my term? What deliverables are expected of me?
- Can we build a work plan that covers tasks, deliverables, and timelines?
- Can we create a development plan for my professional growth? Are there opportunities to shadow folks in different career paths?
- What are some ways in which I will be evaluated on my day-to-day tasks vs. larger events and projects? How will you offer advice and suggestions?

Workplace Norms

- What are the expectations for lunch and other breaks throughout the day?
- Where should I park? Where can I store my belongings during the day?
- What should I do if I am feeling ill or need to take time off?
- If I get hurt or accidentally damage equipment, who should I contact?
- Can you share an organizational chart to illustrate who reports to whom?

Dress Code

- What am I expected to wear to work?
- Are there different uniform styles required for particular work duties?

Tip:

Record these answers and keep the information somewhere handy. Check back in with your supervisor regularly for changes.

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Top 10 Rules for Driving Government Vehicles

Government-owned vehicles, also known as GOV's, may be available for work-related uses during your internship. The following rules will help you stay safe and within the guidelines when operating GOVs.

- 1.) To drive a government-owned vehicle, you must:
 - hold a current valid State Driver's License,
 - be authorized by your supervisor with a Authorization to Drive Form (3-2267),
 - complete the 4-Hour National Safety Council Defensive Driving Course (DDC) online course.
- 2.) Drive your GOV safely and responsibly. Avoid exceeding speed limits, unnecessary honking, tailgating, or abusing your vehicle.
- 3.) Each GOV has a corresponding credit card (also known as a fleet card) and logbook. Only gas and repairs may be charged to this card. Be sure to update the logbook and provide any receipts to an FWS administrative specialist.
- 4.) Use your government-owned vehicle only for work-related purposes. In the course of your workday, you are permitted to drive a GOV to access lunch or dinner when necessary.
- 5.) Unprofessional conduct, illegal activity, smoking, vaping, or tobacco use are not permitted. This includes use of any prescribed medication that may influence decision-making. Additionally, purchasing and carrying alcohol in a GOV is prohibited.
- 6.) Be mindful of where you park your GOV, both on and off your site. While onsite, park carefully where trails may be steep and avoid blocking paths visitors may use. While offsite, avoid parking near bars, liquor stores, or other inappropriate locations so assumptions are not made.
- 7.) For long distance travel, you may not exceed 10 hours behind the wheel or operate the vehicle after 10pm.
- 8.) The only passengers permitted in government-owned vehicles are Service employees, interns, and volunteers unless otherwise approved.
- 9.) Verify any other site-specific GOV rules with your supervisor. This may include: vehicle assignments for certain divisions, designated parking locations, fueling/cleaning responsibilities, what to do in case of an accident, and more.
- 10.) As a general reminder, think of a person you truly respect and imagine that your government-owned vehicle belongs to them. Whenever you drive it, you are borrowing a valued item. Please treat your GOV accordingly!

Tip:

If your fleet card PIN does not work:

1. Check the car/binder for instructions
2. Ask the clerk to run the card as a credit card
3. Try a different gas station

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Prevention and Elimination of Harassing Conduct

Personnel Bulletin 18-01 updates and amends the Department's policy on providing a work environment free from harassment.

If you experience **harassment** based on a **protected status**, it is important to promptly address your concerns with your supervisor. You may choose to pursue any of the following **protected activities**:

- **Talk to your supervisor:** If appropriate, schedule a meeting to discuss your concerns and be prepared to explain how the issue is bothering you. Keep the conversation focused on specific issues and try to avoid becoming defensive or confrontational.
- **Talk to a mentor or advisor:** If you are uncomfortable talking to your supervisor directly or if the issue is not resolved after you do, consider reaching out to a mentor or advisor. This could be someone at your agency or another trusted colleague or mentor. Your mentor may be able to offer guidance on how to approach the situation or may be willing to mediate a conversation between you and your supervisor.
- **Reach out to an internship coordinator:** If your concerns are not resolved after speaking with your supervisor and/or mentor, consider reaching out to your internship coordinator for additional support or resources to help you address the issue.
- **File a formal complaint:** If the issue is serious and cannot be resolved through informal channels, you may need to file a formal complaint. This could mean working with a trusted Service employee to file a complaint with human resources. Be prepared to provide specific details and documentation to support your complaint.

Personnel Bulletin 18-01 Policy Goals:

1. Provide a work environment free from harassment by ensuring that appropriate officials are notified of, and have the opportunity to promptly correct, harassing conduct;
2. Communicate clearly that the Department will not tolerate sexual or non-sexual harassing behavior; and
3. Address harassing conduct and hold employees accountable at the earliest possible stage, before the conduct becomes "severe or pervasive," i.e., harassment within the meaning of anti-discrimination law.

Management has a Duty to Act:

Supervisors/managers who observe or are informed of allegations of harassing conduct must comply with the specific procedural requirements and time frames detailed in the policy. In summary, supervisors/managers are required to:

- Report the conduct/allegations to the appropriate officials, even if the employee raising the allegation requests confidentiality;
- Ensure that a prompt, objective, and thorough investigation is conducted; and
- Take steps to ensure that the harassing conduct is appropriately addressed to deter further misconduct, including taking disciplinary action, if appropriate.

Words to know:

Harassment:

Unwelcome conduct, verbal or physical, including intimidation, ridicule, insult, comments, or physical conduct, that is based on an individual's protected status or protected activities under this policy, when the behavior can reasonably be considered to adversely affect the work environment, or an employment decision affecting the employee is based upon the employee's acceptance or rejection of such conduct.

Protected Status:

An individual's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, family medical history (including genetic information), status as a parent, marital status, or political affiliation.

Protected Activities:

Reporting harassing conduct, discrimination, or retaliation; filing a claim of harassment; providing evidence in any investigation; or intervening to protect others who may have suffered harassing conduct, discrimination, or retaliation.

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Field Safety Awareness

What This Means

Fieldwork involves working outdoors, whether at a field station, private land, or in the community. It is an essential part of conservation and provides valuable benefits for interns, employees, and the communities we serve. However, working in the field may also create risks for participating individuals.

Everyone deserves to be safe in the field. Everyone must also be aware of the challenges some colleagues when conducting fieldwork. This ensures a physically and psychologically **safe environment for all**.

Both immediately and in the long term, implicit and explicit bias can threaten an individual's physical/mental health and safety, productivity, and professional growth.

How It Varies

Not all individuals who conduct fieldwork face the same risks. As a result of prejudice, some individuals are more vulnerable to conflict and violence in the field. At-risk individuals include minority identities of the following: race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability and/or religion.

When individuals from these backgrounds enter unfamiliar communities, prejudice may manifest against them, placing them in uncomfortable, unsafe, or 'othered' positions. High risk situations occur when individuals target those with minority identities. Actions may range from overly vigilant behaviors and suspicion to harassing comments to physical intimidation and beyond. Not all harassment is a single explosive event, it often occurs and escalates over time and can begin as an offensive comment or joke. These offenses may be perpetrated by: landowners, community members, colleagues, local authorities, visitors, volunteers, or others.

