Implementation Plan
for the
Forest Service Fire Program Management Qualifications
Standard and Guide (FS-FPM)

I.   Background

In March 2007 the Washington Office announced an agency-specific addendum to IFPM called the *Forest Service-Fire Program Management Standard* (FS-FPM) to address Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) positions that were excluded from IFPM in 2005. *FS-FPM Standard* is intended to have an implementation period from Oct 1, 2008 thru October 1, 2013.

The *Forest Service Standard Position Description Crosswalk* was revised in 2008 to display all the Forest Service FAM positions that were included in IFPM and FS-FPM, and has been updated periodically as needed. The Crosswalk is available on the Forest Service website at: http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/

The following table shows all the Forest Service positions that are in IFPM or FS-FPM:

IFPM Category	Forest Service Positions in IFPM	Forest Service Positions in FS-FPM
Unit Fire Program Manager	Forest FMO	Forest AFMO District or Zone FMO
Wildland Fire Operations Specialist	The FS does not have any positions in the WFOS category	District or Zone AFMO T2 Handcrew Supervisors IA Module Leaders Station Managers
Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialists	Forest Fuels Specialist	District or Zone Fuels Specialists District Fuels AFMO District Fuels Technician
Supervisory Engine Operator	Engine Captain-Moderate Complexity Asst Engine Captain (FEO)	
Engine Module Supervisor	Engine Captain-High Complexity	
IHC Superintendent	IHC Superintendent	IHC Asst Superintendents IHC Squad Leaders
Helicopter Manager	Helitack Crew Supervisor	Helitack Asst Crew Supervisors Helitack Squad Leaders
Senior Firefighter	IHC/Handcrew Senior Firefighter Helitack Senior Firefighter Engine Senior Firefighter AFEO	
Center Manager	Dispatch Center Manager	
Lead IA Dispatcher/Assistant Center Manager	Forest Dispatcher Asst Center Manager	
Initial Attack Dispatcher	Initial Attack Dispatcher	
Geographic Area Fire Program Manager	Regional Fire Director	
National Fire Program Manager	National Fire Director	

As a general rule, the FS-FPM implementation procedures are the same as those developed for IFPM, however FS-FPM takes into account some of the unique differences associated with Forest Service organization. Forest Service organizational structure is comprised of four tiers (National, Regional, Forest, Ranger Districts) compared to the Department of Interior bureaus that typically have three tiers (National, Regional/State, Unit). This difference had significant impact on the Forest Service's ability to apply the *IFPM Standard* to sub-unit and subordinate positions, and ultimately led to the development of *FS-FPM Standard*.

II.   Implementation Plan Update

This implementation plan has been updated to reflect recent interagency changes in *IFPM Standard* that are mirrored in *FS-FPM* and Forest Service specific implementation procedures regarding occupational series for FAM positions.

Key updates:

- In 2010 the wildland agencies were informed that OPM policy prohibits the use of "currency" as a selective placement factor.
- On July 8, 2011 Forest Service Chief Tidwell issued a memo rescinding former-Chief Kimbell's May 29, 2009 memo that temporarily suspended the use of the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist series for GS-12 and below FS-FPM positions.
- Chief Tidwell's 2011 memo also provides new direction for the re-instatement of the GS-0401 series for the FS-FPM District or Zone Fuels Specialist positions (DFPFM and DFAFM-P), and clarifies the agency's job series guidelines for classification of FAM positions in the future to include managerial FS-FPM positions in the GS-0301 series.
- In 2012 the NWCG Executive Board allowed the use of certain aviation qualifications as alternative pathways for key IFPM and FS-FPM positions (see Crosswalk).
- In 2013 the Forest Service conducted an implementation review which resulted in the modification of the minimum qualification standards for some of the District/Zone fuels management and hand crew personnel (see Crosswalk).

III.   Scope

The purpose of the *FS-FPM Standard* is to establish minimum qualification standards for the Forest Service's fourth tier FAM positions that are typically located on a ranger district or are subordinate to an IFPM position. Full implementation of FS-FPM will require the cooperation of fire program managers, supervisors, affected employees, and human resource (HR) specialists at all levels in the Forest Service.

IV.   Communications

The Forest Service guidance and direction for FS-FPM and the implementation process can be found at:

- Forest Service website: http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/index

- FS-FPM requirements have been codified in the 2011 Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide (FAQG), Chapter 4.

V.   Funding

It is the responsibility of the agency to assist every incumbent affected by FS-FPM Standard to ensure they meet the minimum qualification standards before the FS-FPM implementation deadline of October 1, 2013.

