

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska
Department of Administration
Division of Personnel

To: Matt Robus, Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation

Date: January 12, 2006

Kelly Hepler, Director
Division of Sport Fish

Denby Lloyd, Director
Division of Commercial Fisheries
Department of Fish & Game

Kerry Howard, Director
Office of Habitat Management & Permitting
Department of Natural Resources

Thru: Sarah Brinkley
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Subject: Biologist III/IV Study Memo

History:

In late 2004, the Department of Fish & Game submitted a Classification Study Maintenance Request to revise the Definition section of the Fishery and Wildlife Biologist IV job classes, to include similar language found in the second option of the Habitat Biologist IV job class. Specifically, this was to add a (nonsupervisory) "staff assistant to the Director with statewide responsibility for a specialized function" option to the Fishery and Wildlife Biologist IV job classes.

Since changes to the definition of a class are outside the scope of a maintenance request, this was converted to a job class study, and the initial planning meeting was held 12/16/04. The study team from the Department of Fish & Game included Geron Bruce, former Deputy Director, Division of Commercial Fisheries; Kim Titus, Deputy Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation; David Bernard, Fisheries Scientist II, Division of Sport Fish; and Jeff Hoover, Administrative Manager IV, Division of Administrative Services. The Department of Natural Resources' representative was Kerry Howard, Director, Office of Habitat Management & Permitting.

In the latter part of March 2005, position descriptions for identified positions and clarification of the request were received by the Division of Personnel. The agencies' study team determined that a major expansion to the scope of the Biologist study was necessary; to revise and make consistent the Definition, Distinguishing Characteristics and Minimum Qualification sections between all Biologist III and IV job classes in each of the three series. Also, the team determined that there was a need to update and make consistent the Example of Duties and Knowledge, Skills and Abilities sections for the same job classes in each of the same series. During June and July, the first drafts of the proposed job class specifications were submitted for comment to the study team. Due to a conflict with the departments' seasonal resource management and research activities, the agencies were able to offer only a limited response to the draft specifications. Subsequent drafts, reflecting a complete revision to all sections of the class specifications for the Fishery/Wildlife/Habitat Biologist III and IV (or six) job classes, were submitted to the agencies' study team members for comment. Discussion during October and November resulted in resolving differences and reaching consensus between the team representatives.

Scope:

Changes were made to the Definition, Distinguishing Characteristics, and Minimum Qualifications sections of the class specifications for the Fishery/Wildlife/Habitat III & IV job classes. The result is that the class specifications are standardized, consistent and interchangeable, especially in terms of the Minimum Qualifications, which the Department of Fish & Game management especially requested. Updated changes were also made to the Example of Duties and Knowledge, Skills and Abilities sections. Recently, changes were made to the Minimum Qualifications sections of the Biologist I & II job classes, to agree with the new revisions for the Biologist III & IV job classes; no other changes were made.

Study Method:

This study was initiated at the request of the Department of Fish & Game, with the Department of Natural Resources being an interested party to any changes made to the Habitat Biologist series.

Initial discussion was held with departmental representatives, to understand the reasoning behind the request. Updated position descriptions were requested for a few positions identified by the Department for possible reallocation, as well as some to be used for comparison purposes. Once the PDs were received and reviewed, position interview questions were formulated, and interviews were conducted with the incumbents of PCNs 114098 (Fishery Biologist III, Sigurdsson), 116154 (Habitat IV, Piorkowski), 112278 (Habitat Biologist IV, Fritts), and 116104 (Habitat Biologist IV, Gnath). Additional information was collected and analyzed; levels of work or job class concepts were identified; and drafts of the Definition and Distinguishing Characteristics for each level were completed.

Drafts of the above two specification sections were sent to the original study team contacts. The remaining sections of the class specifications, specifically Examples of Duties, Knowledge, Skills and Abilities, and Minimum Qualifications, were subsequently drafted and sent to the team members. Responses were received with subsequent changes made to language in some of the five sections, most being of a minor nature; more significant proposed changes, such as those to the Definition and Minimum Qualifications, sections required further discussion before

reaching consensus. The class specifications as finalized, reflect past discussions and agreements.

Typically, the duties and responsibilities of each job class are analyzed for internal alignment with the State's existing job classes, to determine the appropriate range assignments. However, due to this office receiving a separate union request for a salary (range) review of the Biologist series, a separate analysis is being done based on the new class specifications. The results will be addressed in a separate memorandum by a different staff analyst.

Last, as is typical of a job class study, individual positions were allocated against the new job class specifications; the final allocations are discussed in a separate memo.

Class Concepts:

The Fishery Biologist series includes professional biological job classes specializing in fishery management or research programs and activities affecting the conservation, management and restoration of fish populations.