What To Do

- Talk with your team about the risks and how to minimize and report them. If a supervisor is dismissive of this conversation, consider reaching out to mentors to gain more insight.
- Learn the history from others (especially those who share an at-risk identity) to assess the area. Consider documenting all known cases of risk at particular locations.
- Take advantage of training opportunities to increase field safety and promote awareness (e.x., self-defense courses, first aid, safety aids and cultural history courses about the location of the field site).
- Know the partners who own or manage the field sites and inform them when and where field work will take place.
- Make yourself known to the community members surrounding the field site. Always carry credentials (driver's license, PIV Card, vehicle magnets/markers) and relevant permits that clearly demonstrate your affiliation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Words to know:

Implicit Bias:

Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner.

These biases are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.

Explicit Bias:

Prejudices and attitudes toward certain groups that individuals knowingly hold. Overt racism and racist comments are examples of this.

Psychological Safety:

An individual's perception of the consequences of speaking up, disagreeing openly, or bringing up concerns without fear of negative repercussions. Psychological safety means feeling safe to take interpersonal risks.

Ally:

Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups.

Privilege:

Unearned access to resources or social power that are available to solely to the members of a dominant group in workplaces and social settings. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it but, nevertheless, puts them at an advantage over those who don't have it.

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What To Do *(continued)*

- Make a plan to engage in fieldwork with another person when possible. When this is not possible, ensure that someone (preferably a supervisor) is aware of your whereabouts and expected schedule. Consider updating a written field plan board each day.
- Keep a record. If you experience harassment or assault, make a written record of the incident, include the date, location, people present, and what was said or done.
- Contact your supervisor. If at any time you feel unsafe, contact your supervisor to discuss ways to modify the project. While supervisors may work closely with individuals, they may not know all of the risks and dangers encountered.
- Speak up. Don't suffer in silence. If you experience a situation with a coworker, speak to a trusted colleague or your supervisor. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to your supervisor, speak to a mentor or advisor, reach out to your internship coordinator, or file a formal complaint (See Intern Rights section of this toolkit).

How You Can Help

The increased risk to certain groups or individuals in the field — and the actions needed to protect them — must be addressed if we are to build and retain diversity in disciplines that require fieldwork.

A first step toward personally contributing to an inclusive culture is to recognize your own bias, privilege, and positionality (i.e. your privilege relative to someone else).

Here are some guiding introspective questions:

- What privileges and biases do I have?
- What do I need to educate myself on?
- How can I use my privilege to elevate marginalized voices?
- How do I practice allyship every day?
- Is my allyship productive and not performative?

Confronting your privilege can be uncomfortable, but it is important to work through these feelings for your own wellbeing as well as those around you. Remember to separate your privilege from your identity as a good person—the two are not mutually exclusive. Allies have an important role to play in making conservation more inclusive.

An ally listens more than they speak, amplifies the voices of the unheard, empowers without rescuing, and is open to being confronted about their own behavior and attitudes.

Citations

Demery, A. & Pipkin, M. (2020). *Safe fieldwork strategies for at-risk individuals, their supervisors and institutions*. *Nature Ecology & Evolution* doi:10.20944/preprints202008.0021.v1

McGill, B.M., Foster, M.J., Pruitt, A.N., et al. (2021). *You are welcome here: A practical guide to diversity, equity, and inclusion for undergraduates embarking on an ecological research experience*. *Ecology & Evolution*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.7321>

To individuals who identify with any minority groups or intersection of identities underrepresented in conservation: You belong here!

If you experience harassment, assault, or anything unsafe, you do not have to tolerate it.

Your physical and psychological safety is a priority. You should not feel pressured to complete a job or task that compromises your well-being.

It is paramount that at-risk individuals advocate for themselves.

Resources:

"In the Field" Publication by AdvanceGeo Partnership
serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html

"Equity Language Guide" by National Recreation and Parks Association
serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html

"Accessible Fieldwork Checklist" by Field Inclusive
fieldinclusive.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Accessible-Fieldwork-Checklist.pdf



Intern Toolkit

Creating a Safe Working Environment

The Importance of Advocacy and Confrontation

The story below was written by a former intern. They share their perspective on a challenging conflict with a colleague and what they learned from it. This story is included in this toolkit as a poignant reminder of our responsibilities to each other and our own impact in the workplace.

“ I had to remind myself that I didn't want the work that I do ... to be jaded by someone who doesn't respect me.

One unfortunate experience I received this summer is working with another intern who often made me feel uncomfortable. For the first month together, it was full of jokes that were offensive and anytime I mentioned it to the intern, it fell on deaf ears. Eventually, he implied to me that I was hired as a diversity candidate and the work people are doing to get diverse populations into underrepresented fields was excessive.

This was hurtful to me as it implied I was not qualified, and it turned into a spiral of doubt about myself – imposter syndrome. I would have physical effects of anxiety near him like nausea, and it affected my confidence about my ability to work here. The next couple of weeks I disengaged in fish harvests and other normal

activities partially to avoid him and partially because I began to doubt myself.

This stems back to my personal challenges, and once again, I had to remind myself that I didn't want the work that I do and the impact I leave at the hatchery to be jaded by someone who doesn't respect me. After hearing that quote from a member of the BIPOC Employee Resource Group, I began to understand that his opinions don't have any real claim on my character.

It turned into a spiral of doubt about myself – imposter syndrome.

This was certainly a surprise to experience here as everyone else has been lovely, but I have learned the importance of confrontation to create an inclusive work environment rather than letting things get swept under the rug. Eventually, I was supported by the staff here after bringing up these incidents, and I was no longer

uncomfortable at work.

This is not an experience that is just special to me. Three friends that I have kept contact with closely have mentioned experiencing some sort of racial or sexual harassment at their own internships whether it be through jokes or blatant expressions of hate. It's hard to support a friend much less convince them that it's worthwhile to report these incidents remotely, but I strongly advise for anyone who experiences some type of harassment to report it to at least one person because no one deserves to work somewhere they don't feel respected.

No one deserves to work somewhere they don't feel respected.”

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
<https://www.fws.gov>
June 2024



Get Involved!

Getting involved in an **FWS Community of Practice (CoP)** or an **Employee Resource Group (ERG)** is a great way to stay up to date on the latest activities, share knowledge, and get to know and collaborate with colleagues who share similar interests, backgrounds, or expertise.

What is an Employee Resource Group?

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are voluntary, employee-led groups that promote a sense of belonging and support inclusivity within the workplace. Typically, an ERG will focus on supporting employees who share a common identity, such as people of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals or employees with disabilities. (*Indeed.com*)

FWS ERGs:

- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color ERG
- Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) - DOI Chapter
- FWS Pride ERG
- National Association of Hispanic Employees - DOI Chapter
- People with Disabilities ERG
- Veterans ERG
- Women+ ERG

What is a Community of Practice?

