

# MEMORANDUM

## STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Administration  
Division of Personnel

**To:** Pam Day, Human Resource Manager  
Department of Natural Resources

**Date:** Nov. 16, 2002

Nicki Neal, Human Resource Manager  
Department of Community & Economic Development

Lynn Ate, Human Resource Manager  
Department of Fish and Game

**Thru:** Dianne Corso  
Personnel Manager

**Phone:** 465-4075

**From:** Connie Preecs  
Human Resource Specialist

**Subject:** Classification Study  
Natural Resource Technicians

### HISTORY

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requested a full study of all job classes in the Natural Resource Technician (NRT), Officer (NRO) and Manager (NRM) series. Several areas of concern identified by the department were addressed in a February 7, 2002 memorandum from Judy Kidd to Dianne Corso:

- The existing class specifications for the NRO series do not reflect all the levels of current work assignments.
- DNR managers prefer a two-track career path, one professional and the other managerial.
- DNR is concerned about employee retention and wants to determine if the existing salary ranges should be changed.
- Classification parity within and between the job series should be verified.
- Apart from the retention issue, a perception exists that the current salaries are too low for the work assigned.
- The minimum qualifications for the series need to be updated to better fit the current needs in the individual job classes.

A planning meeting for the Natural Resource Study was held on October 17, 2001. The study plan included the following job classes:

Natural Resource Technician I – II  
Natural Resource Officer I – II  
Natural Resource Manager I - IV

Subject matter experts were identified at the planning meeting: Nancy Welch, Division of Mining, Land and Water; Jim Hansen and Jim Hayes, Division of Oil and Gas; and Judy Kidd DNR Human Resource Office. Connie Preecs was assigned to the project as the Division of Personnel (DOP) representative. The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) had one position in the natural resource series; DCED designated Carolyn Edelman as its representative. The Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) also had a position in the series but the department did not designate a representative. Lee Powelson served as the Human Resource Manager of DNR and began the study in that department before becoming the DOP Classification Manager; consequently, Lee was designated as an in-house resource and Dianne Corso was designated as the person responsible for final approval of the study. DNR agreed to transmit representative position descriptions (PDs) to DOP. The target completion date for the project was set at February 1, 2002, which was advanced as the study unfolded.

Key milestones during the study included:

- On October 17, 2001, the study planning meeting was held.
- Beginning in November 2001, meetings between DNR and DOP occurred regularly.
- On February 7, 2002, a memo outlining DNR's concerns, providing background information about the work done by positions in the three series, and recommending levels and salary ranges was received by DOP.
- On April 26, 2002, DNR made a presentation expanding upon the information included in the February 7, 2002 memorandum. The presenters were Marty Rutherford, Deputy Commissioner (by telephone), Bob Loeffler, Director of the Division of Mining, Land and Water, and Mark Myers, Director of the Division of Oil and Gas.
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- In May 2002, Connie Preecs traveled to Anchorage to interview incumbents of a variety of positions.
- On June 14, 2002, draft class specifications for NRT I-II and Natural Resource Specialist I-V (previously titled NRO) were sent to the departments for comments.
- On July 24, 2002, draft class specifications for the new Appraiser I-III series were sent to DNR for review and comment.
- On August 30, 2002, draft class specifications for the NRMs were sent to DNR for review and comment.
- On October 4, 2002, the Appraiser I-III class specifications were finalized and implemented.
- On October 15 and 16, 2002, test allocations for the NRT, NRS and NRM series were held; Nancy Welch served as the Subject Matter Expert.

- On October 17, 2002, DOP sent the draft salary recommendations for NRT, NRS, and NRM to DNR for review and comment.
- On October 28, 2002, DNR sent draft position allocations to DOP.
- On October 29, 2002, DNR managers made a presentation to the DOP study team regarding salary recommendations. The presenters were Marty Rutherford, Deputy Commissioner; Bob Loeffler, Director of Mining, Land and Water; Nancy Welch, Deputy Director of Mining, Land and Water; and Mark Myers, Director of Oil and Gas.

