

# MEMORANDUM

**State of Alaska**  
**Department of Administration**  
**Division of Personnel**

**To:** Dianne Kiesel  
Director

**Date:** February 16, 2007

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**Subject:** Forest Technician Study

## **Introduction:**

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry (DOF) submitted a request to the Division of Personnel (DOP) to conduct a comprehensive classification study of the Forest Technicians and Foresters. DOP commenced work on this project in the fall of 2005. The study was bifurcated into technicians and professionals to accommodate DOF in their preparation for the upcoming fire season and ease any concerns about the timing of recruitment closure during the busy hiring period.

The study request for the Forest Technicians included an update of the Forest Technician I-IV class specifications, an internal alignment analysis, and a request to explore the possibility of establishing an additional level in the series for highly specialized technical positions that do not require a degree.

## **Study Scope:**

The study included the review of all permanent Forest Technician positions. The division also employs numerous non-perm positions, and at the study's conclusion only one non-perm position was active and reviewed for proper allocation. The following lists the number of positions by job classes that were included in the study: 0 Forest Technicians I; 32 Forest Technicians II; 58 Forest Technicians III; and 28 Forest Technicians IV.

## **Study Method:**

A formal planning meeting to set a communications plan and discuss the various milestones, expectations, and phases of the study was held on November 7, 2005. Although position descriptions (pds) were due early January, there was considerable delay receiving them due to the large number of pds, the start of the hiring season with staff on field assignment, and delays with implementing the new online position description (OPD) system. Most pds were received by June 2006.

An Occupational Consultant presentation was given by DOF on January 30 and 31, 2006. On-site interviews were conducted April 24 through April 28 and June 5 through June 9. An additional trip was made to Fairbanks on June 12 to observe fire suppression and support related activities during the 2006 Parks Highway Fire.

Working closely with the DOF, class specifications were drafted and provided to the agency for review and comment. A test allocation session was conducted, further revisions to the specs were made, and revised specs were re-submitted for agency review. Following DOF's final comments and agreement to the class specifications, positions were allocated using the new class specifications and the draft allocation spreadsheet was submitted and approved by DOF. DOF provided recommendations for comparable job classes, job classes were analyzed for internal alignment, and the draft results were provided to the agency. The agency reviewed the draft internal alignment and responded to DOP that they were in agreement.

### **History of Job Class:**

Forest Technicians I-V were established in May 1977. Relatively little was done to the class specifications in either series until 1992 when DOF submitted a request to revise the Forester series as a whole and incorporate the Forestry Technicians V into the Forester I job class. As a result of that change, the Forest Technician V job class was abolished.

In February 1976 the Fire Dispatcher I and II job classes were established. These job classes were abolished sometime prior to December 1990, date unknown, and the incumbents were allocated to the Forest Technician job classes.

In 2001 DOF requested a study to establish a Forest Technician V and VI job class. It is unclear why the study was never begun.

In October 2006 DOF again requested a comprehensive study to review and revise class specifications to existing Forest Technician job classes, analyze salary ranges, and again establish a new, higher level Forest Technician V job class.

### **Class Analysis:**

Forest Technicians perform a variety of technical duties in either the Fire Management Program or the Resource Management Program. Work in the Fire Management Program includes fire suppression and support duties related to fire suppression and prevention. Technical work performed in the Resource Management Program is generally field work performed in support of forest management, forest practices, forest stewardship, forest health, and community forestry programs and projects.

The Division of Forestry's mission to develop, conserve, enhance, and protect Alaska's forests and wildlands has not changed significantly over the years, but some factors that influence the planning and methods of achieving the division's program goals have evolved. The purpose of this study was to determine if the work of the Forest Technicians had changed significantly, identify those changes, and analyze how the changes impact the work. As a result, several interrelated issues were raised: how organizational structure and red card certification impacts the work and position allocation; what are lead vs. supervisory responsibilities; was there a need

for new job classes; what would be the appropriate grouping for revised and new classes; and was there a need to expand flexible staffing.

#### *Organizational structure and red card certification*

DOF's organizational structure for the Fire Management Program is modeled after the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). NIIMS provides recommended qualification and certification for personnel responding to regional or national fire incidents, and allows for the development of local minimum standards to meet local needs under the Incident Command System (ICS). An Incident Qualification Card or "red card" issued to a Forest Technician indicates his/her incident management and training qualifications for specified fire positions. Incident qualification was an issue when trying to distinguish between the various levels of Forest Technicians. Confusion existed because often times when wildland fires breakout lower level technicians with higher or specific red card certification may be temporarily placed in positions of greater responsibility and authority than their senior counterparts. Some staff felt that working at higher levels warranted allocation to a higher level job class. Interviews with incumbents and supervisors indicated that these are short term assignments, and once the incident has concluded the technician immediately returns to normal duty and works at the level described in the assigned job class specification. Based on this information, it was determined that the best way to address the issue of red card certification was to re-write the existing class specifications to more clearly and accurately describe and define the class controlling features. Allocation would be based on the preponderance of work performed at each level and the knowledge, skills, and ability needed to perform the work rather than red card certification level. This approach is consistent with classification procedures.