A **Community of Practice (CoP)** is a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals. Communities of Practice often focus on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of this. (*communityofpractice.ca*)

FWS CoPs:

- At-Risk Species CoP
- Bird Friendly Coffee Ambassadors CoP
- Climate Change CoP
- Coastal Barrier Resources Act CoP
- Coastal Program CoP
- Conservation Genetics CoP
- Conservation Translocation CoP
- Crayfish CoP
- Data Management Committee
- Data Science Committee
- DOI One Health Group
- Drupal Community
- Environmental Education CoP
- Environmental Justice CoP
- Freshwater Mussel CoP
- Grassland Restoration CoP
- Habitat Conservation Planning CoP
- DOI Human Wildlife Conflict & Coexistence
- Institutional Change CoP
- Intranet Site Managers
- Library User Group
- Marine Mammal Protection Act CoP
- Midwest Region Energy Practitioners
- Minority Serving Institutions Coordination
- Multilingual Accessibility CoP
- Music and Musicians CoP
- National Renewable Energy CoP
- NRDR and Spills Financials CoP
- Non-Native Aquatic Species CoP
- Pacific Seabird Program CoP
- Pollinator CoP
- Southeast Region GIS CoP
- Species Status Assessment CoP
- Statistics and Evidence CoP
- Structured Decision Making CoP
- Water Resources CoP
- Wildlife Health Experts

Intern Toolkit

Why Join?

For underrepresented groups, ERGs grant access to support, guidance and a sense of community that they might not otherwise have in the workplace. They provide a space to talk about shared experiences and challenges, as well as a platform to drive change (Indeed.com). Communities of practice are important as a professional learning strategy, because they have the potential to: connect people who might not otherwise have the opportunity, enable dialogue that solves challenging problems, stimulate learning through authentic communication, and help people organize around purposeful actions to develop tangible results.

(Adapted from Cambridge, Kaplan & Suter)

A Spotlight on Support

These employee groups are a sample of the dozens focused on improving inclusion and creating welcoming workplaces in the Service and throughout the federal community. Participation is open to all employees, and feedback has shown that their availability has been crucial to employees' acceptance, well-being, and even retention on the workforce. These employee-driven efforts are essential to the Service's strategy to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) and with secretarial and White House orders to embed DEIA principles and actions into everything the Interior Department and its bureaus do to fulfill our mission.

FWS Pride ERG:

Since its inception in 2020, the FWS Pride ERG has grown to nearly 300 members working to foster and cultivate a safe, welcoming, open, and inclusive environment for not just LGBTQ+ employees but also visitors to public lands we manage, volunteers, interns, contractors, retirees, partners, and allies.



Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) ERG:

This emerging ERG promotes solidarity and support among BIPOC employees and allies to remove barriers to success, harness strengths, and create positive and lasting change to advance justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Federal Asian Pacific American Council ERG:

FAPAC's Department of the Interior chapter furthers the interests of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) and fosters professional development and networking among its members within the federal network.

People with Disabilities ERG:

As the Service's newest official employee resource group, the FWS People with Disabilities ERG will be a powerful voice for employees who identify as having seen or unseen disabilities and their allies.



Institutional Change

Community of Practice:

The ICCoP formed from the passion and desire of Urban Wildlife Conservation Program practitioners to create lasting change in the Service. Its goals are adopting a community-focused approach to conservation, and increasing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in conservation. Since its launch in June 2020, the community has grown from 30 members connected by the Urban Program to over 170 members from across programs, regions, and jobs. The community attributes this growth to the relevance of the ICCoP goals to everything the Service does to meet its mission.

Find out More!

Contact information for learning more or joining an ERG or CoP is available on the Welcoming Workplace section of the FWS SharePoint. If you do not have a PIV card, work with a FWS employee at your station to get connected.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Interns:

Where are they now?



Kevin Salgado

Then: Migratory Bird Program Intern
- Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) - Region 8

Now: Fish and Wildlife Biologist -
Wyoming Ecological Services, USFWS
During his internship, Kevin Salgado led the development of species reports for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), as well as a guidance document for Eagle Conservation Plans (ECPs) for mineral development projects. His favorite memory of the internship was receiving professional and personal development mentoring from his supervisor. During his internship,

Kevin witnessed Service biologists' collaboration with partners to advance conservation efforts for federally protected species, inspiring him to one day work for the Service.

Kevin is now as a Fish and Wildlife Biologist for the Wyoming Ecological Services Program in Region 6. His work focuses on Species Status Assessments (SSA), renewable energy development projects, and Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultations.

Kevin's Advice: Listen to those willing to teach you. Be confident in who you are, and don't be afraid to speak your mind. Make meaningful connections with the people you work with.



Kathleen Gerard

Then: Fisheries Biological Support
Member - American Conservation
Experience, Western Washington Fish
and Wildlife Conservation Office

Now: Washington Department of Fish
and Wildlife - Scientific Technician 2

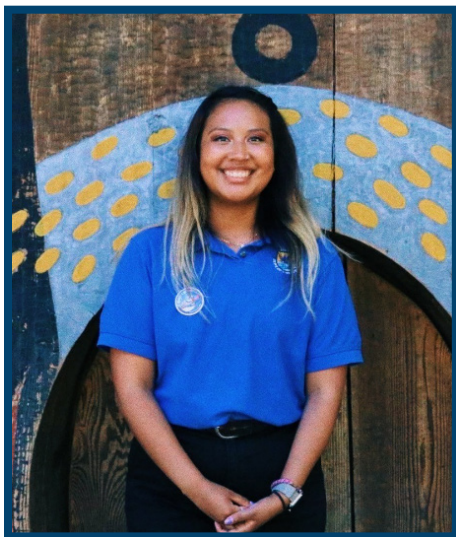
The most rewarding aspect of my internship was having the opportunity to build skills alongside fisheries biologists and technicians who taught me how to think critically about the environment and encouraged me to always pursue my interests. Some of the most memorable experiences I had were simply getting to know established professionals in the field of fisheries while getting my hands on fish! If you are interested in learning more about how I ended up choosing to study fish and more memorable experiences during my term of service, check out my story (<https://www.fws.gov/carp/story/2024-01/story-service-kathleen-gerard>).

Currently, I am working for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as a

Scientific Technician 2. I assist with daily operation of two rotary screw traps in the Lake Washington drainage on the Cedar River and Bear Creek. In addition, I also serve as the lead PIT-tagging technician to investigate the survival of out-migrating juvenile salmon through Lake Washington. During my time with USFWS, I was fortunately able to work on a juvenile salmon predation study in which allowed me to build valuable connections with other agencies working on salmonid monitoring.

Kathleen's Advice: Take every opportunity that allows you to expand your skillset and meet new people. You may be surprised how a simple introduction or quick conversation can open many doors for your future. Continue to be curious and don't be afraid to try something different!

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**Ali Sanchez**

Then: Community Conservation & Visual Storytelling Intern - Hispanic Access Foundation, Youth Employment Program (YEP), Portland-Vancouver Urban Refuge Program

Now: Administrative Support Assistant - Pacific Region Business Office, USFWS

One of my many cherished memories from my time as a YEP intern was getting to connect to underrepresented communities at events. Seeing these children that looked just like me, being awed by nature and excited to show off their biology knowledge in their own language was such a highlight. I was proud to be there as a face of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, showing them that this career path is a possibility for us and being there as a much-needed representation of BIPOC in the environmental sphere.

After my internship, I was fortunate enough to land a job with the Service in the Pacific Region Business Office as an Administrative Support Assistant. This job gave me the opportunity to work with leadership and see all the amazing

behind-the-scenes work that takes place in wildlife conservation.

Currently, I am on a detail (work exchange) with our Visitor Services Program in the Refuges program. In this position, I get to lend my bilingual expertise to make our refuge publications more accessible to Spanish speaking visitors while putting my design chops to work.