VI.   Labor-Management Relations

NFFE Bargaining Units: This implementation plan contains procedures and appropriate arrangements which have been negotiated between Forest Service and NFFE-FSC [reference 5 USC 7106(b) (2) and (3)].   It is not to be altered or supplemented below the National level by units covered by NFFE. As appropriate, National level changes will not be made without notice to NFFE-FSC, and bargaining between the parties, pursuant to Master Agreement Article 11.

Other Bargaining Units: Management may be required to meet additional labor management obligations as appropriate with other unions representing bargaining unit employees who are impacted by the implementation of this plan, in accordance with provisions of their respective collective bargaining agreements.

VII.   Tracking Minimum Qualification Standards

IQCS is the Forest Service's system of record for the management of NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and training, and is intended to be the system of record for FS-FPM implementation as it has been for IFPM.

IQCS will assist supervisors to track their employee's progress towards attaining FS-FPM requirements, develop Individual Development Plans (IDP), and to identify and prioritize needed NWCG position experience and/or training. Refer to the IQCS website (http://iqcs.nwcg.gov) for more information.

It is recommended that fire managers regularly communicate personnel changes with their unit's IQCS account manager. Updates to an employee's FS-FPM status should be done promptly whenever positions are filled or vacated.

VIII.   The FS-FPM Standard

FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS) are tiered from IFPM; however the MQS were adjusted to be appropriate for the Forest Service's fourth tier organization. The FS-FPM minimum qualification standards are displayed in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*

The *FS-FPM Standard* consists of:

A.   Key fire management positions that are either subordinate to an IFPM position or located on a sub-unit

    B.   Sub-Unit Complexity Rating

    C.   Minimum Qualification Standards (MQS) for each FS-FPM position

    A.   <u>Key Fire Management Positions</u>

The FS-FPM Standard is comprised of fire management positions commonly located on a sub-unit or are subordinate to one of the 12 Key IFPM positions. On July 8, 2011 the Forest Service released the FAM Occupational Series Template that re-instated the GS-0401-series[1] for two FS-FPM fuels specialist positions and restructured the occupational series for FS-FPM positions into three main categories:

Firefighting Positions[2]
- IHC Assistant Superintendent (0462)
- IHC Squad Leader (0462)
- Helitack Assistant Crew Supervisor (0462)
- Helitack Squad Leader (0462)
- High Complexity Handcrew Supervisors (0462)
- High Complexity Assistant Handcrew Supervisors (0462)
- Moderate Complexity Handcrew Supervisors (0462)
- Station Managers (0462)
- District or Zone Assistant Fire Management Officer (0462)
- Job Corps AFMO (0462)
- District or Zone Fuels Assistant Fire Management Officer (0462)
- District Fuels Technician (0462)

Managerial Positions[3]
- Forest Assistant Fire Management Officer (0301)
- District or Zone Fire Management Officer (0301)

Fire Management Specialists[1]
- Zone Fuels Specialist (0401)
- District Fuels Specialist (0401)

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[1]Per Chief Tidwell's July 8, 2011 memo, the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialists series has been reinstated for the FS-FPM District/Zone Fuels Specialist (DFPFM and DFAFM-P) positions, and the GS-0401 NSPDs and OCRs will be made available for filling these positions. See Sections IX and X below.

[2]Firefighting positions are those that are typically at the GS-02 through GS-08/09 grade levels and perform the majority of the operational firefighting and dispatching duties. These positions will be classified and filled using the GS-0462-series NSPD and OCR.

[3]Managerial positions are those that are typically at the GS-11 through GS-15 grade levels and manage fire programs on a Forest Service unit or sub-unit.

Unit

For the purpose of this implementation plan, at the program management level a unit is considered to be a Forest or multiple Forests that have been combined into one unit.

Sub-Unit

For the purpose of this implementation plan, a sub-unit is considered to be a Forest Service Ranger District, or a combination of Districts that have been combined into a Zone.

Forest Service employees of "Service First" organizations should implement FS-FPM as per the implementation procedures contained in this plan.

B.   Sub-Unit Complexity Rating

The FS-FPM complexity rating for sub-units (i.e., Ranger Districts or Zone) should be determined by the Forest or Grassland's Forest FMO and Agency Administrator based on how much the sub-unit contributes to the Forest's overall unit complexity (see *Forest Service Implementation Plan for IFPM*).

FS-FPM positions that are based on sub-unit complexity should have their complexity rating established at a level that is commensurate with the complexities of the sub-unit's annual program of work. The Forest AFMO position is the only FS-FPM position that is based on the IFPM Unit Complexity.

In most instances sub-unit complexity is expected be the same or lower than the Unit's. However it is possible for the sub-unit complexity rating to be higher than that of the Unit's.