#### *Lead vs. supervisory responsibility*

Related to the confusion over red card certification was the misuse of lead and/or supervisory terminology. In the pds and during desk audits, staff consistently misapplied the terms "lead" and "supervise," and used them interchangeably to describe those assignments that required they provide short-term oversight to subordinate staff performing duties. Likewise, higher level technical staff assigned true lead level authority and responsibility indicated that they "supervised" staff. In most cases the lead and/or supervisory level of authority was not substantiated within the pd, specifically on the supervisory authority page, nor during follow conversations with managerial staff. In order to sort out and correctly define true lead and/or supervisory levels within the class series and accurately identify the level of authority in the pds, the analyst applied the criteria used by DOP to define lead and supervisory work:

Lead level is defined as having continuous responsibility over the employees while performing the same or comparable work of subordinates. Lead responsibilities include instructing, and training staff, assigning and checking work, setting task priorities, and preparing evaluations. Lead workers may also assist in appointing and promoting employees.

Supervisory is defined as an individual who has the authority to act or effectively recommend action in the interest of the public employer in any one of the following supervisory functions, if the exercise of that authority is not merely routine but also requires the exercise of independent judgment:

- a) employing, including hiring, transferring, laying off, or recalling
- b) discipline, including suspending, discharging, demoting or issuing written warning

- c) grievance adjudication, including responding to bargaining unit agreement.

True lead level work requires the continuous responsibility over employees, involves a variety of duties, and does not consider temporary assignments. Applying DOP's criteria revealed that the majority of the class controlling lead level work was performed at technical levels higher than the journey level. Further, since supervisory level authority goes well beyond providing oversight to staff during specific assignments, it was determined that most supervisory level authority occurred at the professional levels.

*Position grouping and new job classes*

During the initial phases of the study the question was raised whether or not the technicians who perform logistics and dispatcher services should remain within the Forest Technician series. Although incumbents in these positions perform duties related to and primarily in support of the fire preparedness and suppression, the question was whether or not the work was similar enough to meet the criteria for appropriate grouping. The state's classification plan provides for the grouping of positions into job classes when they are sufficiently similar with respect to duties and responsibilities, degree of supervision exercised and received, and entrance requirements so that: 1) the same title can be used to clearly identify each position; 2) the same minimum qualifications for initial appointment can be established for all positions; 3) the same rate of basic pay can be fairly applied to all positions; and 4) employees in a particular class are considered an appropriate group for purposes of layoff and recall. Job classes should be constructed as broadly as is feasible as long as the tests of similarity are met. The result of the grouping test indicated that for the dispatchers, the work was not sufficiently similar to support its current assignment to the Forest Technician series. Different minimum qualifications for initial appointment were established for the dispatchers and technicians. Further, dispatchers and technicians were not considered an appropriate group for purposes of layoff and recall. While it is true that many dispatchers have had prior Forest Technician experience, and both groups require red card training and certification under the Incident Command System, the training and required certification is different for each group. Since the tests of similarity failed, establishing the new job class series for the logistics/dispatchers was both appropriate and warranted.

Related to this was the question of whether or not the dispatchers who worked in the Area Offices performed at the same level as the dispatchers in the State Logistics Center (SLC). Because the scope of responsibility differs between both groups, one statewide and the other area wide, the dispatch organizational structures differ for the SLC and the Area Offices. The SLC organization requires dispatchers who are more specialized, each person responsible for a specific functional desk but has a working knowledge of all functional desks. Most SLC dispatchers serve as temporary leads during peak activities when an expanded fire in a geographical area exceeds the Area Office response capabilities. On the other hand, the organization for the Area Offices is structured to facilitate the initial attack response and as such, the dispatchers must have a more generalized knowledge with responsibility for all functional areas. Although the organization is different between groups, the body of knowledge is equal. In the event of expanded or project fires, Area Dispatchers may be temporarily assigned to the SLC and are expected to arrive for duty and "hit the ground running". In other words, although the organization and assignments may be somewhat different, both the Area and SLC Dispatchers in any duty station must have the same general body of knowledge to perform effectively at the journey level. Further, lead level duties assigned to most SLC journey level dispatchers are

short-term temporary assignments rather than a continuous responsibility, and do not meet the criteria for lead level work.

As part of this study, DOF requested that a new job class, Forest Technician V, be re-established to define and allocate advanced level technical work. This change would reverse the decision made in 1991 when DOF requested that Forest Technicians V be incorporated into the Forester I job class. At the time the rationale for the change was the perception that the incumbents were performing at a level higher than technical. This resulted in the technical series being collapsed and four Forest Technician V positions allocated to Forester I. The question of whether or not these limited specialized positions perform advanced technical rather than professional level work was determined using DOP's criteria:

Professional - work is creative, analytical, evaluative, interpretive, and requires a range and depth of specialized and theoretical knowledge in a field of science or learning characteristically acquired through education or training equivalent to a bachelor's degree or higher. The work requires the exercise of discretion, judgment, and personal responsibility for the application of an organized body of knowledge that is constantly studied to make new discoveries and interpretations, and to improve data, materials, and methods.

Technical - work is typically associated with and supportive of a professional or administrative field. It involves extensive practical knowledge gained through experience and/or specific training. Work in these occupations may involve substantial elements of the work of the professional and/or administrative field, but requires less than full knowledge of the field involved. Employees carry out tasks, methods, procedures, and computations that are covered by established precedents or guidelines and often require a high degree of skill, care, and precision.