Ali's Advice: Enjoy every moment and use every experience to show your skillset and what you bring to the table. Ask questions, get to know those around you. Is there someone that has your dream job? Ask them for an informational interview. And lastly, be yourself and let your hard work and dedication speak for themselves. You might find that at the end of your internship, they might not be ready to let go of you and your talents just yet.

**Amy Hughes**

Then: Directorate Resource Assistant Fellow: Student Conservation Association/FWS

Now: Environmental Protection Specialist - U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI) Orphaned Wells Program Office (OWPO)

I really enjoyed going out into the field with biologists as a break from my GIS computer work! I helped relocate (and save the lives of) gopher tortoises from private construction projects to a safe habitat within Eglin Air Force Base, tracked, captured and monitored Gulf Sturgeon in several different rivers, and surveyed for listed plant species in Apalachicola National Forest (so beautiful). I also had a fantastic DFP supervisor, who helped me feel at home during my stay in Panama City, FL.

I used my DFP 2-year direct-hire authority to get hired on with the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office (VFWO) as a Fish and Wildlife Biologist in Ventura, California. My husband's promotion then moved us back east – now I get to see what the DOI's environmental stewardship efforts involve at the national scale and work with many awesome partners to clean up legacy oil and gas pollution across the country!

My main duties at DOI include advising Tribal and Federal recipients

of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) financial assistance to plug orphaned oil and gas wells and reclaim associated lands, providing expertise for geospatial analysis and data management, collaboratively developing communications materials and program documentation, and ensuring funded projects comply with ESA, NEPA, NHPA, and all other applicable laws and regulations.

Amy's Advice: Ask lots of questions and take photos/notes, maybe even keep a journal of your experiences. Say yes to new opportunities to build new skills and connect with others (e.g., informational interviews, find good mentors). Be kind to yourself and others, trust yourself, set boundaries, and keep balance/priorities (we are meant to enjoy life!).

Intern Toolkit



Alyssa Lu

Then: Student Conservation Association (SCA) Career Discovery Intern - Sherburne NWR, Seney NWR

Now: Visitor Services Manager - Northern New Mexico Refuges Complex, USFWS

My first CDIP internship completely changed my outlook and goals into the future! Coming into the internship, I had wanted to work with trails and researching ways to make them more resistant to invasive species, but I fell in love with working with the public, school kids, and volunteers over that summer. This changed the path I was following, and that fall when I returned to college, I added a minor that would allow me to learn more about environmental education. After that summer, I was offered to be part of the CDIP Bridge Program. I learned so much and knew that I wanted to work for the USFWS in the end! After finishing the Bridge program, I was offered a position at my first station, DeSoto & Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges after graduation.

My favorite memory from these internships would have to be a intern camping trip I went on with a few other interns. We took a holiday weekend and camped together in Forest Service

sites outside of Duluth MN. We got to see some awesome lake shores and had great bonding experiences, as chaotic as it was! To this day, I still talk to some of the other interns, volunteers and staff I met! Currently, I am still with the USFWS as the Visitor Services Manager at the Northern New Mexico Refuges Complex encompassing Las Vegas, Rio Mora, and Maxwell National Wildlife Refuges since. As the sole Visitor Services staff for the complex, I handle all the needs for the Visitor Center, volunteer coordination, environmental education, and interpretive programming for all three refuges among other duties!

Alyssa's Advice: Never stop learning from all that is around you. There is a wealth of knowledge in the staff but also in the volunteers - some even know the refuge better than the staff! The outdoors never stops providing us with wonder. It's our job to share it with future generations, so never stop learning about it in turn.



Typhanie Shepherd

Then: Digital Media Intern, Field Crew Member - American Conservation Experience - Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

Now: Public Affairs Specialist and Videographer - Pacific Region Office of Communications, USFWS

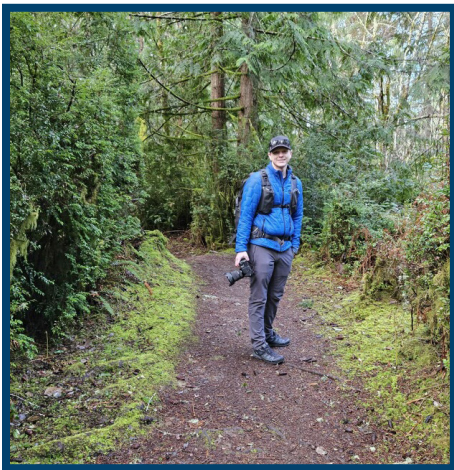
Hey! My name is Typhanie Shepherd, and I worked as a Digital Media Intern and Field Crew Member. Some of my favorite memories from the internship was doing underwater filming of fish surveys along the Elwha River, documenting fish tagging along the Dungeness River and Olympic Peninsula of threatened species like bull trout and getting to create short films about the Western Washington office and one of the other interns we had onboard.

Now, I work as a Public Affairs Specialist and Videographer with the Pacific Region's Office of Communications. In this role, I am responsible for producing visual content to showcase the conservation efforts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. So far, I've followed biologist in conducting rapid genetics work of bull trout in the Yakima River Basin,

filmed eye to eye with white sturgeon, and filmed a project with the Fish & Conservation Program called "Living the Wild Dream". The ACE internship provided me with valuable skills and insights into the world of conservation with the Service and how they produce visual media, which ultimately led me to pursue a career in this specific field. I've always been passionate about teaching others about the wild world around me and that opportunity was just what I needed to get me started.

Typhanie's Advice: Embrace every opportunity to learn and grow, and to never underestimate the impact of your work. And remember, if you can see yourself in that position, no matter where you have come from, no matter what your timeline has brought you to - if you can see yourself doing it, there is absolutely a chance. I'll see you outside!

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**Kevin Cody**

Then: Digital Media Intern - American Conservation Experience - Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

Now: Public Affairs Specialist - Southwest Region Office of Communications, USFWS

My internship was a transformative experience, exceeding my initial expectations. I was immersed in unique and challenging real-world projects from day one. The diverse opportunities led to me creating six

interpretive panels for the Quilcene National Fish Hatchery, a video on the experience of Bureau of Indian Affairs WaterCorps interns, a fish identification booklet, and two stories featured in the all-employee update, Wild Weekly. I also gained experience doing things a variety of projects from underwater photography and videography to writing a grant and a press release. It would be hard to pick one favorite aspect! Experiencing so much variety in an internship and having the support to take on tasks I was interested in made the internship special.

Today, I am a Public Affairs Specialist the Service in the Southwest Region's Office of Communications. Two key ingredients allowed me to acquire my current role. The first was my prior education, work experience, portfolio, and the numerous opportunities throughout my internship. The second was my willingness to seek out people to network with and ask questions, in addition to my belief in myself. Through our experience of being able to spend time with biologists in NOAA, I learned about what it

is like to work for that agency and look toward positioning myself for a future role. Likewise, I connected with people in roles like mine, ranging from Ecological Services to a Regional Office of Communications. I wanted to see where I might fit, which eventually led to the opportunity to join the Southwest Region's Office of Communications.

Kevin's Advice: Just because something is hard doesn't mean you can't achieve whatever you are looking to do. Believe in yourself and go for it.

