



National Federation of Federal Employees

International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
Forest Service Council



Warner Vanderheuel, President Matthew Brossard, General Vice-President Sandee Conner, Secretary-Treasurer

FOREST SERVICE COUNCIL UPDATES

October 28, 2024

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INTRODUCING THE NEW FOREST SERVICE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BOARD:

The September NFFE-FSC held its convention prior to the NFFE 52nd convention in Minneapolis, MI. Forest Service Locals sent elected delegates from across the Forest Service to convention to vote for the Forest Service Council Officers. President Warner “Andy” Vanderheuel, General Vice President Matthew Brossard, Secretary-Treasurer Sandee Conner and 10 zoned Vice Presidents of the executive board were elected by acclamation, R8 CVP Genevieve Kotyk elected at convention, and R2 CVP Paul Dziekan has been designated by the FSC until elections can be held.

President Warner “Andy” Vanderheuel served for the last term on the FSC as the General Vice President; his agency job is an AFMO with R9- Huron-Manistee NF- Huron Shores Ranger District. From his agency job he brings the important incident command skillset of communication, triaging situations, designating the appropriate representatives to take action which will help our Union ensure successful resolution of opportunities and issues. During the last term he was part of the Master Agreement team bargaining our new contract. Andy has also been one of the leaders for many of the NFFE and Forest Service Council legislative efforts in

Washington DC for the last four years. Andy has a strong relationship with the NFFE national office working on legislative issues, served as a Union representative for NFFE at White House, USDA, and Forest Service Union forums and meetings with agency leaders.

General Vice President Matthew Brossard is new to the Forest Service Council, his agency job is Fire Captain with R5-Angeles NF-San Gabriel River Ranger District. Brossard brings his fresh perspective into the Forest Service Council and a passion for a strong Union. Matthew is part of reviving Region 5 locals in California through strong representation even with strong pushback from management who were not used to having their decisions challenged when there were adverse impacts to Bargaining Unit Employees. Matthew has been one of the key leaders that have helped reorganize Federal Locals in R5 empowering new representatives to be engaged and active with their Union, which is changing Management Union dynamics bringing balance back to the employees. Matthew has helped with NFFE legislation efforts visiting Washington D.C. multiple times advocating for wildland fire fighters.

FOREST SERVICE COUNCIL- NATIONAL OFFICERS

Elected at the 2024 NFFE-Forest Service Council Convention. *New to the position.

Position	Name	Email
President	Warner (Andy) Vanderheuel*	Warner.vanderheuel@usda.gov
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VP, Region 5	Justin Brown	justin.i.brown@usda.gov
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THE WORK WE DO IN SOLIDARITY

We have been busy working for you, here are a few highlights from the national representational work your Union does.

PERMANENT SEASONAL EMPLOYEES' MAXIMUM CARRYOVER LEAVE:

Oct. 16, 2024

The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and the FSC helped to secure a major win for employees in accessing “use-or-lose” annual leave hours. The Forest Service will not be extending previously scheduled tour agreements for permanent seasonal employees (PSE), which meant some employees would have to forfeit their accrued leave in excess of 240 hours because they wouldn’t be able to use those hours this season.

NFFE brought this issue to the attention of USFS management and encouraged them to find a solution for employees so that they can access the annual leave they had earned.

The Forest Service [announced](#) that the agency will be providing limited tour extensions for PSEs so that employees can use their annual leave in excess of 240 hours. The agency will also automatically restore any forfeited leave hours for employees in unique situations who cannot have their tours extended or for those who have already been placed into non-pay status. This way, no PSE will have to forfeit the leave they had earned but were unable to use because of the USFS decision not to extend schedule tours.

The USFS Washington Office is asking local management and supervisors to adhere to the request so that all Forest Service employees will have the opportunity to use their extra leave hours.

“The Forest Service’s intent is to support the continued well-being and resiliency of all our employees, including our permanent seasonals,” Mary Rice, Deputy Chief for Business Operations at the U.S. Forest Service, said in a statement.

We commend the Forest Service for taking quick action to correct the unintended consequences of their decision and look forward to continuing effective collaboration with leadership when these types of issues arise.

CAREER LADDER PROMOTIONS-TEMP TO PERM/ ENTRY LEVEL HIRING ISSUES:

NFFE-FSC elevated Career Ladder Promotion (CLP) issues with recent hiring events resulting in changes to ensure that approximately 800 bargaining unit employees will receive retroactive or timely CLP including backpay.

In the Spring of 2024, NFFE-FSC notified management that bargaining unit employees had not received their Career Ladder Promotion (CLP) when they were first eligible regarding the National Hiring Events and many of the new hires were provided misleading and inaccurate information upon acceptance of the permanent position. Many temporary seasonal employees were misinformed that they could be promoted to the highest grade they held in their temporary position after 90 days of being hired into the permanent position. The Forest Service Branch Chief committed to the Union that Human Resources Management (HRM) would provide [policy review and clarification](#) on the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) that impact CLP and conduct an audit/review to correct any CLP that were not processed timely as per CLP in the [Master Agreement](#), agency policies, and CFRs.