DOF identified specific positions that perform duties which they believed should be considered advanced level technical work. The positions are the Air Attack Coordinator, Assistant Area Fire Management Officer, and Regional Training Coordinator. The Air Attack Coordinator manages all airborne tactical operations on wildland fire incidents, and provides air space and traffic management for all aircraft responding to the fire incidents. The Assistant Area Fire Management Officer oversees multiple fire program functions for a complex Area Office such as fire operations, fire prevention, logistics/dispatch, aviation resource management etc. The Regional Training Coordinator develops and implements a region-wide training program.

When applying DOP's criteria it is clear that the type of work performed by these positions is technical rather than professional. Consistent with technical positions, some knowledge of the field is required and the work requires the practical knowledge of terminology, methods, and practices rather than professional theoretical knowledge or professional competency in forestry science. While there may be some degree of evaluative skill necessary to perform the work, the nature of the work is not analytical or interpretive, and the incumbent's work or decision making is guided by well defined processes and procedures. Incumbents perform duties directly in support of operations or programs of the organization, rather than participating in the actual planning, development, and management of programs. In order to accurately allocate high level advanced technical positions, the Forest Technician V was re-established.

*Flexible staffing*

In order for DOF technicians to successfully perform at the journey level, extended training and experience outside of ICS training is required. The division requires and provides separate extensive in-house training with distinct, progressive levels or phases of training that begin at the entry level and continue up to the journey level. DOF has maintained since the onset of the study that because there is an extended training period, and in order to facilitate recruitment and retain a sufficient workforce, flexible staffing is both necessary and appropriate and should remain a management option at the entry level in the series. Analysis of the work and interviews with incumbents not only supported the use of flexibly staffed entry level positions, but also indicated a need for an intermediate/advanced training or developmental level. The criteria for establishing flexibly staffed positions is that the series must include trainee and journey levels and have a formalized training plan in place. Since flexible staffing is a management tool used to aid in recruitment and facilitate entry into an occupational field, creating a flexibly staffed job class was consistent with the overall goal to provide flexibility and stability to the division. Going into the study, flexible staffing was in place for the Forest Technician I/II. In order to allow maximum flexibility to the forestry programs, the Forest Technician I job class was revised and broadened to reflect the option of either hiring an incumbent as a trainee who, after successfully completing the flexible staff training, would be flexed up to the next level, or was hired as an entry level incumbent to perform basic, repetitive tasks and remains at the entry level. A body of work was identified which supported creating the entry level option.

DOP also allows for an advanced trainee/developmental level to accommodate those occupations that have an entry and journey level, and require extensive training periods. Since advancement to the journey level requires significant and extended training with distinct, progressive levels, it was appropriate and consistent with DOP's flexible staffing criterion that allows for an advanced trainee level to further the incumbent's training. This change supports DOF's ability to provide maximum flexibility for the forestry programs. The Forest Technician II was established as the developmental level which provided the intermediate training necessary to successfully perform as a crew member with limited responsibility. A body of work was identified which supported the establishment of two options within this job class.

Similar circumstances exist for those technical positions performing dispatch and logistics work. In order to perform this work specific intensive training is required. Again, since flexible staffing provides maximum flexibility to hiring managers and aids in recruitment, there is a trainee and journey level in the series, and there is a flex staff training plan in place with training and rating criteria, providing a flexible staffing option for specified dispatch positions is appropriate.

#### Class Title:

A class title should be the best descriptive title of the work. It is intended to concisely and accurately convey the kind and level of work performed and should be brief, easily recognized, gender neutral, and understood by potential applicants.

Considerable thought was given to the opinion held by some staff that the class title "Forest Technician" did not accurately describe their work. Some employees felt strongly that the title "Wildland Firefighters" would more accurately describe the duties they routinely perform. To support this claim, the point was raised that the term "wildland" rather than "forest" better described the scope of responsibility which includes rangeland, grasslands, and areas outside of forests, but excludes structural fire fighting. It should be noted that although the majority of

Forest Technicians at this time perform work in the Fire Management Program, technical forestry work does exist in the Resource Program. And, since all Forest Technicians provide support to professional Foresters, develop and exercise practical knowledge of forestry management methods and procedures to perform duties, and work in concert with the division's mission to manage, develop, and protection forest resources, it made sense to keep fire management and resource management technicians in one job class. After analyzing the technicians in both the Fire and Resources Programs, it was determined that incumbents in both programs meet the classification grouping criteria and that the Forest Technician job class should be broadly constructed to include technicians working in both programs. However, in an effort to consider staff concerns, remain consistent with the overall intent of the series, best describe the work, and remain consistent with classification grouping criteria, the Forest Technician job title was changed to Wildland Fire and Resource Technician.

The Wildland Fire Dispatcher title best describes the work performed by those technicians who receive, transmit, and document information critical to fire management, and submit and process requests to locate, allocate, and mobilize essential personnel, equipment etc. Staff performing these duties were removed from the former Forest Technician series and allocated to the newly established Wildland Fire Dispatcher job classes.