Fishery Biologist III performs advanced professional level biological work, either planning, developing, conducting and evaluating fisheries management and research projects and activities, or researching, analyzing, and consulting on specific fishery issues or species impacting divisional operations and position statements.

Fishery Biologist IV 1) plans, develops, coordinates, implements, and evaluates fisheries management activities or research programs as a regional management or regional research biologist; or 2) is a staff assistant to a member of division management, with significant influence on fisheries management or research policy; or 3) is a technical expert and consultant of particular program areas, providing guidance on controversial, interagency and external issues.

Option 1 is a supervisory class with substantive responsibility for the exercise of independent judgment in employing, disciplining, or adjudicating grievances of subordinates.

The Habitat Biologist series includes professional biological job classes specializing in habitat preservation and restoration projects and activities affecting the conservation, preservation, and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat.

Habitat Biologist III performs advanced professional level biological work, either planning, evaluating and recommending substantial changes to major development projects and land use permitting, project reviews, or land transfer decisions; or researching, analyzing, and consulting on specific habitat issues impacting divisional operations, and position statements.

Habitat Biologist IV 1) plans, develops, coordinates, implements, and evaluates multiple, complex and controversial habitat programs and projects; or 2) is a staff assistant to a member of division management, with significant influence on habitat-related management or research policy; or 3) is a technical expert and consultant of particular program areas, providing guidance on controversial, interagency and external issues.

Option 1 is a supervisory class with substantive responsibility for the exercise of independent judgment in employing, disciplining, or adjudicating grievances of subordinates.

The Wildlife Biologist series includes professional biological job classes specializing in wildlife management, research, or information and education programs and activities affecting the conservation, management and restoration of fish and wildlife.

Wildlife Biologist III performs advanced professional level biological work, either planning, developing, conducting and evaluating wildlife management and research projects and activities, or researching, analyzing, and consulting on specific wildlife issues or species impacting divisional operations and position statements.

Wildlife Biologist IV 1) plans, develops, coordinates, implements, and evaluates wildlife management activities or research programs as a regional management or regional research biologist; or 2) is a staff assistant to a member of division management, with significant influence on wildlife management or research policy; or 3) is a technical expert and consultant of particular program areas, providing guidance on controversial, interagency and external issues.

Option 1 is a supervisory class with substantive responsibility for the exercise of independent judgment in employing, disciplining, or adjudicating grievances of subordinates.

Class Analysis:

The State's study process includes the comparisons of work performed at each level, including the examination of eight classification factors used as guidelines for appropriate internal alignment and subsequent range assignments. The classification factors include the nature, variety and complexity of work; the nature and scope of recommendations, decisions, commitments and consequence of error. In addition, factors include the nature of supervision received, and nature and extent of supervision exercised; the nature of available guidelines; initiative and originality required; purpose and nature of working relationships, and qualifications required.

Taking into consideration the review of lower level Biologist job classes, position interviews, review of position descriptions and related documents, and the study team discussions, this analyst primarily revised the Definition, Distinguishing Characteristics, and Minimum Qualifications sections of the class specifications for the III and IV levels of all three series. A serious attempt was also made to use standardized language and build in consistency between the III and IV levels and the affected series; to make the differences more clear and understandable, and to avoid duplication with current job class concepts or options of other related job classes. The revisions are described as follows:

Fishery/Wildlife/Habitat Biologist III

a) The Definition sections for the Fishery/Wildlife Biologist III level were changed from a generalized biologist level of work involving three options or job concepts as an area management or research biologist; a species complex projects biologist; or a species or issues specialist, to an advanced professional biologist level of work involving three options/job concepts as an area management or area research biologist; controversial/complex project biologist; or a specialized, complex issues biologist. These revised options also apply to the

Habitat Biologist III job class. The Habitat Biologist III formerly had four options as a regional habitat biologist assigned to a specific issue; a statewide project leader; an area habitat biologist responsible for a range and variety of assignments; and a staff assistant to the Director or Deputy Director.

I want to clarify any misunderstanding about the term “advanced professional,” which is commonly used in describing levels of work in a series. As distinguished from the journey or working professional level of work, an advanced professional is defined as a professional level of work consisting of unusual, difficult or exceptional matters encountered in the work, which are completed by modifying approaches, methods or techniques. Specialists in particular aspects of a profession, sometimes fit into this category.