Find out what makes you happy and go in that direction. There wasn't an aspect of my internship that I didn't love because I was enjoying every moment. Even when I was banging my head against the wall trying to figure out how to do something in some software, I was still enjoying having to develop skills I either didn't have or had to improve.

Lastly, ask for experience doing things you have never done before. The catch is, you have to deliver! Use the safe space and opportunity that an internship provides to develop your portfolio of work experience.



Intern Toolkit

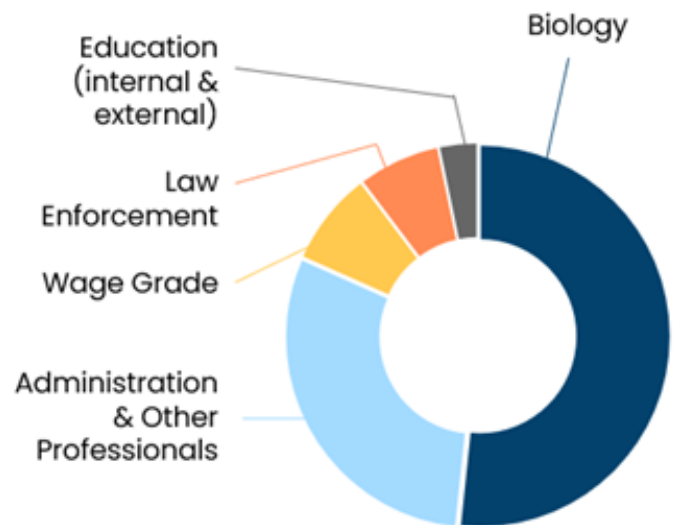
Careers in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

There are more than 70 careers to choose from at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). This document serves as a reference point for understanding career paths, qualifications, and wage grades.

FWS Workforce

8,000 Permanent Employees, 500 Term/Temporary Employees, 8 Regional Offices + Headquarters

570 Wildlife Refuges, 135 Fish Hatcheries/Aquatic Centers, 86 Ecological Service Offices, 58 Law Enforcement Offices

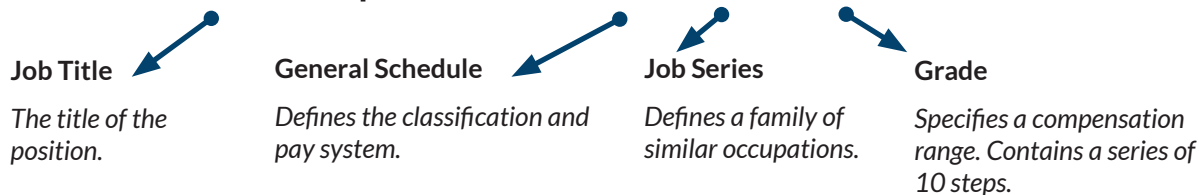


FWS Careers & Job Series

Understanding Job Listings

Each listing will define a job's title, schedule, and grade.

Visitor Services Specialist, GS-0025-07



How Much Will I Make?

General Schedule Pay (GS)

The General Schedule (GS) classification and pay system covers the majority of civilian white-collar Federal employees (about 1.5 million worldwide) in professional, technical, administrative, and clerical positions. The General Schedule has 15 grades—GS-1 (lowest) to GS-15 (highest). Each grade has 10 step rates (steps 1-10) that are each worth approximately 3 percent of the employee's salary. Within-grade step increases are based on an acceptable level of performance and longevity (waiting periods of 1 year at steps 1-3, 2 years at steps 4-6, and 3 years at steps 7-9). It normally takes 18 years to advance from step 1 to step 10 within a single GS grade if an employee remains in that single grade. However, employees with outstanding (or equivalent) performance ratings may be considered for additional, quality step increases (maximum of one per year). To find a GS position's wage, visit the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's General Schedule website at: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/general-schedule/>

Federal Wage System (Wage Grade - WG)

The Federal Wage System covers Federal blue-collar workers in the trade, craft, and laboring positions. It was developed to make the pay of Federal blue-collar workers comparable to prevailing private sector rates in each local wage area. As a result, wages vary across the country. To find a WG position's wage, visit the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service's Wage and Salary website at: <https://wageandsalary.dcpas.osd.mil/BWN/LatestSchedulesAF/>

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Qualifications and Requirements

This chart details the experience or education required to qualify for each GS-level or grade. This is how human resources determines what level you are qualified for, and it corresponds to your pay. In addition to qualify based on either education or experience, some job series (for example, a General Biologist position is a 0401-job series) require a minimum education requirement with a bachelor's degree with a major in Biology or related science. Not every job series requires a minimum education requirement to qualify, but you can use your education to help you qualify at a particular GS grade. That said, because you can qualify at a particular GS grade based on education doesn't mean you will be ranked by Human Resources as among the best qualified for the GS grade. To be ranked among the best qualified, experience trumps education.

GS Level	Experience Required		Education Required
GS-3	6 months general experience	either ← or →	1 year above high school with course(s) related to the occupation, if required
GS-4	6 months general experience and 6 months specialized experience		2 years above high school with courses related to the occupation, if required
GS-5	3 years, 1 year of which was equivalent to at least GS-4		4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree
GS-7	1 year equivalent to at least GS-5		1 full year of graduate level education -or- superior academic achievement
GS-9	1 year equivalent to at least GS-7		master's or equivalent graduate degree -or- 2 full years of progressively <u>higher level</u> graduate education leading to such a degree
GS-11	1 year equivalent to at least GS-9		Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree -or- 3 full years of progressively <u>higher level</u> graduate education leading to such a degree
GS-12 +	1 year equivalent to at least next lower grade level		

Careers by Program

Get inspired with this list of career opportunities! This list serves as a reference and is not a comprehensive of all federal positions with FWS. Be sure to visit fws.gov/careers for more information.

Refuges

Refuge Manager (GS-0485)
Wildlife Biologist (GS-0486)
Wildland Firefighting (GS-0456)
Maintenance Mechanic (WG-4749)
Engineering Equipment Operators (WG-5716)
Facility Operations Services (GS-1640)
Visitor Services/Park Ranger (GS-0025)
Federal Wildlife Officer (GL-1801)
Biological Science Technician (GS-0404)
Administrative Officer (GS-0341)
Administrative Assistant (GS-0303)
Budget Analyst (GS-0560)

Ecological Services

Partners/Private Lands Biologist*(GS - 0401)
Fish & Wildlife Biologist (Endangered Species) (GS-0401)

Fisheries

Fish Biologist (GS-0482)
Biological Science Technician (GS-0404)
Maintenance (GS-4749)
Facilities Operations Services (GS-1640)

Migratory Birds

Biologist (GS-0401)
Grants Management (GS-1109)

Conservation, Science, & Innovation

Biologist (GS-0401)
Social Scientist (GS-0101)

Conservation Investment

Biologist (GS-0401)
Grants Management (GS-1109)

Law Enforcement

Federal Wildlife Officer (GL-1801)
Criminal Investigator (GS-1811)

Joint Administrative Operations (JAO)

Human Resources (GS-0201)
Budget & Financial Management (GS-0505)
Contracting Specialist (GS-1102)
Administrative Assistant (GS-0301)
Information Technology Specialist (GS-2210)

Communications

Public Affairs Specialist (GS-1035)
Information Technology Specialist (GS-2210)

Reference: Office of Personnel Management Qualifications Requirements: General Schedule Qualification Standards (opm.gov)

Intern Toolkit

Special Hiring Authorities *

Special hiring authorities are used to appoint specific groups of individuals who meet the respective eligibility requirements to positions. When searching on USAJobs, job announcements with special hiring authorities include the above Special authorities icon. Below are the most common special hiring authorities:

Pathways - Internship

The Pathways Internship Program is designed to provide students, from high school to graduate level, with opportunities to experience jobs within the Service and explore Federal careers while still in school and while getting paid for the work performed. Students who complete 480 qualifying hours of experience and complete their degree may be eligible for conversion to a permanent position within 180 days of the completion of the program.