> Example: *Forest XYZ is a moderate complexity forest (unit) with four Ranger Districts (sub-units). District-1 has a significantly higher fire suppression workload than the other districts. But when the Forest's complexity analysis was completed for IFPM, the average of the four districts resulted in an IFPM rating of Moderate. As a result, District-1 could have a FS-FPM sub-unit complexity rating of High, whereas the other Districts are rated as Moderate.*

The series and grade level of key fire management positions is influenced by the sub-unit complexity rating and is described in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk.*

C.   Minimum Qualification Standards

The FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS) are similar in nature to their IFPM counterparts, and are comprised of four components:

1. Basic OPM Requirements for the occupational series,
2. Specialized experience[4],

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[4]FS-FPM does not address the substitution of education for specialized experience. Refer to the Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Professional and Scientific Positions, Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Technical and Medical Support Positions, or Group Coverage Qualification Standards for Administrative and Management Positions in the *OPM Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions*.

3. NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, and
4. Additional Required Training

IX.   Recruitment and Staffing for FS-FPM Positions

When filling a vacancy, the supervisor should first consult the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* to determine the correct FS-FPM position that is being filled. The *SPD Crosswalk* contains the minimum qualification standards (as outlined above) for each of the FS-FPM positions. The supervisor should ensure the language in the Vacancy Outreach is consistent with the requirements in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*.

All additional standard statements relative to position (e.g., area of consideration, description of duties, firefighter retirement coverage, minimum entry age, physical requirements and/or medical standards, required supporting documentation, etc) should be included in the vacancy outreach notice and vacancy announcement.

National Standard Position Descriptions (NSPDs) have been developed for all FS-FPM positions, and the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* identifies the recommended NSPD to be used. Managers are encouraged to use the recommended NSPD listed when filling a vacant IFPM position provided that the duties described in the NSPD are at least 80% accurate and reflect all the grade controlling duties of the position. Open Continuous Rosters (OCR) for each of the NSPDs have also been developed.

As described in Chief Tidwell's July 8, 2011 memo, the GS-0401 Natural Resource/Fire Management Specialist NSPDs will be re-instated for the following FS-FPM positions:

- Zone Fuels Specialist (DFPFM), GS-0401-11 (FS0274)
- District Fuels Specialist (DFAFM-P), GS-0401-09 (FS0273)

Vacant DPFM and DZAFM-P positions are to be filled using the GS-0401-series NSPD and OCR that have been developed for these positions. GS-08/09 District Fuels AFMO and GS-06/07 District Fuels Technician positions will continue to be filled using the GS-0462 NSPD and OCR developed for this position.

As HRM and FAM develop managerial NSPDs in the GS-0301 series, vacant FS-FPM positions identified to be transitioned to the GS-0301 series (see VIII, Section A.) are to be filled using the new NSPD. It should be noted that the GS-0301 series is an Administrative/Managerial occupational series, and requires that applicants be rated on their past experiences and abilities as program managers in addition to knowledge of managing firefighting operations.

The Open Continuous Rosters (OCR) for filling FS-FPM vacancies have been established and are available for use during the FS-FPM implementation period. A listing of the OCRs is available on HRM's website at:
http://fsweb.hcm.fs.fed.us/HRM/employment/Open_Continuous_Recruitments.php

On October 1, 2013, the OCR announcements associated with FS-FPM will be modified to include the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS), and these MQS will become selective placement factors (SPF) in the vacancy announcement's on-line questionnaire. The FS-FPM OCR's will become available for use on October 1, 2013 when *FS-FPM Standard* is fully implemented.

A. <u>FS-FPM Position Recruitment</u>:

The *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* identifies the recommended series, grade, and the NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training that will be required for each FS-FPM position on October 1, 2013.

Before October 1, 2013: In order to be considered eligible for an FS-FPM position, the applicant:

- Must meet all the OPM requirements for the applicable occupational series (GS-0462, GS-0301, or GS-0401), including specialized experience requirements and positive education (if applicable).
- Prior to the implementation deadline of October 1, 2013, applicants are not required to meet NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training (as applicable) at the time of hire (see *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*).
- FS-FPM incumbent must meet the NWCG Qualification and Additional Required Training prior to October 1, 2013.

In cases where selected applicants do not meet the NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training, the Selecting Official should require the newly selected employee to sign an Employment Agreement (Appendix D-2) prior to placement. The Employment Agreement is an acknowledgement by the employee that they are required to obtain the missing qualifications prior to October 1, 2013 or face possible removal from their position.

On or After October 1, 2013:   Following the implementation deadline the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards will become selective placement factors (SPF), and all applicants must be able to provide documentation that shows they meet the SPF described for the FS-FPM position in order to be considered an eligible applicant. Recruitment and outreach must inform potential candidates that NWCG qualification currency is NOT a selective placement factor.

