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Date: July 8, 2011

Route To:

Subject: Occupational Series for Fire Management Positions

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

This memorandum rescinds memorandum dated May 29, 2009, subject: *Interagency/Forest Service Fire Program Management and Fire Management Positions*; and memorandum dated November 5, 2008, subject: *401 Series for Fire Management Specialist*.

In March 2011, Forest Service Human Resource Management (HRM) leadership, Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) leadership, and representatives from the National Federation of Federal Employees - Forest Service Council (NFFE-FSC) met in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to develop an organizational template that provides for firefighter safety and workforce succession goals while maintaining compliance with the Office of Personnel Management's regulatory guidance. The outcome of the meeting was a long-term strategy to pursue the creation of a unique occupational series for wildland fire management that is consistent with the action item in the agency's Cultural Transformation Plan. However, the creation of a new occupational series is likely to require significant effort and time. As such, an interim strategy is being developed that classifies fire management positions into several different occupational series that will enable FAM to fill vacancies in the interim period.

The Forest Service is developing an interim strategy to resolve a number of on-going issues the agency has been experiencing with our previous practice of using the GS-0462 and GS-0401 occupational series for the majority of FAM managerial positions. The key points of this interim strategy are:

- Firefighting and dispatch positions in grades GS-02 through GS-08 will continue to be classified in the GS-0462 Forestry Technician series.
- Fuels Specialist positions under Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) and Forest Service-Fire Program Management (FS-FPM) at the GS-09 and GS-11 have been determined to be appropriately classified in the GS-0401 series with one exception (see enclosure), and four GS-0401 National Standard Position Descriptions (NSPD) will be reinstated for these four positions.



- Fire management positions at the GS-09 and above grade levels that are primarily administrative and managerial in nature are in the process of being reclassified in the GS-0301, Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series. New NSPDs for fire program manager positions are being developed and will be available for use once they are finalized with USDA and approved for firefighter retirement coverage. Until those GS-0301 series NSPDs become available, positions at the GS-11 and below level (see enclosure) may continue to be filled using the existing GS-0462 series NSPDs. The use of the GS-0462 series for GS-12 positions is no longer authorized.

We value your support and patience as we work through this process. I want to assure all affected employees that the implementation of this interim occupational series is expected to have minimal impact (if any) on your ability to perform as firefighters, dispatchers, fire program managers, and specialists; and, in fact, will resolve several difficulties the agency has been experiencing with filling critical vacancies. A communications plan for current status and future direction for use of the GS-0301 series is being developed and will be released as soon as it is available. In addition, you will also be notified when the interim GS-0301 series position descriptions have been approved, and on the progress towards the establishment of a new wildland fire management series.

If you have any questions, please contact Tom Harbour (FAM) at 202-205-1483, or Ron Banegas (HRM) at 505-563-9430.

/s/ **THOMAS L. TIDWELL**
THOMAS L. TIDWELL
Chief

Enclosure

U.S. Forest Service
Information Sheet
May 2011

1. The Forest Service Standard Position Description Crosswalk for IFPM and FS-FPM will be updated to reflect the re-instatement of the following NSPDs for Fuels Specialist positions at the unit and sub-unit levels:
 - IFPM: GS-0401-11 PFFS-High (FS2016)
 - IFPM: GS-0401-09 PFFS-Moderate (FS2015)
 - FS-FPM: GS-0401-11 DFPPM (FS0274)
 - FS-FPM: GS-0401-09 DFAFM (FS0273)

The IFPM/FS-FPM Crosswalk is located at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/index.html>