Note: Up to 320 required hours may be waived for Interns who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance. Additionally, students working in agencies via third-party/partner programs may count up to 320 hours of that work towards the 480-hour requirement.

Pathways - Recent Graduate

The Recent Graduate program provides developmental experiences in the Service with the intent to promote potential careers to individuals who have recently graduated from qualifying educational institutions or programs. Applicants must apply within two years of receiving a post-secondary degree or technical certificate to be eligible for the program. Upon completion of a full year of service, Recent Graduates may be converted to a permanent position.

Public Lands Corps

Public Lands Corps (PLC) provides individuals ages 16 to 30 (up to age 35 if the individual is a veteran) the opportunity to work on conservation projects with partner organizations on public lands. Participants must complete 640 hours, at least 120 hours of which must be on or in support of federal lands. PLC participants are not federal government employees; however, those who successfully complete the PLC requirements are eligible for 2 years of noncompetitive hiring status, which can be used when applying to competitive service positions.

Directorate Fellows Program

The Directorate Fellows Program (DFP) is a 12-week paid summer fellowship program designed to attract highly talented and diverse Fellows from underrepresented communities. This program is open to rising undergraduate seniors and current graduate students wishing to pursue careers in wildlife biology, conservation, environmental education, geosciences, infrastructure, etc.. Upon successful completion of this program and graduation, fellows receive Direct Hire Authority for positions within U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. *Note: Each region has limited DFP positions per academic year, and a minimum GPA of 3.0 or higher is required.*

Interns in Action



Suzena Arias (middle), FWS intern through Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences, assists a FWS biologist (right) with radio tagging a Chinook salmon. Typhanie Shepard (left), FWS intern through American Conservation Experience, captures photo and video documentation.

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Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act

Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act (LMWFA) is a status that current or former temporary, seasonal employees can earn. Employees must have worked with a qualifying federal land management agency for at least 24 months total without a break in service of 2 or more years. Eligible candidates need to have received a performance rating that demonstrated an acceptable level of performance throughout their service period, and have not separated by termination or resignation for misconduct or poor performance. Federal land management agencies include Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Bureau of Reclamation. LMWFA allows candidates to apply for permanent positions open only to current federal employees.

Presidential Management Fellows

The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program is a 2-year fellowship with full salary and benefits, challenging assignments, training and development, mentoring, plus an opportunity to make government work better. Agencies hire competitive, qualified, and diverse graduate students at the GS-9 level, although agencies may initially appoint at the GS-9, GS-11, GS-12, or equivalent. Bearing the Presidential Seal, the PMF program is the Federal Government's premier leadership development program for advanced degree holders across all academic disciplines.

Schedule A (Disabilities)

Schedule A Hiring Authority for individuals with disabilities (Schedule A) is noncompetitive authority that allows for individuals who meet the eligibility status of the appointment and the minimum qualifications for the position to be hired for the position without competing against the general public. To demonstrate Schedule A eligibility, documentation of disability status and qualification for the position are required. To demonstrate disability status, candidates must provide a letter from a doctor, licensed medical professional, a licensed rehabilitation professional, or any entity that issues or provides disability benefits. It does not need to give detailed medical history, and should only state ability to perform essential functions of the job as well as any special accommodations needed.

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA) allows for agencies to make non-competitive appointment of eligible veterans up to the GS-11 or equivalent grade level. VRA eligibility applies to disabled veterans; veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during a war declared by Congress, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized; veterans who, while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces, participated in a military operation for which the Armed Forces Service Medal (AFSM) was awarded, to include the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; and separated from active duty within the past 3 years.

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I Want Your Job!

This handy guide provides steps for interviewing someone in your dream job. The goal is to learn more about a potential career path and determine what it will take to get you there!

Prepare:

1.) Identify Potential Candidates

Find people whose field, position, office, current/past work, career path, or location interest you.

You may consider a guest speaker from a conference/training, a member of a Community of Practice, or someone from a different division or agency. You can also search LinkedIn or the FWS SharePoint for people with jobs that might interest you. Be sure tell your supervisor about your career goals as they may also know a colleague in that area.

2.) Get Ready

Begin with establishing a general understanding of purpose of the individual's office and how their work fits into it. Review the office website and / or social media to learn more.

3.) Broaden your Perspective

Gain a wider understanding of the job by gathering opinions and advice from folks in varied roles. Use your best judgment when receiving advice from others.

Request:

Use the template and suggestions provided here to craft an email request.

New Message

To: dream.job@fws.gov Cc Bcc

Subject: Informational Interview Request – SCA Intern Jane Doe

Good afternoon,

My name is Jane Doe and I'm an SCA Digital Media Intern with Fish & Aquatic Conservation. My supervisor sent me your info after I expressed interest in networking with professionals in your field.

I'm highly interested in pursuing a career in communications and would love the opportunity to learn about your job and hear about your career path.

Would you be available for a 15 – 30 minute meeting to answer a few questions? Please let me know a day and time that works best for you.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to speaking with you!

- Jane Doe
SCA Digital Media Intern
Fish & Aquatic Conservation

Send [icons]

Subject

Use an effective email heading:

- Keep it short
- State your interest in meeting

Body

Introduce Yourself

- Explain your professional status
- Name your internship program and which FWS programs you work with

Establish Purpose

- State how you found the candidate
- Explain why you are reaching out

Outline Request

- Request 30 minutes of time for a “few questions” - this is a manageable request that gets you in the door.

Closing

Be sincere!

- Thank them for their time and use a professional email signature.

Follow Up

Don't get discouraged if you don't receive a quick response. Remember, the people you're contacting are likely busy. If a week or more has passed, tactfully following up can be appropriate.

- Forward your original message and add a polite note in the new message body.
- If appropriate, offer to facilitate the process.

During The Meeting

1.) Ask genuine questions

Focus on connecting with the person and asking for advice, not asking for a job.

2.) Try to come away with something tangible.

This may include: further connections, training recommendations, mentoring, or even an in-person meeting.

3.) Respect their time

Plan to ask 3-5 questions and avoid exceeding the planned meeting time. If time is short, say "I want to be mindful of your time; we agreed on 20 minutes, and we have just a few minutes left. I have one more question I'd like to ask about..."

Give Thanks!

