

TO: Personnel Board

FROM: Michael Lipski, Human Resources

DATE: October 20, 2011

SUBJECT: Conservation Section-Parks Division

The Parks Division has over 2000 acres of conservation park land throughout the City. The Conservation Unit within the Division is responsible for managing the land, ensuring that native species thrive and invasive species are eradicated. The Unit also creates and maintains cross country ski trails throughout the parks in the winter. The Unit is supervised by Russ Hefty, Conservation Resource Supervisor (CG18-08). Until this year, the Unit had a permanent full-time Conservation Parks Leadworker (CG20-14) and a 0.8 FTE Conservation Maintenance Worker (CG16-09). Earlier this year, both positions became vacant. As a result, the Division has reviewed the staffing in the Conservation area and has recommended creation of a new classification of Conservation Technician to replace the 2 vacant positions. Both positions would be recreated in the new classification and the 0.8 FTE position would be upgraded to full-time. After meeting with the appropriate personnel in the Parks Division and reviewing the proposed position description (attached), I agree that a new classification of Conservation Technician is appropriate. In reviewing the new classification, I also recommend placement of the new classification in CG16-12 for the reasons outlined in this memo. Finally, I recommend increasing the 0.8 FTE position to a full-time position so that Parks can have 2 full-time personnel performing the required work.

As mentioned above, the Conservation Unit is responsible for maintaining all conservation areas in the Parks Division. This work involves conducting controlled burns of prairie land, recognizing and eradicating invasive plant species, knowing how to properly apply pesticides, cutting down trees and removing brush from conservation areas, maintaining trails in conservation areas, and engaging in outreach activities with the public. The proposed classification includes a higher expectation than what had been required of employees in the past. For instance, in the past, the class specification for Conservation Maintenance Worker (attached) required

Knowledge of the methods and equipment used in basic carpentry, mechanics, landscape construction, grounds maintenance and forestry. Knowledge of broad ecological relationships relative to plants and animals. Basic knowledge of native plant materials, methods of care, and methods of management and restoration.

However, the Parks Division has upgraded the standards to require working knowledge for each of these areas. Also, the class spec for the conservation maintenance worker had no requirement that the incumbent know anything about plant identification. The proposed classification includes "Working knowledge of native plant identification, methods of care, and methods of management and restoration-e.g. prescribed burns, brush mowing with tractors, applying herbicides." These increased requirements fit in with the increased expectations of the Parks Division for the employees. Again, conservation maintenance workers were required to

Construct and maintain mowed paths, gravel and woodchip trails, boardwalks and bridges, observation platforms, fences, gates, signs and maps.

Mow trails for people and vehicle access. Rake and seed new trails. Groom trails as required and maintain proper trail signing.

Plant and transplant native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. Trim back and remove trees, shrubs and brush to maintain paths and service roads.

Perform or assist with prairie restoration and management including planting, mowing, burning, and collecting seeds.

Mow, burn, cut and or treat plants with herbicides to control non-native vegetation. Remove non-native vegetation with a chain saw or other equipment.

However, this work was performed “under the direction of the Conservation Parks Leadworker and is reviewed through personal inspection and observation for compliance with instructions and established procedures.” The new classification provides the Conservation Technicians with general supervision and expects the employees to take a more proactive role in finding problems in the field and reporting back to the supervisor. Instead of performing at the direction of the Leadworker or Supervisor, the employees are to act independently to identify problems and reach a solution. Also, the classification includes new responsibility for enforcing ordinances and engaging in public outreach activities. In light of this, the training/experience requirements were adjusted to require not only a year of experience supplemented by a 2 year degree in natural resources, but that a 4 year degree in a related field including a field internship could also be considered a minimum qualification for the position.

Because the Parks Division has increased the expectations for the positions, a title change is appropriate. Conservation Technician reflects the technical nature of the classification in that it is required to proactively manage issues in the field. It isn’t just a worker carrying out the instructions of a supervisor. The State of Wisconsin has a similar classification of Wildlife Technician so the title is consistent with other titles in the field.

After reviewing the increased expectations in the class specification, it is appropriate to review whether the placement in range 9 is appropriate. I find that this classification functions at a higher level than other classifications in range 9. For instance, the Parks Maintenance Worker, in range 9, only requires “One year of directly related public works, landscaping, or construction experience including varied manual and semi-skilled work.” There is no requirement for a technical or 4 year degree for this classification. In addition, a Parks Maintenance Worker is not required to safely operate the wide variety of equipment that a Conservation Technician is expected to use as outlined in the class specification. An Arborist 1 is in range 10, but only requires “Two years of responsible experience in tree trimming/pruning and related tree care activities which involved significant experience in operating specialized tree trimming/pruning equipment.” Again, the Arborist 1 does not require any technical or 4 year degree and while the Arborist 1 operates similar equipment to the Conservation Technician, the Conservation Technician is responsible for more equipment and has higher knowledge requirements. Similarly, the Recreation Services Assistant in range 10, which enforces ordinances and performs heavy manual labor, does not require any technical or 4 year degree, does not require

the same level of knowledge, and is not expected to operate the wide variety of equipment expected of the Conservation Technician. Placement in range 12 is more consistent with other positions in the Parks Division. The Arborist 2, in addition to operating equipment similar to the Arborist 1, is responsible for higher knowledge requirements and requires a pesticide license. The Arborist 1 does not require the pesticide license, but the Conservation Technician does. Although the Arborist 2 is required to lead a crew of lower-level staff, this is offset by the fact that the Conservation Technician will oversee seasonal/hourly staff, and is still required to operate a wider variety of equipment than the Arborist 2. Similarly, the Public Works Leadworker in range 12 must perform heavy manual labor and oversees a large staff. However, the Leadworker does not have the same technical or 4 year degree requirements as the Conservation Technician, and is not expected to enforce ordinances. The Parks Division has a Forestry Operations Specialist in range 15, but this position requires a 4 year degree plus an additional year of field experience, and inspects trees throughout the City, not just in Parks areas. The Specialist also requires Thorough Knowledge in areas where the Technician only requires Working Knowledge so the higher range is appropriate. Based on this, the placement in Range 12 is most appropriate.

As mentioned at the start of this memo, the Parks Division is looking to create 2 positions within the Conservation Technician classification, and this will be accomplished by reclassifying the existing vacant Conservation Parks Leadworker and Conservation Maintenance Worker positions. In addition, the Conservation Maintenance Worker will be converted to a full-time position. It is appropriate to eliminate a leadworker when the unit only has 2 employees reporting directly to the supervisor. In addition, the new classification is in an equivalent salary range to where the Leadworker was classified previously. Finally, placement of both in CG16 is appropriate as these are field positions, not office/administrative positions.

We have prepared the necessary Resolution to implement this recommendation

Editor's Note:

Compensation Group/Range	2011 Annual Minimum (Step 1)	2011 Annual Maximum (Step 5)	2011 Annual Maximum +12% longevity
16/09	40,297	45,015	50,414
20/14	43,655	48,421	54,236
16/12	43,817	48,609	54,444

cc: Kevin Briski-Parks Superintendent
Eric Knepp-Parks Financial and Administrative Manager
Charles Romaines-Parks Operations Manager
Russ Hefty-Conservation Resource Supervisor
Greg Leifer-Labor Relations Manager