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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BENCHMARK POSITION DESCRIPTION

Rangeland Management Specialist GS-454-12

Introduction

The incumbent serves as a senior principal advisor for the rangeland ecology and management program for one or more parks. The incumbent is involved primarily in rangeland management, planning, administration, restoration, monitoring, and evaluation required to meet park objectives.

Major Duties (80-100%)

Directs an intricate program of rangeland ecology and other natural resource activities that involve sensitive and complex issues that may impact a wide variety of park issues.

Represents the superintendent when working with others on rangeland ecology matters. Develops and maintains liaisons and effective working relations with local ranchers, resources managers, cooperating agencies, local communities, interest groups, and the public to integrate the program with other resources programs and to achieve ecosystem based management goals and objectives. Attends management and professional conferences and other events for the purpose of exchanging information, presenting technical and policy information, and advancing advocacy for park stewardship.

Develops and prepares major portions of the resources management plan and specific action plans pertaining to the ecological management of rangelands based on an inventory of the resources by using maps, aerial photography, satellite imagery, and other data to carry out park and agency rangeland ecology and management goals.

Represents park on NPS regional task groups or similar organizations. Makes presentations in the parks, in public gatherings, and at professional meetings.

Assists resources management staff in parks, centers, and support offices by providing direct professional and programmatic advice and support.

Carries out program management duties by developing work plans and schedules, scopes of work, cost estimates, and proposals and/or grants to justify funding requests and accomplish goals. May administer and track project funds and prepare accomplishment reports, as needed. Maintains awareness of applicable funding sources within NPS and outside.

Develops and implements long range plans for the inventory, evaluation, documentation, preservation, research and interpretation of rangeland ecology and other natural resources within the appropriate mission, objectives and resources contexts.

Develops guidelines to deal with the more complex or unusual problems, or with novel, undeveloped or controversial aspects of rangeland ecology and other natural resources and their management.

Coordinates park rangeland resources strategies and programs with those on adjacent lands for the purposes of achieving broad ecosystem protection strategies and preventing human impacts.

Develops standards and guides on management practices and specifications for rangelands. Correlates range and grazing practice specifications with other area resources specialists and develops, revises, and amends park unit technical guides. The ecologist interprets higher-level agency policies and directives, and develops supplemental guidance as necessary.

The rangeland ecologist formulates and directs the monitoring program and compiles all monitoring data and other resources information to produce an evaluation document that is the basis for resources management decisions and agreements. These studies include condition and trend, utilization, actual use, climatological, and other pertinent aspects of the rangeland resources and ecosystem, native plant communities, and/or pastures. Develops and carries out statistically valid data collection protocols using the latest technology. Performs or directs data entry and carries out quality control checks on data entry performed by subordinate staff.

Monitors use on all grazing allotments to ensure that turnout, removal, numbers of stock, and pasture moves are in compliance with permits. Advises management regarding concerns and violations and revises or alters permits necessary. Works closely with each permittee to ensure that management systems are accomplishing stated goals. Collects and keeps current actual use records on animal months. Contacts permittees on general inquiries such as project maintenance and conditions. Prepares special use permits and develops and maintains cooperative agreements with other agencies. Calculates grazing fees.

Negotiates cooperative and interagency agreements and other cooperative instruments needed to effectively carry out resource stewardship goals.

Identifies research needs, prepares requests for research proposals or statements of work, and provides oversight for research projects. Serves as a Contracting Officer's Technical Representative for projects conducted through contracts, interagency and cooperative agreements.

Based on results of inventories, in depth studies, and monitoring, the incumbent develops and conducts scientifically credible protection, mitigation, and restoration projects to prevent resource damage, to restore and/or maintain the integrity of rangeland resources, and to minimize human activities that impact resources.

Prepares management and scientific reports regarding the results of protection, mitigation, restoration, inventory, monitoring, and research activities. Summarizes new and conventional information for use by scientists, managers, park staff, ranchers, cooperators, and partners.

Incorporates appropriate Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology into job to provide comprehensive and scientifically sound answers to inquiries from managers and others. Utilizes

automatic methods of data collection, analysis or illustration. Inputs data into digital form and uses computer applications for data analysis, manipulation, and presentation.

Advises livestock operators and, as applicable, tribal council members and Indian landowners on principles of rangeland ecology and management and the laws, regulations, and policies governing management of NPS lands, i.e., rental, value of grazing privileges, special use permit conditions, appropriate range improvements, and long-term plans for use of rangeland resources.