### **SCOPE**

The study was limited to positions in the NRT, NRO, and NRM series. All class specifications for these job classes were reviewed and revised. An advanced level was added to the NRT series. The NRO series was retitled to Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) and three levels added. Positions doing appraisal work were removed from the NRS series and a separate Appraiser series was established. Minimum qualifications were broadened across the three class series. An internal alignment analysis was conducted for all job classes in the three series. Class concepts and the rationale for salary assignment are discussed in the memorandum specific to each series.

### **CLASS CONCEPTS**

The Natural Resource Technician series historically has had two levels where the NRT I level is the entry or trainee level and the NRT II is the journey level. During the study an advanced level of work was identified; consequently, the NRT series was revised by adding an additional level to describe this work. The minimum qualifications were broadened for the NRT I- II job classes, which will allow more applicants to apply and be considered but does not affect the level of work performed by these positions.

Natural Resource Technicians I-III perform technical work in support of professional staff in the development, administration, analysis or implementation of programs to manage land, water, mineral, forest, oil, gas, agricultural, natural and cultural history, parks and related surface and subsurface resources of the state.

NRTs I perform recurring, well-defined tasks and assignments at the entry or trainee level subject to specific instructions. Supervision is readily available or guidelines and procedures are well established and easily understood. Assignments typically involve informing the public of the programs available through DNR, gathering scientific data or learning to interpret and maintain computerized land information.

NRTs II perform systematic, recurring assignments at the journey technical level based on specific instructions or established statutes, regulations, policies and procedures. Work assignments require a general knowledge of a specific natural resource management program, comprehension and evaluation of the subject matter, procedures, guides and references. Tasks are usually repetitive and problems require standard solutions. Work is performed independently and reviewed on completion for technical accuracy.

NRTs III perform advanced technical assignments in support of natural resource management on a regular and recurring basis. NRTs III are responsible for unusual or sensitive technical matters where decisions are made about how data is obtained, organized and manipulated. Work assignments require a detailed knowledge of a specific natural resource management program, procedures, guides and references, are performed independently and are not normally reviewed except on completion.

### **SALARY ANALYSIS**

The work performed by NRTs includes an unusually wide range of duties. This job class series includes maintenance, visitor education and safety in parks; approval of land use authorizations, data entry on multi-dimensional maps and a land administration data base in adjudication units; researching maps, encumbrances and land status and conducting title and adjudication research in title and in information services offices. This complicates the salary analysis process because 1) there are no classes or series with a similar mix of duties against which to make a direct comparison; and 2) the variety of duties within each class level results in a wider variations within the classes with respect to classification factors such as complexity than is typical. Consequently, a broad range of job classes performing work similar to the various types of work performed by NRTs must be considered for alignment.

Job classes in the same family (66XX – Forestry and Natural Resource Management) as the NRT series have been scheduled for study, except the Trust Resources series which is being moved to the exempt service. Job classes in Parks are also under study. It is not appropriate to use these classes to compare for salary range designation at this time since questions have already been raised about whether current pay rates are correct. Several other technical level job classes in the Fish and Wildlife Research and Development Family (P61XX) were considered, as were several from the Engineering and Physical Science Group (P8XXX). These are job classes that collect and process scientific data and make authorization determinations. Loan Closer/Processor (P2116-8) and Retirement and Benefits Technician (P1443-5) were also considered because the work of these classes focuses on researching and interpreting rules and regulations to make determinations regarding requests and claims. Eligibility Technicians (P4172-3) were considered because of the technical interpretation of rules and regulations; however, the range assignment (SR 13) for this class was based heavily on the nature and difficulty of the person-to-person contacts in that the people Eligibility Technicians serve are typically under great stress with financial, emotional or social issues. The Recorder (P7520-3) was considered because it is used in the minimum qualifications for the NRT I and II but determined to not be comparable because the journey level work is clerical in nature. The higher ranges in the Recorder series are assigned based on supervisory or management authority; these are not elements given consideration for range assignment in the NRT series.

The NRT I is the entry or trainee level. Many of the positions are flexed to the NRT II level, but not all.