#### Minimum Qualifications:

The minimum qualifications established for a job class must relate to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the work and must not create an artificial barrier to employment of individuals in protected classes. Required training should be limited to the basic formal training that customarily prepares individuals for work in the field. Experience requirements are intended to ensure new employees can successfully perform the work after a period of orientation or familiarization. Required experience should be directly related to the actual duties of positions in the class and should not be equivalent to the work to be performed.

#### Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians:

DOP's Fire Management Program mirrors the National Interagency Incident Management System, and the minimum qualifications established for the technicians are narrow and reflect these national standards. In addition since the work is physically strenuous in nature, incumbents at all levels who are assigned firefighting work in the field, must be able to pass the Work Capacity Test at the "Arduous" level as defined in Federal Publication PMS 307, Work Capacity Test Administrator' Guide. This special requirement is also consistent with national standards.

At the entry level in the series fire or resource experience is not required. However, what is required is the ability to follow direction and undergo training in order to develop essential fundamental skills and learn appropriate procedures. At all levels in the series incumbents participate in rigorous training. For all but the entry level, minimum qualifications require training and a logical progression of work experience. To both meet the training needs and provide a healthy pool of candidates who can be reasonably expected to succeed in the positions, flexible staffing at the entry/developmental/journey levels is an administrative tool that helps to meet this goal. At all levels, candidates can enter the job and can be expected to successfully perform the work following the training period.

#### Wildland Fire Dispatchers:

Similar to the Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians, the Wildland Dispatchers must obtain specific red card training and certification under the Incident Command System. To enter the series six months of specific work experience is required, either fire fighting, supply ordering and receiving, or radio dispatching. All levels require in-house and ICS training, and require progressive dispatching experience throughout the series.

Class Code:

A Class Code is assigned based on the placement of the job class in the classification schematic of Occupational Groups and Job Families. Occupational Groups are made up of related Job Families and encompass relatively broad occupations, professions, or activities. Job Families are groups of job classes and class series that are related as to the nature of the work performed and typically have similar initial preparation for employment and career progression.

Examination of the job families reveals PH03 (Natural Resources and Forestry) and PJ02 (Fire Fighting and Inspection) as possible families for the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician series. PH03 Natural Resources and Forestry includes positions that advise on, administer, supervise, or perform work related to land, forest and natural resource management, leasing, development, production, conservation, and protection. PJ02 Fire Fighting and Inspection includes positions that advise on, administer, supervise or perform work involved in fighting fires and maintaining fire fighting equipment; inspecting for fire hazards, and developing plans, procedures, and standards concerned with fire prevention.

While many of the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician positions perform fire suppression or fire support duties, the job classes were written to include those positions that work in the Resources Program as well as other fire program related positions. It was determined that placing the series within a broader family that includes conservation and protection of Natural Resources and Forestry rather than just firefighting responsibilities serves to include all positions and better categorizes the series as a whole. Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians are assigned Class Codes PH0351, PH0352, PH0353, PH0354, and PH0355.

Examination of the job families reveals PD04 (Emergency Planning and Response) as a possible family for the Wildland Fire Dispatchers. This family includes classes of positions that administer, supervise, or perform work related to disaster planning, mitigation, response, and recovery and emergency service dispatch.

Comparing the nature of the work and the common methods of entering the occupation indicates the Wildland fire Dispatcher series is properly placed in the Emergency Planning and Response family. The classes are assigned class codes PD0470, PD0471, and PD0472.

AKPAY Code:

AKPAY Codes are assigned to job classes for use in computer systems which cannot use the six-digit Class Codes established with the revision of the Classification Outline on July 1, 2006. The AKPAY Code for new job classes are five-digit alpha-numeric codes beginning with K and numbered in sequence.

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians I-IV retain their assigned PCodes.  
The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician V is assigned AKPAY Codes K0011.



The Wildland Fire Dispatcher classes are assigned AKPAY Codes K0008, K0009, and K0010.

### Fair Labor Standards Act

The positions in this study are covered by the minimum wage and maximum hour provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as Amended (FLSA). While exemption from the provisions of the Act are determined based on the specific circumstances of an individual employee on a work-week basis, there are general aspects of the classes and their influence on the exemptions for employees in bona fide executive, professional, or administrative positions that can be addressed in general.

There are both salary and duty requirements which dictate FLSA exemption status. There are three categories used in analyzing the eligibility for overtime exemptions under the Fair Labor Standards Act: Executive, Administrative, and Professional. If a full-time employee receives a weekly salary of more than \$455, they have met the first test of exemption under all three categories:

**Executive Exemption Status:** in order to qualify an employee must be compensated on a salary or fee basis at a rate of not less than \$455 per week and the primary duty must be the management of a customarily recognized subdivision of the organization, including the customarily and regularly directing of work of two or more employees; and include authority to hire or fire other employees or make recommendations as to the change of status of other employees that are given particular weight. For those Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians and Wildland Fire Dispatchers who meet the \$455 per week test, there are only two employees who could possibly qualify for FLSA executive exemption (PCNs 109228 and 109506). However, while these two positions supervise staff and manage the work of staff, it is not for a customarily recognized subdivision of the organization, rather they are specific operations and functional areas. Therefore no Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians or Wildland Fire Dispatchers meet the FLSA executive criteria for overtime exemption.

