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Date: May 29, 2009

Route To:

Subject: Interagency/Forest Service Fire Program Management and Fire Management Positions

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

This letter provides further direction and clarification regarding Forest Service actions to address the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Management Alert concerning the use of the 401 series for fire management. Please reference the November 5, 2008, letter from Hank Kashdan, then Deputy Chief for Business Operations, regarding previous direction. This letter of direction is interim and adds further details to the November 5, 2008, memo until a longer term solution is developed.

The Forest Service will be working with the Department to evaluate the options of establishing two new job series to describe wildland fire management work. One series would be a technical wildland fire management series. The technical series would blend the knowledge, skills and abilities required of modern wildland fire suppression and natural resource management. The second series would be a professional wildland fire management series that provides leadership and management for wildland fire management programs in a natural resource organization. These job series would replace the existing 462 and 401 series currently in use for fire positions within the Agency. Human Capital Management (HCM), in collaboration with Fire and Aviation Management (F&AM) and our interagency partners, will be establishing a team to pursue this effort in the near future. Meanwhile, the Forest Service will continue to use the 401 and 462 series for all fire management positions, and will respond to the OIG Management Alert regarding whether the 401, as currently described, meets the Agency's need for qualified fire leadership.

To comply with Office of Personnel Management direction we will not concurrently advertise 401 and 462 series. The issue for the Forest Service originated from the transition of fire leadership positions moving from 462 and other series to 401. Accordingly, the Forest Service will establish future fire management leadership positions through grade GS-12 in the 462 job series until we determine the appropriate fire leadership series. Grades GS-13 and above positions will be classified in the 401 series. Effective immediately, we will discontinue concurrent advertisement of these two series. Additionally, all agreements and/or processes involved with directing or instructing affected employees from the 462 series to the 401 series are no longer required during this interim period. Enclosed is an information sheet which outlines the actions that will be in place during this period.

The Forest Service will also develop a succession plan that will support both the technical and professional job series. Building on both Interagency and Forest Service Fire Program Management (IFPM/FS-FPM) the Agency needs to clearly identify the training, formal



education, qualifications and work experience necessary to advance in the wildland fire management organization. It is critical for the Agency to provide its employees with the knowledge and opportunity to succeed in their individual careers. It is also critical for employees to respond to specific agency needs.

I endorse the goals of both the IFPM/FS-FPM direction. We can not meet future mission requirements without it. This will be a combined effort of F&AM leadership with support from senior line officers, HCM, and in collaboration with our interagency partners.

We appreciate your patience as we continue to address these challenges and develop actions that will ensure a viable and sustainable fire management workforce.

If you have any questions, please contact Tom Harbour (F&AM) at (202) 205-1483 or Arthur Gonzales (HCM) at (505) 563-9539.

/s/ Abigail R. Kimbell

ABIGAIL R. KIMBELL
Chief

Enclosure

**U.S. Forest Service
Information Sheet
401/462 Issue Resolution for IG Management Alert**

The following actions will be in place during this interim period referenced by the Chief's memo (6130/6150/5100 Interagency/FS Fire Program Management and Fire Management Positions). These are short-term measures needed to fill vacant positions and maintain agency operations while dedicated wildland fire management classification series are developed.

1. The requirement to meet 401 education requirements by October 1, 2010 is suspended. No incumbents in 462, other Interagency, or FS Fire Program Management (IFPM) positions targeted for placement in the 401 series will be removed from their 462 positions for failure to meet 401 requirements.
2. The portion of the "IFPM Conditions of Employment" agreement requiring education qualifications for the 401 series is hereby not required as a condition of employment. The requirement to meet NWCG qualifications by 10/1/2010 is still valid.
3. Fire Planner and Fire Ecologist positions that have historically been classified in the 401 series will continue to be filled in the 401 series.
4. Referral lists for 401 and companion 462 lists for the following positions will be cancelled and re-issued. All announcements for the positions listed below, with the exception of Fire Planner and Fire Ecologist positions as noted in number 3, will be closed and re-issued as 462 only. Re-advertisement of 462 positions is necessary because the target position is no longer a 401. As IFPM positions currently classified as 401 positions become vacant, they will be filled consistent with these re-issued announcements.
 - a. All IFPM and FSFPM positions at GS-12 and below will be re-issued as 462 positions, including FMO, AFMO, DFMO, DAFMO and Prescribed Fire/Fuel positions.
 - b. All Dispatch positions at the GS-12 and below, including Forest/Unit Center Manager and Assistant Manager positions, will be re-issued as 462 positions.
5. Employees in career-ladder 401 positions not at the target grade level may be promoted to the target grade when qualified and eligible.
6. Employees in 462 positions selected for conversion to 401 career-ladder positions will be eligible for career-ladder promotions within the 462 series. If they meet the requirements for the 401 position prior to October 1, 2010, they will become eligible for career-ladder promotions in the GS-401 series.
7. Employees that were selected as GS-462-12, Forest Fire Management Officer (FMO) with target potential to the GS-401-13 will remain in the GS-462-12 positions and will only be promoted to the GS-401-13, when qualified and eligible.
8. Vacancy announcements for GS-462-12, Forest FMO with target potential to the GS-401-13 will be cancelled. A new announcement will be issued for Forest FMO as a GS-401-12/13.