The extension request process (similar to the one approved for IFPM implementation) will be in place for incumbents of FS-FPM positions that do not meet the October 1, 2013 deadline (see Section XI., Step 9).

GS-0462 Positions: In order to be eligible for a FS-FPM position in the GS-0462 series after the implementation deadline, applicants must:

- Meet the OPM requirements for the GS-0462 series, including specialized experience requirements,
  -and-
- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, or can show that he/she was once certified in the qualifications,
  -and-
- Have successfully completed the Additional Required Training (if applicable)
- Once hired, currency must be maintained

The above requirements are required even if the applicant is applying for the lower grade level of a career ladder, such as: GS-07 of a GS-0462-07/08 IHC Assistant Superintendent career ladder, or the GS-06 of a GS-0462-06/07 Helitack Squad Leader career ladder.

GS-0401 Positions: In order to be eligible for a FS-FPM position in the GS-0401 series, applicants must:

- Possess all of the OPM positive education and specialized experience requirements for the GS-0401 Supplemental Qualification Standards for Fire Management Specialists,
  -and-
- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, or can show that he/she was once certified in the qualifications,
  -and-
- Has successfully completed the Additional Required Training (if applicable)
- Once hired, currency must be maintained if required (see *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*)

GS-0301 Positions: In order to be eligible for a FS-FPM position in the GS-0301 series, applicants must:

- Meet the OPM requirements for the GS-0301 series, including specialized experience requirements,
  -and-
- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, or can show that he/she was once certified in the qualifications,
  -and-
- Has successfully completed the Additional Required Training (if applicable)
- Once hired, currency must be maintained if required (see *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*)

The above requirements are required even if the applicant is applying for the lower grade level of a career ladder, such as: GS-11 of a GS-0301-11/12 Forest AFMO career ladder.

It should be noted that the GS-0301 series is an Administrative/Managerial occupational series, and requires that applicants be rated on their past experiences and abilities as program managers and knowledge to manage fire fighting operations. Final approval for use of the GS-0301 series is pending USDA and OPM approval.

B. Requiring Currency for Applicants

Before October 1, 2013: Prior to the implementation deadline, applicants are not required to meet NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training.

On or After October 1, 2013: OPM policy does not allow the use of "currency" as a selective placement factor. Therefore:

- Applicants who were once qualified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications but lost currency in one or more of the required NWCG qualifications are still eligible to apply for FS-FPM positions, provided they are able to provide supporting documentation that they were once certified in the required NWCG qualifications.
- If an applicant who lost currency in one or more of the required NWCG qualifications is selected into a FS-FPM position, they will be granted a not-to-exceed (NTE) 12 month period from the date of hire to become re-certified, and thereafter must maintain currency for that position.
- All applicants must have successfully completed the Additional Required Training (if required) in order to be considered eligible for the position.

C. Maintaining Currency for Incumbents

Before October 1, 2013: During the implementation period, incumbents may occupy the FS-FPM position without possessing or maintaining currency of the NWCG qualifications required for their position, but must attain currency by the FS-FPM implementation deadline of October 1, 2013.

On or After October 1, 2013: With the exception of the Forest AFMO High and Moderate complexity positions, all FS-FPM positions require that incumbents maintain currency in their Primary and Secondary Core NWCG qualifications for as long as they occupy that position (see PMS 310-1 for definition of "Currency" and how to maintain).

If an employee who is encumbering a FS-FPM position which requires currency loses their currency for one or more of the required NWCG Qualifications (i.e., does not perform in that NWCG qualification or in another qualification that maintains currency within the stipulated timeframes) the supervisor shall:

- Inform the employee that they do not meet the FS-FPM requirements for their position and take steps to assist the employee to regain the required certification.
- Update the employee's IDP to provide the necessary training or trainee assignments needed to regain certification.
- Work with HRM/ER officials to identify an appropriate time frame, NTE 12 months, in which the employee will be required to regain certification.
- If the reason for lost currency is related to the employee's inability to complete the Arduous WCT due to injury or medical reason, the supervisor should establish a reasonable time frame for recovery and recertification based on the nature of the injury.

- The employee should be given preferential consideration for assignments necessary to regain currency. Employees that refuse such assignments should be counseled.

D. Applicant Supporting Documentation for Required NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training

Before October 1, 2013: Prior to the implementation deadline, applicants for a FS-FPM position are not required to submit any additional documentation regarding NWCG qualifications or required training, however it is encouraged that this information be included.

On or After October 1, 2013: In order to be considered for a FS-FPM position, applicants must submit a recent copy of their Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) Master Record or equivalent documentation that contains documented 3rd party proof of the NWCG Qualification or Additional Required Training requirement. This supporting documentation must be submitted with the application. Failure to provide this documentation will result in not being considered for the position.