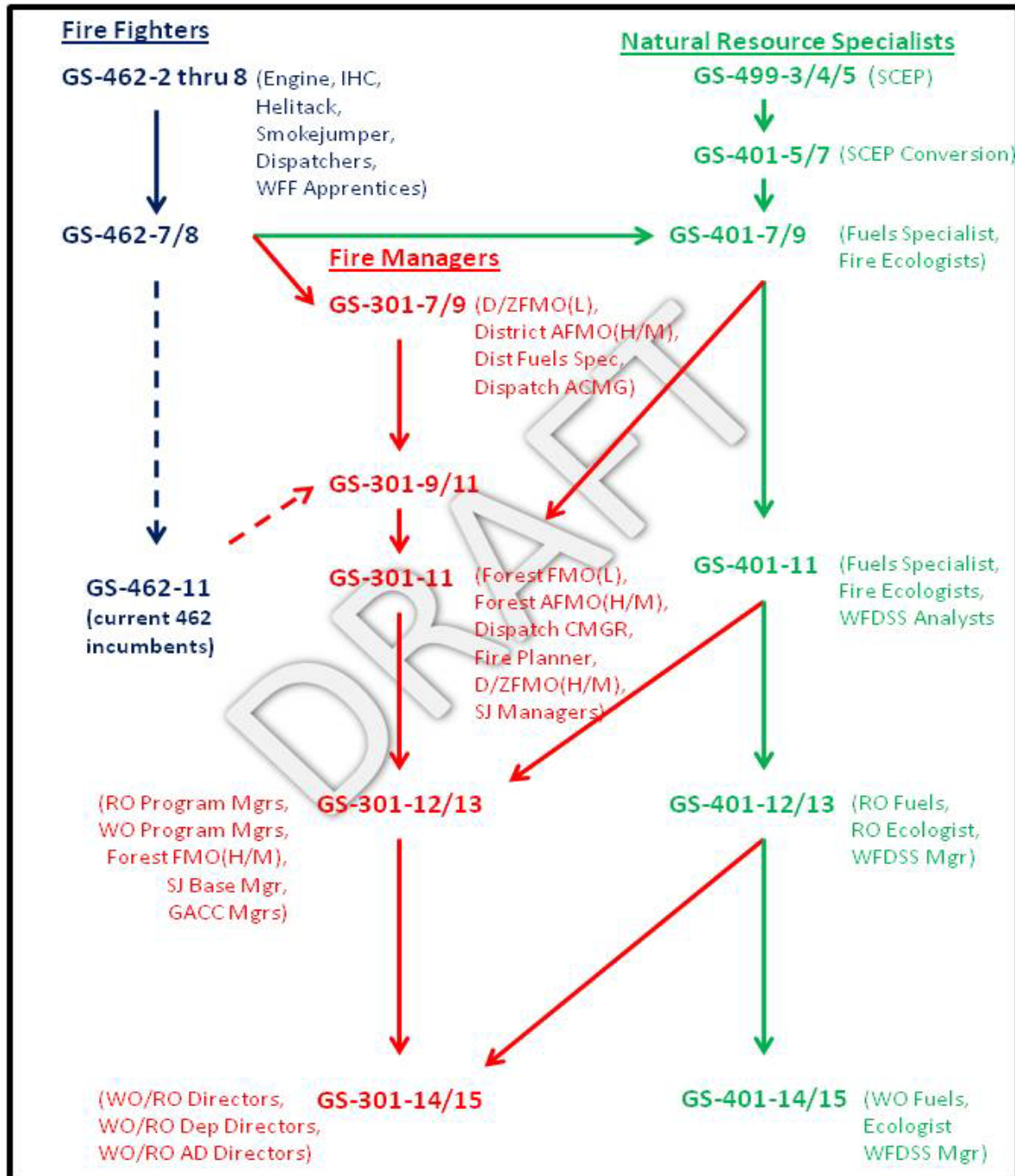
In addition, the IFPM and FS-FPM Implementation Plans will be updated to reflect the following:

- a. The requirement for GS-0462 incumbents in these IFPM and FS-FPM positions to meet the positive education requirement by a certain deadline will not apply, and will not be required as a condition of employment as incumbents may remain in their current GS-0462 series position descriptions (see #2 and #3 for additional information).
 - b. The IFPM and FS-FPM requirement to meet NWCG qualification and training requirements by their respective implementation deadlines is still valid.
2. Forest or District level Fuels Specialist positions (PFFS, DFPPM, or DFAFM) that were filled using a GS-0462 NSPD following issuance of the Nov 5, 2008 memo that would otherwise have been filled in the 0401-series:
 - If the current GS-0462 incumbent possesses the positive education requirements and specialized experience for the GS-0401 series they may be non-competitively re-assigned into the GS-0401 series NSPD at the same grade level.
 - If the current GS-0462 incumbent does not possess the positive education requirements and specialized experience for the GS-0401 series they may remain in their GS-0462 position. However, supervisors/managers must ensure that professional duties requiring knowledge that can only come from positive education in a natural resource, biological, or agricultural sciences are appropriately assigned to a GS-0401 position in their organization.
 - If/when the GS-0462 position becomes vacant the position should be filled using the appropriate GS-0401 NSPD.
 - Managers of the FS-FPM GS-09 District Fuels Specialists (DFAFM) will have the flexibility to select between the GS-0462 and 0401 series when filling future vacancies depending on the classification of work that is performed (see #3 below, and the IFPM/FS-FPM Crosswalk and Implementation Plans for additional information). However, the occupational series must be based on the unit's organizational structure, and the work to be performed. Any changes in the series must be documented on the unit's organization chart approved by the Forest Supervisor.