Serves as the principal contact and negotiator for rangeland resources including consultation, coordination, and cooperation with all affected public land interests including representatives of both the livestock industry and the environmental/conservation community.

Prepares environmental assessments (EA) related to park projects in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Evaluates EAs and environmental impact statements prepared by other federal agencies for projects that may effect rangeland resources.

Works closely with park education staff to incorporate new information into park and partner education programs.

Prepares and maintains plant specimens for rangeland in the park herbarium. Maintains records on the collection.

Acquires and maintains equipment and supplies necessary to conduct field activities.

May supervise seasonal, temporary, permanent, VIP, and other personnel, but less than 25% of the time.

Factor 1. Knowledge Required by the Position Level 1-7; 1250 points

Knowledge of NPS planning and management requirements and guidelines so that resources plans result in programs that provide adequate long-term protection for park vegetation resources.

Professional knowledge of a wide range of rangeland ecology and management principles, concepts, and theories sufficient to perform duties concerning the development and implementation of multiple-use rangeland management plans. Knowledge and skills are sufficient to solve problems covering diverse rangeland management situations.

Thorough knowledge of NPS and/or tribal policies and procedures, guidelines regarding the monitoring of the resources, and applicable federal statutes and legislation governing rangeland ecology and management programs to assure program goals and objectives meet legal requirements and reflect national priorities and policies.

Professional knowledge and skills required to modify or adapt standard processes and procedures; to assess, select, and apply appropriate precedents; and to devise strategies needed to overcome significant resources problems related to program management and evaluation. Skill and knowledge sufficient to deal with special problems that require sustained efforts for solution.

Knowledge of related disciplines such as wildlife biology, ecology, forestry, soil conservation, plant

taxonomy, and hydrology and their interrelationships sufficient to utilize such knowledge in planning multiple-use, sustained yield rangeland ecology and management programs.

Knowledge of ecological processes and the skill to evaluate and assess the environmental impact of various management practices on a rangeland ecosystem, or on the complementary or competitive impact of the development, modification, or change in the use of one resources on another. Knowledge and skill sufficient to resolve differences among diverse groups with competing goals in order to effectively recommend and justify appropriate rangeland ecology and management strategies.

Skill to modify or adapt standard techniques, processes, and procedures and to access, select, and apply precedents and devise strategies to achieve program goals.

In-depth knowledge of program management and administration of contracts, budget, and personnel.

Knowledge of scientific data acquisition and analysis standards, methods, and recording techniques so that the incumbent can efficiently manage the collection and summation of data, and accomplish data analysis in a way that is highly credible and meets scientifically acceptable standards.

Knowledge of computer hardware, software, and application so that information, primarily field data, can be processed, summarized, and reports generated.

Skill in oral and written communication in order to insure that plans are well written and easily understood, scientific reports and journal articles are of high scientific credibility, pertinent information is shared effectively with others, and oral presentations are well designed, informative, and clearly convey the intended message.

Factor 2. Supervisory Controls Level 2-4; 450 points

The supervisor sets the overall goals and resources available. Guidance is provided only to determine priorities, approve work plans, and assist in working through unprecedented situations that have a bearing on the overall program.

The incumbent independently plans, designs, implements, and manages the program with a minimum of direct supervision. Independent judgement is required on a regular basis in developing, testing, and refining procedures and methods, and in the application of these methods in the field. The incumbent resolves most problems that arise and coordinates the work both within the work unit and with other park divisions. The incumbent keeps the supervisor informed of progress, potentially controversial problems, and concerns, issues or other matters having far-reaching implications.

The supervisor evaluates the completed work based on general adequacy in meeting program or project objectives, expected results, and compatibility with other work. Work produced is considered technically correct and is normally accepted without significant change.

Factor 3. Guidelines Level 3-4; 450 points

Guidelines include regulations, policies, scientific protocols, practices, plans, procedures, and any additional directions given and defined by the supervisor. Policies and precedents are applicable but are stated in general terms; guidelines are scarce or of limited use. Guidelines are often inadequate to deal

with the more complex or unusual problems, or with novel, undeveloped, or controversial aspects of rangeland ecology and management encountered at the field level. These kinds of situations occur when precedents or guides point toward conflicting decisions; recent court decisions or legislation may appear to require a technical decision at variance with existing guides; or there may be relatively few precedents or guides which are pertinent to specific methods; or proven methods are incomplete. The employee uses initiative and resourcefulness in deviating from traditional methods or researching trends and patterns to develop new methods, criteria or proposed new policies.