If the IQCS or IQS Master Record cannot be obtained (or not used in the case of private sector), the applicant must submit documentation that shows the applicant has attained the required NWCG Qualifications and Training. Submitted documentation must include 3rd party certification (e.g., signature of the certifying official's name, title, contact information, and date of certification).

Proof of NWCG qualification, such as:

- Copy of Position Task Book certification page (page 2 of the PTB) that has been signed and dated by the applicant's certifying official, –or-
- Screen capture from IQCS (or IQS) database showing certification of the required NWCG qualification (i.e., "Incident Qualification Card" tab, "Competency Evaluation" tab, "Qual Card Summary" tab, or "Current Competencies" tab, etc.)

-AND-

Proof of required NWCG training (if applicable), such as:

- Copy of the required training certificate that is signed and dated by the Lead Instructor or Course Coordinator –or-
- Copy of the course completion letter that is signed and dated by the course coordinator that shows successful completion of the NWCG course –or-
- Screen capture from IQCS database (or IQS for state employees) showing attainment of the required training (i.e., "Student Training Summary" tab, "Competency Evaluation" tab, "Responder Training" tab, "Current Competencies" tab…etc.)

Applicants with expired NWCG qualifications are still eligible to apply, however they must attach the above documentation that proves that at one time they were certified in the required NWCG qualifications (i.e., expired qualification due to expiration of WCT or refresher, or expired due to lack of position performance currency).

E. Developmental Position Recruitment

Positions that are filled at lower grades or in position descriptions other than identified in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* for the purpose of recruitment and development for future workforce needs <u>are not</u> considered FS-FPM positions, and are not subject to the minimum qualification standards of the full performance level (FPL) FS-FPM target position. Although, if a particular non-competitive career ladder position includes lower graded IFPM or FS-FPM positions in its progression, the employee must meet the IFPM or FS-FPM NWCG qualifications required at each grade level.

> Example: *A Forest opts to recruit and develop an employee thru the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) that is targeted to fill the duties of a District Fuels Specialist (GS-401-09). If the employee is hired using non FS-FPM position descriptions at the lower grade levels (i.e. thru use of 499 series PD's at grades GS-5 thru 7), the employee should not be required to meet the FS-FPM requirements for a GS-0401-09 District Fuels Specialist position until they are converted into the FS-FPM national standard position description.*
>
> *When filling positions with non-standard PD's, the local unit must work with Human Resources to place the employee into a developmental position description that adequately describes the duties, responsibilities, and factors of the position.*

F. Temporary (1039) and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) Employees in FS-FPM:

FS-FM requirements also apply to temporary employees if they are occupying a FS-FPM position and using a NSPD that was developed for a FS-FPM position. The following implementation procedures apply to Temporary employees:

Before October 1, 2013: Temporary employees that are hired or rehired into a FS-FPM position (e.g. Helitack squad leader, IHC squad leader, IA Module Leader, or T2 IA Handcrew Assistant) are not required to meet the NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training for their position at the time of hire, however they will be required to meet it on October 1, 2013.

On or After October 1, 2013:

New Temporary Employees: In order to be eligible for a temporary FS-FPM position, applicants for a new temporary position must:

- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Qualifications, or can show that they were once certified,
  -and-

- Possess the Additional Required Training (if applicable).

<u>Temporary Employees with Rehire Eligibility</u>: Prior to being rehired, temporary employees in a FS-FPM position with re-hire eligibility must:

- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Qualification, or can show that they were once certified,
  -and-
- Possess the Additional Required Training (if applicable).

An individual with rehire eligibility who does not meet the FS-FPM Standard for their prior position may be re-hired into another agency position on the same major sub-division for which they meet the qualifications, to include the selective placement factors that may be required for that other position.

When rehiring a temporary employee into a FS-FPM position after October 1, 2013, supervisors must attach supporting documentation (see D above) to the personnel action in SF-52 Tracker to show that the employee meets the FS-FPM selective placement factors (e.g. FFT1 and ICT5 for IHC Squad Leaders).

G. <u>Temporary FS-FPM Employees who will work past October 1, 2013</u>:

Unqualified Temporary Employee:

Temporary employees who do not meet the FS-FPM requirement may be allowed to remain in their position after October 1, 2013 provided that their NTE date is <u>prior</u> to November 15, 2013 (45 days after the implementation deadline).

However, if the unqualified temporary employee's NTE date is <u>after</u> November 15, 2013, the host unit has the option to terminate the employee on November 15, 2013 or request an extension (see Section XI., Step 9: Managing Unqualified Employees on October 1, 2013).