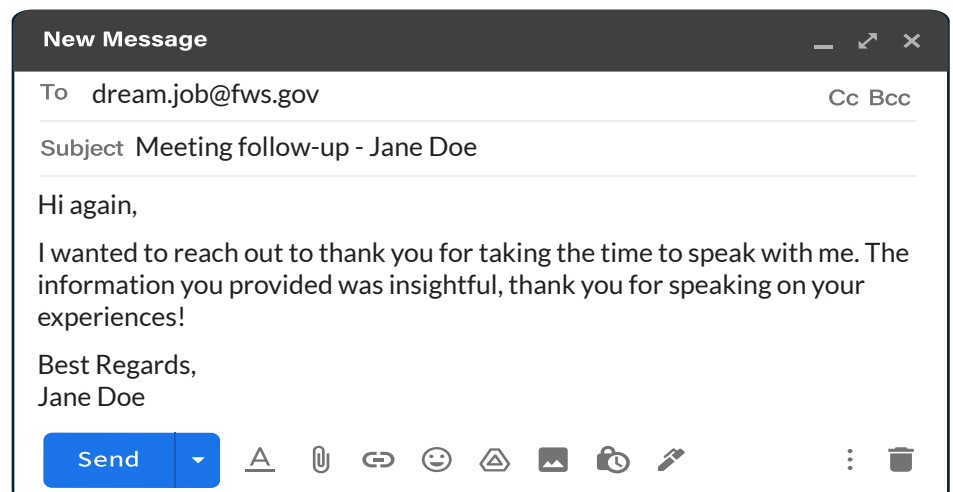
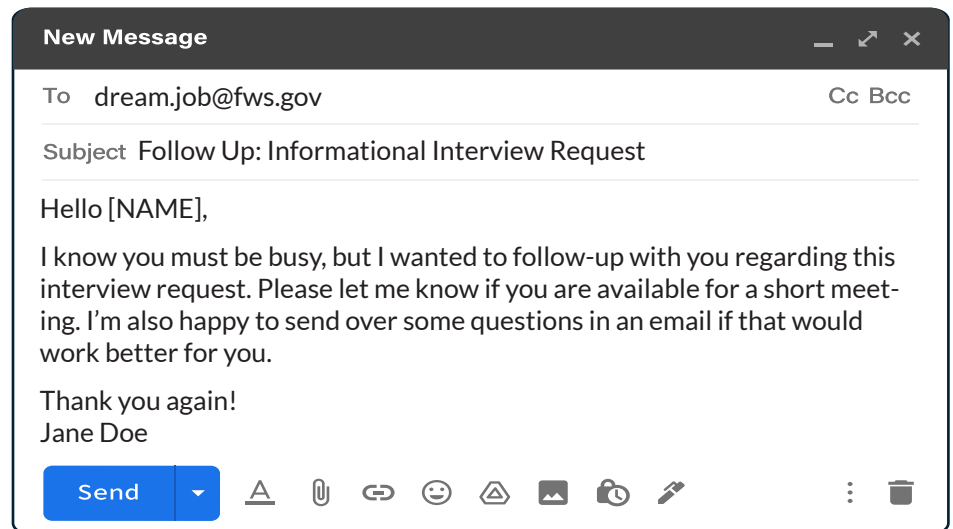
Send a 'thank you' email within 12-24 hours. It is also good to be specific about what you gained from meeting with them.

If you forget, it is better to send it late than never.

Send Updates

Be sure to send a follow-up message if/when you have updates for the person (e.g., you want to share your resume with them, you had a good meeting with someone they connected you with, you got a job thanks to their help).

This keeps the connections going, allows you to express appreciation again, and lets the contact know their conversation with you was fruitful.



Sample Questions

Career Details

- What are your main responsibilities?
- What does a typical workday or week look like for you?
- What do you like about working in your job/field/office/division?
- What are some challenges of your job/field/office/division?
- What made you enter this field, and what has kept you in it?
- Is there anything that has particularly surprised you about your job/field?
- Is there anything you've done that has been particularly helpful in preparing you for this job?
- If you had to do it all over again, what changes would you make in your career?
- What are some trends you see in the field? How have you seen the field change over the years?

Advice & Networking

- What are some skills that I should acquire or emphasize in my application materials?
- Is there any other job search advice you would recommend?
- What technical and non-technical skills do you recommend building up to succeed in this job/field?
- Are there any offices or divisions you would recommend I explore for possible jobs/internships within the XYZ (e.g., San Diego) area?
- Is there anyone in particular that I should talk to related to these interests?
- Is there anyone else you would recommend I talk to about this work/field/organization?

Questions About Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Environmental Justice (EJ), & Office Culture

- What is your office's culture like?
- In your own words, what would you say is your office's mission and/or what are its values?
- What does DEI mean to you personally, and what does it mean to the office you work for?
- How have you incorporated DEI and EJ into your work, and what has your office put in place to integrate DEI and EJ into the organization, its work, and/or its culture?

Questions About Opportunities at the Person's Office

It is important to keep in mind that the abundance job postings/vacancies vary by office and are not always known by everyone. If you are really interested in working for someone's office, it is best to bring up at the end of your meeting (or after a few meetings) with them when you have had a chance to establish a connection with them.

Here are some examples of what you could say:

- **More General Approach** (most common): The work you do sounds very interesting, and I am impressed with the office's services and projects. How often do XYZ positions come up in your division and in the region as a whole? When they do become available, what is the best way to learn about them?
- **Slightly More Direct Approach** (Only if appropriate based on your relationship—see above): I really appreciate you taking the time to chat with me more deeply about your work in XYZ today. As you know, I'm a huge fan of XYZ (e.g., specific type of work). I would love to work in your office/division/field if any opportunities come up that would be a good match; I'll be keeping an eye out, and please let me know if there's ever anything you think would be a good fit.

Leverage Connections

Right before you graduate (or when you are seeking a job) you can reach out to see if they know of any open positions or any upcoming vacancies their office is looking to fill.

- You should let them know about any additional accomplishments/relevant work that you have done since you last spoke.
- Reiterate your interest in working in their office/division/agency.
- Send an updated resume to them.
- Ask if they have any inside information about the hiring process.

While they might not be able to help, they might provide information, advice, or help connecting with a hiring manager.

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Intern Toolkit

Crafting Your Federal Resume

When applying for jobs with the federal government, your resume serves as your application. Your resume must demonstrate that you meet all minimum requirements. Use the USAJOBS Resume Builder to learn what information must be included.

General Tips:

- **Provide detail but be concise.** Federal resumes are often significantly longer than standard resumes, functioning more as a curriculum vitae (CV). There is no page limit but use the space wisely!
- **Ensure understanding.** A Human Resources (HR) specialist is the first person to review your resume, NOT the job's supervisor. HR may be unfamiliar with your field of study so be sure to clearly demonstrate how you are qualified for the job. **Avoid acronyms.**
- **Tailor your resume.** Mirror the terms and language listed in the vacancy's "duties" and "qualifications" sections in your resume. Also reference the occupational questionnaire (linked within the vacancy announcement) to demonstrate how your experience aligns.
- **Use action verbs and quantitative details.** Demonstrate complexity with numbers or performance metrics that describe how much, how many, or how you may have improved efficiency.
- **Project professionalism.** Make your resume visually appealing and easy to read. There are no standard requirements for design or format. Either bulleted lists or narrative paragraphs are acceptable.
- **Spell check!** Ensure that you have spelled names of people and places correctly. Check your grammar by slowly reading your resume aloud or asking a friend to review.