**Administrative Exemption Status:** in order to qualify an employee must be compensated on a salary or fee basis at a rate of not less than \$455 per week and his or her primary duty must be the performance of office or non-manual work that is directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer that includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance. For those Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians and Wildland Fire Dispatchers who meet the \$455 per week test, none have office work related to management or business operations as a primary duty and do not meet the FLSA administrative criteria for overtime exemption.

**Professional Exemption Status:** in order to qualify an employee must be compensated on a salary or fee basis at a rate of not less than \$455 per week and an employee's primary duty must be work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning, which is customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction; or be work requiring invention, imagination originality or talent in a recognized field of artistic or creative endeavor. For those Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians and Wildland Fire Dispatchers who meet the \$455 per week test, the technical nature of the work does not require advanced knowledge customarily acquired through a bachelor's degree, rather it requires technical experience gained through training and on-the-job assignments. No Wildland Fire and Resource

Technicians or Wildland Fire Dispatchers meet the FLSA professional criteria for overtime exemption.

**Internal Alignment:**

The salary range of a job class is determined based on internal consistency within the state's pay plans, in accordance with merit principles, with the goal of providing fair and reasonable compensation for services rendered and maintaining the principle of "like pay for like work." In evaluating internal consistency, the difficulty, responsibility, knowledge, skills, and other characteristics of a job are compared with job classes of a similar nature, kind, and level in the same occupational group and job family or related job families.

**Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians**

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians perform a variety of duties in support of professional staff in the development, protection, implementation or maintenance of the Fire Management or Forest Resource Programs. DOF was asked to provide their recommendations for comparable job classes and submitted the following list for the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician internal alignment: Fish & Wildlife Technicians I-V, Natural Resource Technicians I-III, Natural Resource Specialist II, Aircraft Rescue and Firefighter Specialist I-IV, Emergency Management Assistant, Safety and Emergency Support Specialist, Emergency Management Specialists I-III, and Fire Training Specialist. Because the Natural Resource Specialists, Emergency Management Specialists, Fire Training Specialist, and Safety and Emergency Support Specialist are professional rather than technical job classes, they were considered not appropriate for purposes of internal alignment and therefore not included in the comparison. Although the number of remaining job classes considered appropriate for comparison was limited, they did provide a sufficient pool of job classes from which to compare and provided a reasonable point of reference.

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician series is included in the Natural Resource and Forestry family (PH03). This family includes classes of positions that advise on, administer, supervise or perform work related to land, forest, and natural resource management, development, production, conservation, and protection. This family is limited to professional and technical Natural Resources and Forestry job classes, and comparisons within this family were made to the following classes:

Range	Class
10	Natural Resource Technician I
12	Natural Resource Technician II
14	Natural Resource Technician III

Since the number of job classes within this family was limited, the list of comparable classes was broadened to ensure full compensatory consideration. Other job classes that share similarities in duties and characteristics were found within the same occupational group but within another family (PH01). This family includes classes of positions that advise on or administer professional and technical work with a focus on fisheries, wildlife, and habitat resources. Similar to Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians, most Fish and Wildlife Technician positions are seasonal, incumbents spend a great deal of time working in the field performing manual labor, the work requires the application of practical knowledge to accomplish duties, and the positions

perform a variety of work in support of resource related research or management programs. Comparisons within this family were made to the following classes:

Range	Class
07	Fish & Wildlife Technician I
09	Fish & Wildlife Technician II
11	Fish & Wildlife Technician III
13	Fish & Wildlife Technician IV
14	Fish & Wildlife Technician V

Job classes outside of the occupational group were also considered. Comparisons were made to the fire fighting and inspection family (PJ02) to ensure the fire fighting and emergency response aspects of the work were fully considered. Comparisons within these families were made to the following classes:

Range	Class
11	Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting Specialist I
12	Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting Specialist II
12	Emergency Management Assistant
13	Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting Specialist III
15	Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting Specialist IV

The standard practice for internal alignment is to establish the journey level range as the benchmark for range comparison. Once the journey level range has been established, a two range difference between levels above and below journey is typical. For those job series where only a one range difference exists between levels, it has been demonstrated that there is limited difference in the work between levels. With the Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians and the Wildland Fire Dispatchers, it has been clearly articulated and demonstrated that there are significant differences in duties, scope of responsibility, recommendations, decisions, commitments, and consequence of error at all levels to warrant the two range difference.

*Wildland Fire and Resource Technician Journey level baseline range:*

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician III is the full proficiency/journey level where the incumbent performs the full range of firefighting and resource related duties. Comparison to other journey level classes includes:

- Fish and Wildlife Technician III (range 11). This is the journey level where incumbents perform duties requiring the use of discretionary judgment. Positions require some knowledge of the fisheries or wildlife program, research practices, and procedures. Incumbents follow general guidelines and use discretion in adapting actions to specific situations and are expected to perform simple problem analysis and resolution.
- The Natural Resource Technician II is the second level (range 12) or journey level where incumbents regularly and independently perform the full range of technical duties, and through experience the incumbent has acquired a general knowledge of a specific natural resource management program and comprehension of the subject matter, procedures, guides, and references.

- Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist II (range 12) is the journey level in the series. At this level incumbents have gained considerable knowledge of aircraft rescue and firefighting and rescue techniques, practices and equipment through a comprehensive training program.
- Emergency Management Assistant is a single level job class (range 12) in which incumbents perform paraprofessional duties to assist professional staff in the coordination and development of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery planning for disasters and other emergencies and in the day-to-day operations of the State Emergency Coordination Center.

Similar to the Fish and Wildlife Technician III, the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician III applies programmatic knowledge and works independently. However the Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians III have greater decision making authority with a higher consequence of error.

The Natural Resource Technician II, Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist II, and Emergency Management Assistant job classes perform independently, exercise initiative, and discretion to plan, organize, and carry out assignments. Through training and experience incumbents gain sufficient knowledge and skill to make appropriate tactical and strategic decisions, and work out solutions to technical problems or unfamiliar situations. This is also the case for all Wildland Fire and Resource Technician III positions, including those assigned fire suppression duties. In addition, the Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians III closely align with Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist II. Both job classes require specific and extensive training, require significant programmatic knowledge, judgment, and discretion to make sound decisions, and the decision and actions of incumbents often have a high consequence of error. These similarities indicate the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician III should be aligned at range 12.

The next step was to align the developmental level Wildland Fire and Resource Technician II. Since there are few flexibly staffed job classes with developmental levels, locating comparable job classes was difficult at best. Due to this limitation, analyzing both the comparable entry and developmental classes together was appropriate. The following developmental and entry level job classes were used for comparison:

- The Fish and Wildlife Technician I (range 7) is the entry level. Incumbents work under close supervision to perform fundamental, unskilled, and simple field sampling tasks that are repetitive, manual in nature, and often involve heavy physical labor. While the work is primarily physical, little training is required to learn the job. Incumbents focus primarily on a single task and the consequence of error is relatively small.
- Fish and Wildlife Technician II (range 9) is the developmental level. Incumbents perform semi-skilled field work which requires fundamental knowledge of research procedures. Incumbents rely on the supervisor for instructions on all issues requiring discretionary judgment. Technicians may direct the work flow or scheduling of other crew members in small crews.
- Natural Resource Technician I (range 10) is the entry level of the series. Incumbents receive on- the-job training and perform recurring, well-defined tasks and assignments are subject to specific instructions. Positions included in this job class perform a broad

mix of duties within each level. The Natural Resource Technicians I who work in parks perform a variety of outdoor work that requires physical labor, contact with the public, maintenance of the facilities, and learns to conduct park presentations. Other NRT Technicians perform duties that typically involve informing the public of the programs available through DNR, gathering scientific data, or learning to interpret and maintain data.

- The Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist I (range 11) is the entry/trainee level of the series. Incumbents receive extensive U.S. Air Force classroom and on-the-job training in crash/rescue and firefighting techniques and practices. Positions learn to analyze potentially dangerous situations, make sound decisions quickly, perform physically demanding work, and work within safely, efficiently, and effectively within very hazardous conditions.

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician I is the entry/trainee level. The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician I's scope of responsibility is narrow and the incumbent works with little independence. However, because of the nature of the work and the inherent danger in the fire suppression work, extensive training is required beginning at this level. As a trainee, the variety of knowledge and skills learned and the consequence of error is beyond that which exists for the Fish and Wildlife Technician. This indicates the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician I should be aligned higher than range 7.

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician II is the intermediate training level where incumbents continue training in a developmental capacity with increased responsibility for performing a variety of technical assignments. The duties are generally well defined, repetitive tasks that require limited substantive judgment and response. While the technician makes occasional choices or minor modifications to methods, the scope and procedures are well defined and the work or performance is generally reviewed or evaluated following completion. For fire suppression positions, incumbents are assigned to lead small crews in response to fires of low complexity as part of the training, and serve as Incident Commander who are responsible for making decisions and directing crews. Compared to the Fish and Wildlife Technicians, some of the knowledge base and skill level appears to be the same for the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician II. However a closer look at the work between both job classes indicates differences exist between them. When compared, the Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians II perform a greater variety, complexity, and scope of duties, and the decision making and recommendations are more consistent, significant, and often have a higher consequence of error. In addition, both classroom and on-the-job extensive, intensive training is ongoing and required of the incumbents. These differences support a range assignment higher than developmental level Fish and Wildlife Technician II range 9.

The Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist I/II/III internal alignment was set at ranges 11, 12, and 13 for the trainee, journey, and advanced levels respectively. As stated, the standard classification practice is for a two range differences between levels. In the case of the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialists, the unusual alignment was set because of the brief training period required and the fact that the work performed at each level does not differ substantially. Had there been a substantial difference between the journey and entry level, there would have been a 2 range differential. Keeping this in mind, it is appropriate to consider the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialists in the internal alignment at the journey level but not the entry level.