Qualified Temporary Employee:

Qualified temporary employees should have their status established prior to termination, and a copy of the IQCS Master Record submitted in SF-52 Tracker when rehired the following season.

H. <u>Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)</u>:

SCEPs will be treated as being in developmental position. See "Developmental Position Recruitment" in Section E. above.

I. <u>Standard Vacancy Outreach Language for FS-FPM Positions</u>

The following language and format is recommended for use when outreaching vacant FS-FPM positions. Make sure the correct position and qualification requirements are used.

Here is an example:

> This position has been identified as a District or Zone FMO (DZFMO) positions in the Forest Service Fire Program Management (FS-FPM) Standard, and will be subject to minimum qualification standards (MQS) that will become selective placement factors on October 1, 2013. Applicants hired prior to October 1, 2013 do not need to possess all of the MQS, but must attain them prior to or on that date to remain in the position.
>
> **Key Fire Management Position**: District or Zone Fire Management Officer (DZFMO-High)
>
> **NWCG Incident Management Qualifications**:
> * Primary: Division Group Supervisor (DIVS)
>   -and-
> * Secondary: Incident Commander Type 3 (ICT3) or Burn Boss Type 2 (RXB2)
>   -and-
> **Additional Required Training**: M-581
>
> **Currency Requirement**: After Oct 1, 2013, employee will be required to maintain currency for the above NWCG qualifications. Currency of NWCG qualifications is not required for selection, however the applicant must provide documented evidence that they have been fully qualified in the past, and are able to regain currency within one year of being hired.
>
> A copy of the IQCS master record (or agency equivalent) should be submitted along with the application as supporting documentation to validate NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training.

J. Filling Temporary Promotions or Detail Assignments

Basic OPM requirements for occupational series (i.e., Supplemental Qualification Standards if GS-0401 series) must be met for all temporary promotions or lateral detail assignments.

In addition, the FS-FPM required NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training must be met prior to placement into a temporary promotion assignment.

For developmental purposes, lateral detail assignments (temporary reassignments in the same grade) do not require prior attainment of the NWCG Qualifications or Additional Required Training, however managers should take necessary steps to avoid assigning the detailed employee duties that require possession of the NWCG qualifications, and ensure that those duties are assigned to a qualified individual.

X. **Conversion of GS-0462 series Fuels Incumbents into the GS-0401 series**

As described in the attachment to Chief Tidwell's July 8, 2011 memo, employees that were hired into one of the District or Zone Fuels Specialist positions (DFPFM or DFAFM-P) using a GS-0462 NSPD following issuance of former-Deputy Chief Kashdan's November 5, 2008 memo or former-Chief Kimbell's May 29, 2009 memo may be non-competitively reassigned into a GS-0401 Fuels Management NSPD, provided:

* The current GS-0462 employee possesses the positive education and specialized experience requirements contained in the GS-0401 Supplemental Qualification Standard.

- If the current GS-0462 employee does not possess the positive education and specialized experience requirements contained in the GS-0401 Supplemental Qualification Standard, they may remain in their position using the GS-0462 position description in which they were originally hired. However, managers must ensure that the professional duties requiring knowledge that uniquely come from positive education in natural resource, biological, or agricultural sciences are assigned to the appropriate professional position in the GS-0400 series within their organization.

If/when the position is vacated the position should be filled using the appropriate GS-0401 NSPD (see *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*).

The FS-FPM implementation deadline of October 1, 2013 only applies to the attainment of the required Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training. <u>No deadlines are imposed for conversion to the GS-0401 series</u>.

XI.   FS-FPM Standard Implementation Process

The following steps are to be used in the implementation of *FS-FPM Standard*:

Step 1: <u>Sub-Unit Complexity</u>

Complexity for FS-FPM sub-units (i.e., Ranger Districts) should be determined by the Forest or Grassland's Unit Fire Program Manager and Agency Administrator. The measure of a sub-unit's complexity should be based on how much that sub-unit's fire and aviation management program contributed to the overall Forest or Grassland's complexity rating.

- Forest AFMO positions are to be based on the Unit's overall complexity rating.
- District or Zone FMO and District or Zone AFMO positions are dependent on the sub-unit's complexity rating.
- Fuels management, Type 2 Handcrew Supervisors, Initial Attack Module Leaders, Station Managers, and subordinate positions on Interagency Hotshot Crews (IHC) or Helitack Crews are independent of the sub-unit's complexity rating.