What to Include:

- **Detailed description of current and past jobs.**
- **Any coursework not reflected on your transcript(s).** If you received written feedback from an HR Specialist regarding your coursework qualifications, include it as an attachment.
- **Volunteer experiences** and their respective accomplishments and duties may be listed in the same way as a paid work experience.
- **Awards, honors, publications, and affiliations** with professional associations or societies help to highlight a well-rounded resume.
- **References are often required.** List 2-3 references and notify them of your intent so they are prepared to respond promptly.

Current and Past Job Info	
This:	Not This:
	
• Job titles (include job series and grade, if federal) • Duties • Starting and ending dates (month and year), • Hours worked per week • Salary/hourly pay	• Height • Weight • Age, date of birth • Marital status • Ethnicity • Health • Reason for leaving previous jobs • Social security number • Pictures of yourself

Intern Toolkit

Writing About Your Experience

Translating Military Experience

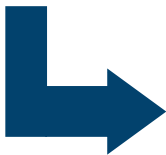
Avoid overusing military jargon and acronyms to describe your experience. A resume filled with terms used only in the military may confuse HR specialists and lead to disqualification. Think of how you would explain your military job during a conversation. What terminology would you use to be understood? Also, consider translating your military job title to one comparable in the civilian workforce.

Using Descriptive Language

Each bullet on your resume should define what you did, how you did it, and what your work resulted in.

What you did :

- Assisted biologist with fieldwork and data inputting
- Led summer camp programs for local youth
- Worked with local university students to do bird surveys



How to write about it:

- Used ArcGIS to map invasive species and define a strategic removal plan. Conducted manual, mechanical, and chemical removal of Hairy vetch (*Vicia villosa*)
- Planned, prepared, and independently led 15 interpretive programs for youth ages 9-11
- Fostered partnership with Clemson University to train and engage students in weekly marsh bird surveys

Tip:

Seemingly unrelated work experiences are valid!

From extracurricular activities to faith-based volunteering to work in the food service industry, every experience provides the opportunity to learn new skills.

Include all info as if it were a paying job. (Start/end date, hours worked, etc.)

Tip:

Include:

- Technologies used
- The purpose of your work
- Quantitative numbers for outputs

Use Action Verbs!

Action verbs more concisely describe the type of work you've done and how you contributed. Examples are provided below:

compiled	organized	prepared	resolved
directed	adapted	designed	initiated
budgeted	increased	tracked	advised
implemented	analyzed	delegated	established
investigated	surveyed	instructed	trained
contributed	coordinated	promoted	administered
delivered	prioritized	operated	facilitated

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Federal Hiring Glossary

This glossary serves as a reference and is not comprehensive of all hiring terms. Use this tool to assist in your job search and visit USAJobs.gov for more information.

Annual leave	Paid time off of work to be used at your discretion
Announcement	Job vacancy posted on USAJobs
Candidate	An applicant that meets the minimum qualifications and is eligible for consideration
Career conditional	The employment status of a permanent employee who has not completed three years of substantially continuous, creditable service
Career employee or Career tenure	After serving three years of substantially continuous creditable service, a career conditional employee becomes a career employee and gains career tenure. Employees with career tenure have permanent reinstatement eligibility.
"Cert" (Certificate)	A list of applicants from which the hiring official may make a selection
Close of business (COB)	The end of the business day, usually 5 p.m. local time regardless of individual work schedules
Competitive status	An employee's basic eligibility for assignment by transfer, promotion, reassignment, demotion, or reinstatement to a position in the competitive service without having to compete with members of the general public. The employee will compete with other federal employees and candidates that qualify for special hiring authorities. Competitive status belongs to an employee, not to a position.
Conversion (Non - competitive)	The transition from a non - status position to a status career conditional position without competition. There is a 120 - day window for conversion upon the completion of requirements. This pertains to pathway interns.
Creditable service	Qualifying service necessary to achieve full career status. For career tenure, creditable service is three consecutive years of qualifying experience.

Delegated Examining	Is an authority granted to fill competitive civil service jobs with applicants applying from <u>outside the Federal workforce</u> . This includes: the public, career or career-conditional employees, and temporary or term employees who do not hold career competitive status.
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	An employee benefit program that can assist in issues affecting financial, emotional and mental well - being
Eligible	Meeting specific requirements of a job description
Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)	Federal laws make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. It is also illegal to discriminate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.
Entry on Duty (EOD)	The first date of your employment in a position
Expert	A person proficient in a knowledge, skill or ability, consulted by others for information and advice about specific subjects
Fly (Flew)	Refers to when a position is advertised in USAJobs
GS	General Schedule; predominant pay scale for civil service workers
Hiring authority	Legal provisions for Federal employers to fairly hire individuals or certain groups of individuals more easily
Hiring official	Person with responsibility of making the hiring decisions, typically the position supervisor
Leave and Earnings Statement	Informational statement employees receive concerning their last paycheck, deductions, time off earned, and other critical administrative announcements

Intern Toolkit

Federal Hiring Glossary

Merit promotion	Placement, promotion, transfer, reassignment, and other movement of competitive service employees
Occupational Questionnaire	A self - rating electronic form which identifies an applicant's competencies for positions
Permanent	A full - time position usually hired under a career- conditional appointment; full benefits are offered
Position description (PD)	The official list of duties for the job and skills needed to perform the job
Preference	Refers to benefits provided under a special hiring authority; generally boosts applicants' chances of getting on the "cert" by providing extra points
Qualification	Refers to the determination of federal human resource experts and computer programs about the general evaluation of an applicant's abilities to perform a job. Applicants could be ranked "not qualified," "minimally qualified," or "highly qualified."
Ranks	USAJobs Staffing system grades applications to determine their percent score from applicants' self evaluation (occupational questionnaire)
Referred	An applicant is deemed to be among the most qualified candidates for a vacancy; and is referred to the hiring manager for further consideration. This is often referred to as "Making the cert."
Reinstatement eligibility	Ability to reenter the Federal competitive service workforce without competing with the public - also enables you to apply for Federal jobs open only to status candidates. You must have held a career or career-conditional appointment previously.
Seasonal	Any position of employment which does not exceed 1039 hours of work, benefits are limited or not offered
Series	The Federal Government categorizes occupations as professional or trade, crafts or labor. These groups are further categorized into "series" – a family of similar occupations

SF -50 Notification of Personnel Action	The Standard Form to process any changes to a position such as hiring, raises, promotion or termination
Sick leave	Personal time earned to address medical needs for you and your immediate family
Special hiring authority	A legal government provision that allows human resources and hiring officials to give preference to eligible candidates, such as military veterans, Peace Corps and students
Term Position	Temporary in nature and open for a defined short period of time not to exceed four years. The initial appointment is for 13 months which can be extended.
Temporary Position	A position which exceeds seasonal 1039 hours, but will not exceed three years of work; some benefits are offered
USAJobs	U.S. Government's official jobs and hiring program, portal to job announcements (www.usajobs.gov)
Wage Grade (WG)	Federal pay plan that typically covers craft, trade or labor positions

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 June 2024