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician II developmental level compares most favorably to the Natural Resource Technician I entry/trainee level. Although firefighting duties are not present in the Natural Resource Technician's work, the general scope and variety of duties, complexity, guidelines, and supervision received is comparable. At this level judgment and decision making requires a practical knowledge of basic management or resources concepts, practices, methods, and techniques. Procedures for performing duties are established and the incumbent works in strict adherence to guidelines, referring the more unusual, difficult, or complex situations to the lead technician or supervisor. Training, experience, scope of responsibility, and complexity of assignments are increased for the purpose of developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform at the journey level. Looking at the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician II job class as a whole, not focusing solely on firefighting aspects but including positions and other work performed in support of the Fire Management and Resource Programs, the similarities of these characteristics are consistent between both groups. This supports that the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician II should be assigned at the range 10. Applying the two range difference indicates the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician I should be assigned at the range 8.

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician IV is the lead level. Comparison to other lead level job classes includes:

- The Fish and Wildlife Technician IV (range 13) initiates, leads, and performs advanced technical work. The incumbent may function as a technical assistant to an area management biologist, or be responsible for a permanent field facility, research station, or laboratory. Incumbents may direct the work of lower level technicians and perform ongoing functions of field logistics, supply and personnel/payroll matters. Assignments are directed toward a specific goal, but a high degree of discretion and creativity is exercised in determining methods, techniques, and equipment used to achieve the goal. Incumbents make technical recommendations on procedural aspects of research and management projects.
- Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist III (range 13) is the lead/advanced level class in which incumbents act as the aircraft rescue and firefighting crew chief on a shift, directing and participating in the work of assigned firefighters.

For all lead level job classes the work is characterized by the responsibility for providing technical direction and oversight to staff, the authority to assign work, set task priorities, and evaluate work quality and performance. Incumbents have overall programmatic knowledge and experience sufficient to interpret and apply program principles and concepts, and lead staff in the execution of work that supports program objectives. In addition to these responsibilities, the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician IV is also tasked with ensuring that the operation is successfully executed by staff, and has the regular and recurring responsibility for a program operation or work projects. The responsibilities go beyond providing oversight to staff since they are in charge of assigned program operations. The assignments are most often complex, and the nature and scope of recommendations for decision making most often have a high consequence of error. This indicates the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician IV should be aligned higher than the range 13 lead level Fish and Wildlife Technician IV. When applying the

two range differential between journey and lead levels, the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician IV is appropriately assigned to range 14.

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technician V is the advanced/specialist level. Comparison to other advanced or specialist level job classes includes:

- Fish and Wildlife Technician V (range 14) is the highest level in the Fish and Wildlife Technician series and positions may serve as the technical program manager of a geographic or programmatic segment of a research or management project. As senior technical specialists, incumbents are allowed significant discretion in achieving objectives directed toward goals and assignments which require considerable knowledge of principles and practices of fisheries, wildlife and their habitat, and in some positions, thorough knowledge of one or more species of large mammals and their habits and habitat.
- The Natural Resource Technician III is the advanced level (range 14) where incumbents are assigned work that requires detailed knowledge of a specific natural resource management program, procedures, guides and involves unusual or sensitive technical matters.
- Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist IV (range 15) is the Assistant Fire Chief/Shift Supervisor class, participating in the administration, planning and training activities with the Base Fire Chief. During the assigned shift, incumbents are in immediate charge of aircraft rescue and firefighting until relieved by the Base Fire Chief.

Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians V are specialists who apply unique and advanced knowledge, skills, and experience to coordinate and perform specialized duties that directly impact fire program support activities or tactical suppression response. The primary focus of positions at this level is to be the most knowledgeable source of information and direction for a specialized technical area, and the work requires highly technical or specialized knowledge and skill to perform assignments that are most difficult or exceptional. Similar to the Aircraft Rescue and Fire Specialist IV who serves as Assistant Fire Chief, the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician V serves as Assistant Area Fire Manager for complex areas. The Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians V have a wide scope of responsibility for large geographic areas, work with multiple agencies to coordinate, direct, and manage fire response, have a greater scope of decision making and commitment authority and are responsible for controlling, coordinating, and managing multiple operation functions and resources through subordinate lead level Technicians. While incumbents may not have the scope of responsibility and authority as the supervisor (Forester II), the judgment, discretion, and level of authority exercised is beyond that found at the advanced level Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resource Technicians and is similar to the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist IV. This indicates the Wildland Fire and Resource Technician V should be aligned with the range 15 Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Specialist IV.

#### Wildland Fire Dispatchers

DOF was asked to provide their recommendations for comparable job classes and submitted the following list for the Wildland Fire Dispatcher internal alignment: Radio Dispatchers I-III, Emergency Management Assistant, Emergency Management Specialist I-III, and AMHS Dispatch Supervisor. With the exception of the Emergency Management Specialists, these same

job classes were identified as comparables by the analyst. Because the Emergency Management Specialists are professional rather than technical job classes, they were considered not appropriate for purposes of internal alignment and therefore not included in the comparison. No other state job classes were identified as appropriate for internal alignment comparison and the number of job classes available for this exercise was limited.