Periodically a sub-Unit's FS-FPM Complexity Analysis may need to be re-analyzed. Changes to a sub-Unit's complexity rating can be made at any time. The need for re-analysis may be generated at the local Unit level, or from Regional or National direction. Possible reasons for a re-analysis include, but are not limited to:

- Changes in protection area that increases or decreases a Unit or sub-Unit's responsibility for providing fire protection
- The combining of multiple Units or sub-Units into an interagency zone or organization
- Addition or subtraction of key components to a Unit or sub-Unit's fire management program

Changes to key elements of a fire management program should be "programmatic" and long term, and not adjustments to respond to a temporary arrangement.

Step 2: Position Identification and Incumbent Declarations

Fire Managers should be constantly reviewing the positions within their fire organization and determine if those positions are affected by the *FS-FPM Standard*. The *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* displays all the FS-FPM positions, and identifies the recommended series, grade, and the national standard position description (NSPD) for each position.

Each employee who is encumbering a FS-FPM position shown on the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* must be identified on the *FS-FPM Unit Identification Worksheet* (Appendix A-3) and submit an *Incumbent Declaration* (Appendix A-4) to the Forest FMO. Further guidance for evaluation of positions can be found in the Position Identification Process in Appendix A.

IQCS has been configured for FS-FPM, and all Units are required to update their FS-FPM incumbent data into IQCS whenever there are personnel changes.   IQCS will be the Forest Service's database of record and will constitute the documentation necessary for the Incumbent Declaration and Qualification Determination.

Step 3: Determination of Qualifications

The Forest FMO will be the responsible official to conduct qualification determinations for all FS-FPM incumbents and new hires identified on their *Unit Position Identification Worksheet*. The Forest FMO will review and certify all *Incumbent Declarations* submitted by the district or zone fire managers against the requirements in the *FS-FPM Standard*. These requirements can be found in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*, and the process for making the *Determination of Qualifications* can be found in Appendix B of this plan. For guidance on advertising and filling vacant positions, refer to *IX. Recruitment and Staffing for FS-FPM Positions*.

Step 4: Notification of Qualification Status

The Forest FMO will document the results of *Step 3: Determination of Qualifications* and will be responsible for notifying the employee in writing with regard to his/her qualification status. Guidance for this process can be found in Appendix C: *Notification of Qualification Status Process.*

Step 5: Assess Employee Development Needs

All supervisors of FS-FPM positions must periodically assess their employee's training and development needs to meet the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards by October 1, 2013. In addition, employee and supervisors should consider the employee's next target position when assessing development needs.

Prioritization for NWCG training and position trainee assignments should be balanced between FS-FPM position needs and unit staffing needs. Local, Regional, and Agency needs should be evaluated along with historical availability and quality of the individual's performance.

Step 6: Initiate Individual Development Plans

Once an employee's training and development needs have been assessed in *Step 5*, the employee and supervisor must develop and initiate an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that will assist the employee to obtain the minimum requirements for their current or next target position (i.e., NWCG qualifications, NWCG training, or detail assignments as needed to broaden the employee's knowledge and skills).

Step 7: Employee Monitoring

Unqualified FS-FPM employees should be evaluated by their supervisor at least twice per year, and have their IDP updated when warranted. Supervisors should document results of the quarterly assessments.

If it appears that the employee will not meet the minimum qualification standard for his/her position by October 1, 2013, the first level supervisor is responsible for notifying the employee's second level supervisor and the Forest FMO at least 75 days prior to the implementation deadline. Refer to *Step 9* (below) for further guidance.

Supervisors should document attainment of minimum qualification standards that were previously lacking, as well as instances when employees failed to meet attainment goals as specified in the IDP. Examples of these include:

- *Employee unable to partake in fire assignments due to injuries or unique personal reasons that preclude normal participation in fire assignments that are deemed reasonable (i.e., injury or medical condition that prevents employee from performing arduous level assignments).*
- *Employee unable to partake in fire assignment or NWCG training due to other work priorities as directed by supervisor.*
- *Employee elects not to participate in a required training session*
- *Employee fails to successfully complete a NWCG class*
- *Employee elects not to take a training assignment for an NWCG qualification they are lacking*

Step 8: Re-evaluation of Incumbents Previously Determined to Not Meet Qualifications

Once an employee has obtained the minimum qualification standard (NWCG Incident Management Qualification and/or Additional Required Training) required for his/her position, it is the responsibility of the employee and his/her supervisor to re-submit the appropriate qualifying documentation (e.g., Incumbent Declaration, certified PTB, and/or training certificates) to the Forest FMO prior to October 1, 2013. Refer to *Step 3: Determination of Qualifications*, for further guidance.

Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) must be updated on a regular basis to reflect current accomplishments.