- The Fish and Wildlife Technician (FWT) I (SR 7) was not considered comparable because supervision for the FWT I is very immediate and the work is mainly physical, focused on a single type of work such as counting fish from towers, weirs and on foot in streams as part of a team. The FWT II (SR 9) is closer to the level of supervision the NRT I receives in that the supervisor is not always immediately available. The FWT II work relates to the NRT I in

parks in some respects because the work is often outdoors, requires physical labor, and decisions are made without a supervisor nearby. The park NRT also deals with park visitors and collects fees, leads volunteers in the maintenance of park facilities and learns to make formal and informal presentations about the park's attributes. The park NRT I work is at a higher level because the work is broader in scope than the FWT II.

- The Environmental Technician I (SR 10) is a trainee level where the incumbent learns about the state and federal program guides, and collects, reviews and enters data into a database. Other technical classes that are entry or trainee level and learn rules and regulations in order to complete the work are Loan Closer/Processor I (SR 10) and Retirement and Benefits Technician I (SR 10). All three of these job classes move directly to the full journey level as do many of the NRTs I. The work of these three job classes is comparable to NRT I work in adjudication and public information units.

Conclusion: The NRT I is allocated to salary range 10.

NRT II is the journey level of the technician series.

- The FWT III (SR 11) work relates to the parks work done by NRT IIs in that the work is full journey for the series, occurs mainly outdoors and without supervision immediately available. The FWT III collects data, may lead a team of FWTs in the collection of biological data or samples and explains regulations and laws to the public. The NRT II may lead a team of volunteers and explains regulations and laws to the public; this work is comparable to the FWT II work. The NRT II also maintains park facilities, collects fees, identifies hazards and determines if action must be taken, and makes formal and informal presentations. The scope of work is broader for the NRT II. Some decisions made are at a higher level; for example, the park NRT II must determine when there is a hazardous situation within the park and decide if the hazard needs immediate action.
- The Environmental Technician II (SR 12) is journey level technical work in the series where the incumbent provides information to the public about the programs of the department, performs simple investigations and collects, tracks, computes and summarizes statistical data in chart or narrative form using agency statistical software programs. This is a good match to NRT II positions that work in public information and adjudication units. The type and frequency of public contact is similar and the research in the land administration and title systems collecting, tracking, and summarizing data either to determine land status or title is directly comparable to the Environmental Technician II.
- The Fish and Game Program Technician (SR 12), Loan Closer/Processor II (SR 12) and Retirement & Benefits Technician II (SR 12) are also journey technical level classes that use guides in a similar manner to the NRT II. They work within established guidelines and the work requires substantial knowledge of the program in which the technician works.

Conclusion: Based on the discussion above, NRT II is allocated to salary range 12.

NRT III is a new advanced technical level in the NRT series. The work is advanced not only because the data involved is unusual or sensitive, but also because the NRT III makes determinations about whether the data provided by outside entities fulfills the requirements of the department as defined in agreements such as permits and leases. When this information is determined to be inadequate, the NRT III takes independent action to obtain the data required.

- The Cartographer I (SR 13) and II (SR 15) were considered at this level because of the extensive Geographical Information System (GIS) work done by the benchmark NRT III

position. The Cartographers are specialized technical job classes with level I at a trainee level and II at the full journey. The NRT III uses GIS mapping technology to track geological data; however, the work performed is not directly comparable to either Cartographer class: the NRT III is neither a trainee level nor a full journey level Cartographer but somewhere in between.

- The FWT IV (SR 13) requires a high degree of initiative and, under the nonsupervisory option, functions as a technical assistant to a Biologist. The FWT V (SR 14) provides technical management of a project where data is analyzed and presented in reports. The NRT III is similar to the FWT IV because the work is in direct support of professionals; however, the FWT IV information is not as sensitive and does not require direct interaction with outside entities such as oil companies for the collection of data as is typical of the NRT III.
- Loan Closer/Process III is a supervisory job class and is therefore not comparable. The Retirement & Benefits Technician III (SR 14) is expected to provide information to participants in areas that may be complex, sensitive, controversial or confidential concerning individuals.

Conclusion: Based on the above discussion, NRT III is allocated to salary range 14.

### CONCLUSION

The study supported the creation of an additional level in the Natural Resource Technician series. The series required different class codes.

| Title                           | Class Code | Salary Range |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Natural Resource Technician I   | P6631      | 10           |
| Natural Resource Technician II  | P6632      | 12           |
| Natural Resource Technician III | P6633      | 14           |

The new class specifications are effective November 16, 2002.