Result of Review: At the conclusion of the review, 1,026 employees of the 1,700 were identified who would be eligible for a CLP from February 2024 through June of 2026. There are approximately 803 employees eligible for CLP from February 2024 through September 2024.

FS Next Steps: HRM will email identified employees that addresses the issue specifically related to the National Hiring Events. The emails will be sent 1 week before the supervisory notices are released.

HRM will begin processing the CLPs as they are received, beginning October through December 6, 2024. After November 22, 2024, the appropriate HRST will process any other CLPs associated with these events through June 2026.

Union Next Steps: The Union has just filed a national grievance on behalf of bargaining unit employees to seek the additional relief/resolution for financial damages based on accepting the position under widespread misleading information from agency officials. We also have many individual grievances on this matter that we have filed. Please reach out to your Local Union representative with any questions about Career Ladder Promotions as soon as possible to avoid timeliness issues.

TRAINING FOR 2024 MASTER AGREEMENT BETWEEN FOREST SERVICE AND NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES:

NFFE Union and labor relation representatives are providing joint training for the new [Master Agreement](#) across NFFE bargaining units. This training is for all bargaining unit employees, supervisors, and management. It's a great opportunity for you to learn about your Union contract that outlines your employee's rights, bargaining rights, and rights for representation, with 45 articles that cover working conditions including promotions, work schedules, position descriptions leave, awards, pay and per diem, performance, safety and much more. Trainings are being conducted virtually and in hybrid format this fall, late winter, and potentially early spring. Some regions may provide trainings at each Forest and others may consolidate the trainings. We encourage all BUE to take advantage of this opportunity.

NFFE PENS LETTER TO FOREST SERVICE REGARDING NEW WILDLAND FIREFIGHTER OCCUPATIONAL SERIES:

August 27, 2024

The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) [sent a letter](#) to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) regarding the agency's new occupational series for federal wildland firefighters. Addressed to USDA Secretary Vilsack, USFS Chief Moore and Undersecretary Wilkes, the letter lays out the reasons why NFFE is not endorsing the launch of the new occupational series in its current form.

“The Union’s primary goal was to ensure the position descriptions (PDs) are accurate, reflect the modern emergency duties of the positions, and conform to classification standards,” the letter reads. “Management will implement the series using position descriptions we believe remain flawed. As a result, employees who volunteer to opt-in to the new series will still be performing duties without equal pay for substantially equal work in violation of law, rule and regulation.”

We encourage wildland fire employees to review their position description (PD) and ensure your PD accurately covers your principal duties, knowledge requirements for 80 percent or more of your work situation, and includes major duties, special training, performance, or credentials that are necessary to perform your job.

Per Article 14.3a. Any employee who feels that they are performing duties outside the scope of their PD, or that the PD is otherwise inaccurate, may make a written request to their immediate supervisor that the position be reviewed. Reach out to a Union representative for any questions on position description reviews. Detailed PD issues can also be found in letter linked above.

TIPS FOR APPLICANTS:

If you get a notification that you were not referred for a job and you believe it was an error, you can appeal that by following the process in the Master Agreement Article 16.7.f.

Employees may request a review of their application within 7 days of the notification that they are not referred to the hiring official. The employee will request a review by opening a case with HRM noting you are “requesting a review per Master Agreement Article 16 appeal process”. Employees are encouraged to also contact the hiring official to let them know a second level review has been requested.

We are hearing an uptick from applicants during fire hire not being referred. The Union has been able to help several of those applicants get back on the referral list prior to selection.

We recommend applicants also reach out you’re your Union representative for assistance.

NFFE NATIONAL NEWS:

The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) concluded its 52nd National Convention in September with elections of National Executive Committee (NEC) officers and National Trustee. NFFE National President Randy Erwin and National Secretary-Treasurer Max Alonzo (former FS employee) were elected by acclamation. The NFFE members elected to the NEC include Robyn Bolgla, Cassandra Buckhanan, Crispin Castro, Kamil Marcinka, and Jake Pannell. Bob Beckley (former FS employee) and Lisa Foust were re-elected to their positions on the NEC. Genny Kotyk (R8 FSC-CVP/current FS employee) was elected to the position of trustee.

Other NFFE News can be found here: <https://nffe.org/nffe-news/nffeneewsroom/>

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS:

We want to thank our NFFE dues paying members. Being a dues-paying Union member is essential to creating a better workplace for everyone. Your support empowers us to provide skilled legal representations from dedicated attorneys committed to defending workers' rights. It also fuels our ability to propose and enact vital pro-labor legislation that directly benefits employees across all federal agencies. Additionally, your contributions fund critical labor rights training for our stewards, who play a crucial role in advocating for and effectively bargaining with management on working conditions for all employees. Our collective commitment strengthens our voice and builds a fairer, safer, and more just workplace for everyone.



[Join Here](#)



[NFFE-USFS
Master
Agreement](#)

You can look-up your local number with the “Bargaining Unit Description” link on the Master Agreement page: <http://www.nffe-fsc.org/master-agreement/>