Step 9: Managing Employees Who Do Not Meet the FS-FPM Standard on October 1, 2013

Incumbents who do not meet the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS) for their position on October 1, 2013 may be eligible for a 12 month extension, provided they comply with the following requirements:

- Employee must submit a written request for an extension within 45 days (by December 2, 2013) following the implementation deadline of October 1, 2013 (deadline extended by 16 days to account for the 2013 furlough). The request must describe the circumstances that prevented the employee from meeting his/her FS-FPM minimum qualification standards prior to the implementation deadline.

- The Forest FMO and Line Officer of the employee's home unit will review the request and must agree that there were mitigating circumstances outside of the employee's control and concur that an additional 12 months is a sufficient time for the employee to obtain the required training and experience or regain certification if currency was lost.

- If the home unit determines that there is justification for recommending the extension, the written request must be submitted to the Regional Forester by January 2, 2014. The request for extension must include the Forest FMO and Line Officer endorsement of the employee's request, a copy of the employee's Individual Development Plan (IDP), and identification of an individual on the same unit (i.e., a supervisor) that will mentor and monitor the employee's progress.

- Regional Forester review of the extension and subsequent approval or denial of the extension request must be communicated to the employee by February 18, 2014.

- If the extension is granted, the employee will be required to sign an Employment Agreement contained in Appendix D-4, agreeing to work towards meeting the NWCG Qualifications, Training, or currency re-certification requirements in the agreed upon time. The base language of the Employment Agreement contained in Appendix D-4 of this plan has been negotiated with NFFE-FSC, and is not to be modified without union representation if the employee is in the NFFE bargaining unit.

- The 12 month extension will commence from the date that the request was approved by the Regional Forester.

Failure of the employee to submit a request in compliance with the above requirements, or disapproval of the request, will result in the employee being immediately removed from their FS-FPM duties, and offered placement into another position for which they are qualified, if available. Managers should work with HR Staffing Operations and/or Employee and Labor Relations to resolve this situation.

There may be instances where additional or continuing mitigating circumstances occur that preclude the employee from being able to obtain their missing NWCG Qualifications, Training, or currency re-certification requirements in the initial 12 month extension period, the employee may be eligible to submit a request for an additional 12 month extension. Requests for additional extensions will be on a case-by-case basis, subject to home Unit

and Regional Forester concurrence. However it should be noted that these are expected to be rare instances.

Bargaining Unit Employees will be notified of their right to union representation in the Step 9 process with the supervisor and FMO, and their right to grieve qualification determinations.

Mitigating circumstances for not meeting the FS-FPM NWCG Qualifications or Training, or currency recertification requirements include, but are not limited to:

- Short-term medical condition or injury.

- Employee was nominated for an NWCG class that is required for their position, but was not accepted into the course, or was accepted but employee had to withdraw for reasons outside of their control (e.g., illness, cancellation of the class, or travel cap).

- Insufficient training opportunities due to low fire activity prevented the employee from completing the remaining tasks in their Position Task Book.

- Employee was hired in 2013 before the FS-FPM Standards became effective, and thru no fault of the employee there was insufficient opportunity to attain the minimum qualifications required for their position.

- The local unit has been unable to implement prescribed fire projects during the implementation period due to unfavorable conditions (i.e., extreme drought or excessive precipitation) that were prevalent in that geographic area that prevented the employee from completing their Position Task Book for initial RX certification or currency re-certification.

- Employee has initiated formal action to retire or to move into a non IFPM or FS-FPM position with an effective date prior to the end of January 2015.

Circumstances that would not qualify for an extension include but are not limited to:

- Employee was informed of their unqualified FS-FPM status, but did not take sufficient steps to work towards meeting the FS-FPM requirements.

- Opportunities to work on position Task Book or attend NWCG training were made available to the employee but the employee voluntarily opted not to take advantage of them.

- Employee was unable or unwilling to take/pass the Work Capacity Test (WCT) at the level required to maintain currency for the NWCG positions their FS-FPM MQS require.

- Employee has not demonstrated the ability to successfully complete a NWCG Position Task Book required for their position, and efforts to develop the employee's lack of skill or abilities have proven unsuccessful.

- Employee has not demonstrated the ability to successfully complete a NWCG course required for their position, and efforts to develop the employee's lack of skill or abilities to successfully complete the curriculum have proven unsuccessful.

In all the above cases, or others as applicable, supervisors should be documenting instances of employee refusal or inability to comply with training opportunities.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Position Identification

- Position Identification Process
- Unit Position Identification Worksheet
- Incumbent Declaration

Appendix B: Determination of Qualifications

- Qualification Review Process

Appendix C: Notification of Qualification Status

- Notification of Qualification Status Process
- Notification of Qualification Memo(s) Template

Appendix D: FS-FPM Employment Agreements

- Employment Agreement Template for unqualified employees hired prior to Oct 1, 2013
- Employment Agreement Template for unqualified employees granted an extension after Oct 1, 2013