Concerning the revisions, the first option has not changed to any degree and remains the option that traditionally has been and still is predominantly used in the allocation of positions to the Biologist III level in the three series. The second option was changed to capture the role of biologist positions that develop, conduct, implement, or evaluate the scope, plan, schedule, and needed resources of (management or research) projects characterized as involving biological unknowns, limited technical guidelines, extensive interaction and negotiation, controversy, public visibility or similar factors. The third option is intended to apply to biologist positions that specialize in addressing and resolving complex issues affecting or impacting the operations, policies and recommendations of the division.

b) The Distinguishing Characteristics sections were revised to describe the factors true of three options or job class concepts for the Fishery/Wildlife/Habitat Biologist III & IV job classes.

c) The Minimum Qualifications sections of the III & IV job classes were changed to be applicable and interchangeable between all series. Previously, the Habitat Biologist III & IV job classes required a bachelor’s degree with a major in the sciences of biology or a branch of biology, while the Fishery Biologist III & IV job classes required the same plus limnology. The Wildlife Biologist III & IV job classes required a bachelor’s degree in wildlife biology, wildlife conservation, wildlife management, zoology, biometrics, fisheries biology, ecology (excluding human ecology), biology or a branch of biology.

The educational requirements were changed from the above differing majors to the same educational requirement for all job classes, specifically a bachelors degree in biology, a branch of biology, limnology, biometrics, oceanography, forestry or natural resource management. Again, this educational requirement applies to all Fishery/Wildlife/Habitat Biologist job classes. The study team agreed to the change, verifying that the change would be an “acceptable preparation” for a given field. With the educational requirement being similar and interchangeable between the two highest levels of the three series, the team believed that the degree in a variety of fields was acceptable, and would allow more opportunity for employees to apply and at least, meet the Minimum Qualification requirements for the job classes.

There still remains the same educational substitution with no substitution allowed for the required experience. Regarding the previous experience requirements, the Habitat Biologist III job class required one year of full performance professional level experience equivalent to a Habitat Biologist II, Fishery Biologist II or Wildlife Biologist II. The Habitat Biologist IV

required one year of advanced professional level experience equivalent to Habitat Biologist III. The Fishery Biologist III job class required one year of full performance professional level experience equivalent to Fishery Biologist, Habitat Biologist II (specializing in fishery or fish habitat issues), or Fish Culturist II. The Fishery Biologist IV required one year of advanced professional level experience equivalent to Fishery Biologist III. The Wildlife Biologist III job class required two years of full performance professional level experience equivalent to Wildlife Biologist II, Biometrician I, or Habitat Biologist II. The Wildlife Biologist IV required two years of advanced professional level experience equivalent to Wildlife Biologist III or Biometrician II.

Again, to broaden but make consistent the experience requirements between the III & IV levels in the three series, a change was made to one year of full performance professional level experience (with a specific application depending on the involved job class) met by service as a Fishery Biologist II, Wildlife Biologist II, or Habitat Biologist II with the State or equivalent with another employer; and one year of advanced professional level experience (again specific application) met by service as a Fishery Biologist III, Wildlife Biologist III, or Habitat Biologist III. The study team approved and verified that such experience is “similarly related” to the duties of a particular Biologist III or IV job class; the change would allow flexibility and more accurately portray reality.

Fishery/Wildlife/Habitat Biologist IV

a) The Definition for the Fishery Biologist IV previously described three roles as the highest level of the series, specifically as the regional management or research biologist; a staff advisor with a statewide, specialized function; or the manager of the mariculture or mark/tag/recovery program. The Wildlife Biologist IV job class described two roles as the regional management or research biologist or a senior staff advisor or manager of statewide programs. The Habitat Biologist IV described two roles, that as a section supervisor or staff assistant to the director responsible for a statewide, specialized function, but both responsible for multiple program administration and administration.

The Definitions for the IV level for all three series were changed to be very similar as options or job concepts. The level applies to the biologist roles of either: 1) performing the traditional duties of a regional management or regional research (supervisory) biologist, or in the case of habitat, being responsible for and supervising complex and controversial habitat programs and projects, or 2) a staff assistant to a member of division management with significant influence on management or research policy, or 3) a technical expert and consultant of particular program areas, providing guidance on controversial, interagency and external issues.

b, c & d) See above.

In summary, there are adequate differences and similarities in the variety and complexity of the work; recommendations, decision-making and commitments, and other classification factors to warrant the class specification revisions.

Conclusion:

The titles, class codes, and ranges of the Fishery/Wildlife/Habitat Biologist III and IV job classes remain the same as of this date, with the salary analysis being addressed in a separate memo.

Only the Definitions, Distinguishing Characteristics and Minimum Qualifications sections of the class specifications for these job classes have changed, with minor changes made to the two remaining sections of the class specifications. The effective date of the new job class specifications is 01/16/2006.

The position study allocation memo has been completed separately.

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