The Wildland Fire Dispatcher series is included in the Emergency Planning and Response family (PD04). This family includes classes of positions that administer, supervise, or perform work related to disaster planning, mitigation, response, and recovery and emergency service dispatch. Comparisons were limited to this family and included the following classes:

Range	Class
11	Radio Dispatcher I
12	Radio Dispatcher II
12	Emergency Management Assistant
13	Radio Dispatcher III

*Wildland Fire and Resource Technician Journey level baseline range:*

Due to the nature of the work, the Radio Dispatchers provided a very good point of reference from which to compare. Radio Dispatchers transmit, receive, evaluate and relay information concerning law enforcement activities and public safety to, from, and between Department of Public Safety units, other State agencies, emergency units, law enforcement agencies, and the public by means of telephone, radio-telephone, radio, and teletype. The level of Radio Dispatcher varies by supervisory control, guidelines, degree of independence, and complexity factors. Although the Radio Dispatcher I and II are not defined as entry or journey in the class specifications, the factors are evaluated and positions are assigned to a dispatch level depending on the degree to which they meet requirements. Since the Radio Dispatcher III is identified in the class specifications as the lead level, for purposes of internal alignment, the Radio Dispatcher II will be used to represent the journey level in the series.

The Radio Dispatcher II is regularly and on a recurring basis assigned to work alone on shifts with no supervisor or lead available. Guidelines consist of written and oral instructions and procedures which are applicable to a wide range of situations. Significant judgment is required to choose which guide applies to specific situations and adapt or improvise procedures to unique situations. Although many of the duties the Radio Dispatchers perform are not highly difficult in themselves, it is the necessity for doing or considering several things at once that add to the difficulty. The Radio Dispatcher II is characterized by the necessity to consider many variables which add to the complexity of the job. The journey level dispatcher monitors radio frequencies of other agencies and dispatches personnel or mobile units from these agencies without approval if there are situations which are potential law enforcement or safety risks.

The Wildland Fire Dispatcher II is the full proficiency/journey level where the incumbent performs the full range of dispatch and logistical duties. Similar to the Radio Dispatcher II, the Wildland Fire Dispatcher II independently performs the full range of duties while ensuring compliance with standard methods, established contracts, rules, policies, procedures and guidelines. Incumbents routinely take action or make decisions without prior approval from higher level staff. However, the work of the Wildland Fire Dispatcher II goes beyond receiving,



and relaying information for the purpose of dispatching units. The Wildland Fire Dispatcher II initiates the response for appropriate fire resources based on the nature and location of the reported fire, tracks ongoing incidents, maintains radio contact with fire suppression personnel, and must stay abreast of current fire information to issue updates to field locations. In order to respond to fire emergencies, incumbents must have and apply knowledge of equipment rates, types, and capabilities. Positions also maintain fire management data, such as weather information, status of fire suppression resources, fire situation information, and do so as reported to the dispatch office. Incumbents keep Incident Commanders up to date of conditions, interact and communicate with Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians and overhead personnel on scene, pilots and aerial observers, co-workers in the dispatch office, administrative staff, supervisors, local fire department and law enforcement personnel, adjacent dispatch offices and the public. Incumbents often respond to and monitor several fires at one time. Wildland Fire Dispatchers apply guidelines, and references go beyond instruction and include state and federal policies, contracts, professional standards, as well as policies, and procedures that are regularly used to perform logistics and dispatch duties. Wildland Fire Dispatchers, similar to the Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians, must progress through extensive classroom and on-the-job training at both the entry and journey levels. Although the nature of the work is similar to the Radio Dispatchers in that both job classes are responsible for responding to emergencies, the variety and complexity of the work, the guidelines used for work performance, and the scope of the work indicates the journey level Wildland Fire Dispatcher II should be placed at range 13, one range higher than the journey level Radio Dispatcher II.

In order to remain consistent with DOP's standard practice of the two range difference between levels, the Wildland Fire Dispatcher I entry level will be placed at range 11 and the lead level Wildland Fire Dispatcher III at range 15.

One final point on the Wildland Fire Dispatchers should be addressed. While the Wildland Fire Dispatcher positions are often filled with former Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians, the work between both series is related but different. Wildland Fire Dispatchers must be able to multi-task, coordinate the dispatch of resources for multiple fires occurring at the same time, be constantly aware of resource availability, and track the inventory to meet the area wide or statewide incident management needs and objectives. In addition to dispatch and logistics knowledge, the Wildland Fire Dispatchers must also have some technical knowledge of the concepts, principles and practices of fire suppression response and techniques, and those factors which influence fire behavior. This comprehensive knowledge and the necessity to multi-task support the higher ranges assigned to the Wildland Fire Dispatchers.

**Conclusions:**

Changing the title from Forest Technician to Wildland Fire and Resource Technician more accurately describes the work. The extended training requirements and differences in difficulty, independence, and organizational responsibility support creating Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians I/II/III (flexed), IV, and V. The differences between the Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians and Wildland Fire Dispatchers support creating a separate job class, Wildland Fire Dispatchers I/II (flexed), and III.

The Wildland Fire and Resource Technicians I-V are assigned salary ranges 8,10,12,14, and 15 respectively. The Wildland Fire Dispatchers are assigned salary ranges 11, 13, and 15 respectively.

The new classes are effective February 16, 2007.

Attachments:

Final class specifications

cc: Chris Maisch, Director  
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Department of Natural Resources

Nico Bus, Director  
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Department of Natural Resources

Dean Brown, Deputy Director  
Division of Forestry  
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Lex McKenzie, Administrative Manager  
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Department of Natural Resources

Management Services – Resources Group

Employee Services

Employee Records (original PD, FLSA worksheet & copy of memo)