



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Washington D.C. 20250



AUG - 3 2010

REPLY TO

ATTN OF: 08601-54-SF

TO: Thomas L. Tidwell
Chief
Forest Service

ATTN: Donna M. Carmical
Chief Financial Office
Forest Service

FROM: Gil H. Harden *Gil H. Harden*
Assistant Inspector General
for Audit

SUBJECT: Forest Service's Firefighting Succession Planning Process

We received your follow-up memorandum, dated July 14, 2010, concerning Recommendation 19 of the subject audit report. Based on the information provided in the memorandum, we have accepted your management decision for the recommendation as noted in the attached Recommendations and Summary of Management Decision form. Management decision has now been reached on all recommendations.

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), U.S. Department of Agriculture, has responsibility for monitoring and tracking final action on the subject audit. A copy of this memorandum and its attachment is being forwarded to OCFO. We are also forwarding to OCFO a copy of your July 14, 2010, follow-up memorandum. Please follow your agency's internal procedures in forwarding final action correspondence to OCFO. Please note that final action on the management decision should be completed within 1 year of the date of the management decision to preclude being listed in the Secretary's management report.

If you have any questions please call me at (202) 720-6945, or have a member of your staff contact Steve Rickrode, Director, Rural Development and Natural Resources Division, at (202) 690-4483.

Attachment

cc: (w/attachment)
Director, Planning and Accountability Division, OCFO, USDA
OIG Audit Liaisons, Forest Service

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT DECISION

AUDIT NUMBER:	REPORT ISSUANCE DATE:	MANAGEMENT DECISION DATE:
08601-54-SF	March 31, 2010	AUG - 3 2010
TITLE: Forest Service's Firefighting Succession Planning Process		

RECOMMENDATION: 19

Immediately discontinue the use of the GS-401 series to reclassify staff for the six IFPM and four FS-FPM fire management positions.

FS RESPONSE:

In its follow-up memorandum, dated July 14, 2010, to the final report, the FS has determined that it will continue use of the GS-401 job series for these six IFPM and four FS-FPM fire management positions when appropriate. FS has spent considerable time working on the issue of qualification standards for fire management personnel. After much deliberation, work with our interagency wildland fire partners, and discussions with the Office of Personnel Management, the Chief has decided to continue the implementation of the IFPM and FS-FPM Standards. This action ensures that the FS is in alignment with its partners in the Department of Interior wildland fire agencies and with OPM Classification guidelines. As such, FS does not concur with this Recommendation to completely discontinue use of the GS-401 job series for these six IFPM and four FS-FPM fire management positions because there are instances, due to the complexity of the duties of the position, where GS-401 is the appropriately classified series. In other instances, GS-462 is the appropriately classified series. In fact, forestry technicians in this series will remain the majority of our workforce.

Agency leadership does not share OIG's conclusion that FS's ability to fight fires may be compromised due the classification of certain fire management staff under the GS-401 job series. Rather, agency leadership believes that these minimum standards have enhanced the basic safety of our firefighters and that these programs will have a long lasting and beneficial effect on our fire management workforce and leadership for generations to come. In addition, the agency believes the current qualification requirements and its selection practices are aligned to ensure that only those with relevant education and specialized field experience are placed into these professional fire fighting positions. The agency will continue to implement IFPM and FS-FPM in accordance with current practice and adhering to Office of Personnel Management guidelines. The Washington Office, through the Regional IFPM Leads, will continue to monitor implementation and be available for assistance to clarify any questions or issues and supervisors are expected to work with employees to obtain the necessary qualifications.

To communicate this revised direction, the FS will issue a policy memorandum that will follow up to the letter responding to the OIG Management Alert on this topic, dated December 3, 2008.

OIG POSITION:

We accept the FS' management decision on this recommendation. For final action, FS needs to provide the Office of the Chief Financial Officer a copy of the policy memorandum it issues following up on its response to the OIG Management Alert.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE: September 30, 2010