Factor 4. Complexity Level 4-5; 325 points

The work includes varied duties requiring many different and unrelated processes and methods that are applied to a broad range of activities or substantial depth of analysis. Decisions regarding what needs to be done include major areas of uncertainty in approach, methodology, or interpretation and evaluation processes that result from such elements as continuing changes in program, technological developments or conflicting requirements. The work requires originating new techniques, establishing criteria or developing new information.

Resources issues are often publicly controversial and require substantial initiative and skill in building consensus and obtaining public and cooperating agency support. The incumbent must be able to exercise professional skills in rangeland research, evaluation, and writing applied to (1) a broad range of rangeland ecology subjects or (2) substantial depth of analysis.

Assignments involve sensitive and complex issues that require solving problems concerned with novel, undeveloped, or controversial aspects. The problems are difficult due to the abstract nature of the concepts, or the existence of serious conflicts among scientific requirements, program direction, and administrative requirements. These conditions create major areas of uncertainty in the decision-making process. Information collected must be reorganized, interpreted, and presented to reflect supportable hypotheses and themes. The incumbent must be able to examine separate subject areas to draw upon research and sources of several fields of rangeland ecology and management.

The incumbent must be especially versatile and innovative in order to recognize new approaches, devise new or improved techniques or strategies for obtaining effective results, or to anticipate future trends and requirements. In addition, the person must be able to (1) exercise good professional judgement in ensuring the appropriate consideration of rangeland resources in the overall picture of park operations, development, interpretation, and resources management, (2) identify resources, evaluate their significance, develop management options that take into account all levels and areas of concern, and (3) prepare plans to preserve, conserve, mitigate impacts, and manage the resources.

Factor 5. Scope and Effect Level 5-4; 225 points

The purpose of the work is to investigate and analyze rangeland resources problems and environmental conditions to recommend or implement solutions that achieve objectives. The successful accomplishment of the duties of this position provides the professional foundation of the rangeland program. The work involves establishing criteria, formulating projects, assessing program effectiveness or investigating or analyzing a variety of unusual conditions, problems or questions. The product or service affects a wide range of agency activities, major activities or issues, or the operation of other agencies or entities. Management strategies developed and conducted by the incumbent are essential to maintaining the resources. Information gained through research, inventory, and monitoring provide the scholarly and

professionally credible basis for management decisions, thereby directly affecting the current and future integrity of the resources.

Because the scope of work covers more complex or unusual problems, the incumbent develops new or improved techniques or criteria for the conduct of projects dealing with such problems. The work influences the effectiveness or acceptability of agency goals and programs by program managers or specialists in outside agencies. Programs carried out by the incumbent directly affect the preservation or enhancement of the ecological integrity of park ecosystems and surrounding landscapes.

Factor 6. Personal Contacts Level 6-3; 60 points

Contacts are made with rangeland ecologist, resources managers, and subject matter experts of other agencies and tribes, researchers and other members of the scientific community, science and management staff of other parks, livestock owners and private landowners, conservation organizations, the media, the general public, and other members of the park staff. Contacts typically are not established on a routine basis, and the role and authority are identified and developed during the course of the contact.

Factor 7. Purpose of Contacts Level 7-2; 50 points

The purposes of the contacts are to provide professional advice to managers and others; to exchange information; to provide instruction and services; to coordinate and advise on mutual work efforts and research; to insure compliance with laws and regulations; to train; to procure supplies and materials; and to secure cooperation for park programs from other agencies, individuals or interest groups.

Factor 8. Physical Demands Level 8-2; 20 points

The position may require strenuous physical activity including periods of standing, walking, climbing, and lifting and carrying heavy objects. Some activities will occur in physically dangerous areas or settings. Documentary research and report writing work is sedentary, which entails the ability to concentrate and write for long periods of time.

Factor 9. Work Environment Level 9-2; 20 points

Work is performed both indoors and outdoors in all types of weather. Assignments may be performed in potentially hazardous areas including steep slopes, rocky terrain, volcanoes, caves, firelines, arctic environments, swamps, deserts, and forests. Flying in fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters is possible.

Total Points 2850