3. GS-09 District Fuels Specialist (DFAFM) positions in FS-FPM that have historically been classified in the GS-0462-series may continue to be filled in the Forestry Technician series, provided:
 - Managers have ensured that professional duties requiring knowledge that can only come from positive education in a natural resource, biological, or agricultural sciences are appropriately assigned to a GS-0401 position in their organization (refer to the IFPM/FS-FPM Crosswalk for more information regarding series and NSPD's for District Fuels Specialists).
4. Fire Planners and Fire Ecologist positions that have been historically classified in the GS-0401 series and were not affected by 2009 Chief's memo will continue to be filled in the GS-0401-series.
5. GS-11 District/Zone FMO or Forest AFMO, and GS-09 District AFMO positions will continue to be filled using the existing GS-0462 series Position Descriptions until FAM and HRM can develop the GS-0301 NSPDs and develop a transition plan into the new series.
6. GS-12 FAM positions will no longer be classified in the GS-0462-series. All GS-0462 incumbents at the GS-12 grade level may remain in their current position. All vacant positions (current and future) must be filled in a series that is authorized for the GS-12 grade level.
 - Currently FAM and HRM are in the process of developing NSPDs in the Administrative/Managerial series for Fire Management Officers, GACC Dispatch Managers, and Smokejumper Base Managers. Status on the development of these NSPD's will be forthcoming.
 - In the interim, HRM recommends using temporary promotions or detail assignments to fill critical GS-12 vacancies.
 - Regional Fire Directors have been in close communication with the Washington Office FAM Staff, and efforts to resolve this issue are on-going.
7. GS-13 Forest Fire Management Officers (career ladder GS-12/13) may continue to be filled in the GS-0401 occupational series.
 - However, FAM and HRM are currently working on developing GS-0301 NSPDs that more appropriately describes the managerial duties and knowledge requirements for Fire Management Officers.
 - Further guidance for use of the GS-0301 series for FMO positions will be forthcoming when it is approved by the Department and OPM.
8. The Forest Service is aware of the recent difficulties in filling GS-0401-series positions at Regional, GACC and WO levels, and will be working with our interagency partners to re-examine the GS-0401 Supplemental Qualification Standards to propose changes to the Specialized Experience requirements for GS-11 and above positions.

FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY – SUBJECT TO CHANGE. The below draft Template shows the proposed career pathways for FAM positions using the GS-0462/0301/0401 occupational series. This plan was developed by HRM, FAM, and NFFE-FSC and has been approved by the Forest Service Executive Leadership Team. It still requires approval by USDA and OPM.

Diagram 1 – Occupational Series Template for FAM



6/1/2011 DRAFT

The above draft Template shows the proposed career pathways for FAM positions using the GS-0462/0301/0401 occupational series. This plan was developed by HRM, FAM, and NFFE-FSC and has been approved by the Forest Service Executive Leadership Team. It still requires approval by USDA and OPM and is subject to change.

The solid arrows show the normal career progression between grades and occupational series. These classifications are consistent with the duties of the positions and OPM Qualification Standards requirements for the GS-0462, GS-0301, and GS-0401 occupational series. With full implementation, the GS-0462 series will not be used beyond GS-09 (with rare exceptions).

The normal career pathway will be for employees entering management positions to move from the GS-0462 to the GS-0301 series at the GS-07, GS-08 or GS-09 level; or employees may move from the GS-0401 to the GS-0301 series at any grade level above GS-07. The dotted lines leading to the GS-0462-11 and over to the GS-0301-09/11 position reflect a possible career pathway, but one that is anticipated to be unusual.

This Template shows career pathways with full implementation; it does not address transition issues from our current state to the full implementation state. See the Information Sheet for more information on transition issues. In addition, it does not show all the positions within the FAM organization. Additional positions that exist at the Forest, Region, or Washington Office level are to be classified in the appropriate occupational series based on the duties of these positions.