

# USDA Forest Service Society of American Foresters Convention 2022

## Hiring Event Guide and Informational Materials

Online (USAJOBS) Hiring Event:  
September 19-28, 2022

On-site Recruitment Event:  
September 20-24, 2022

# Table of Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. WHAT IS THE PATHWAYS PROGRAM.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Student Interns.....	3
2.2 Recent Graduates .....	4
<b>3. TIMELINE OF THE HIRING EVENT.....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Critical Dates for POCs .....	4
3.2 Online Application Process.....	4
3.3 Selections.....	5
3.4 Post-Selections .....	5
<b>4. REGIONAL POINTS OF CONTACT .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5. APPLICATION REVIEW TEAM.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6. INTERVIEW TEAMS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
6.1 Online Applicant Interviews .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>7. REFERENCE CHECKS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8. SELECTION PROCESS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
8.1 Veteran’s Placement.....	7
8.2 Student Interns.....	7
8.3 Recent Graduates and Merit .....	7
<b>9. FOR QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>APPENDIX A - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS .....</b>	<b>7</b>

## 1. Introduction

The Forest Service will hold an in-person National Hiring and Recruitment event to coincide with the 2022 Society of American Foresters (SAF) National Convention, September 20-24, 2022 in Baltimore, MD. We will be hiring Pathways Program Interns, Recent Graduates, and internal merit applicants to include Resource Assistant Program, Public Land Corps, Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act and Veterans Employment Opportunity Act eligibles. The materials below are intended to help the regional point of contact (POC), hiring managers, and line officers understand the process for this hiring event.

Applications will only be accepted through USAJOBS, though we will have Forest Service recruiters, HR specialists, and other agency volunteers onsite September 20-24 2022 to assist with the application process.

After HR has determined which applicants are qualified (Once an applicant is deemed eligible and qualified by HR they become a "candidate" for our positions), an Application Review Team will screen the qualified candidates to determine who to interview. Interviews will take place in November and will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. Candidates will be evaluated consistently and at the same time. The entire process will be conducted using a centralized national team with support coming from the regions. Selections and job offers will take place 1-9 December 2022.

For a list of Frequently Asked Questions and their answers see Appendix A.

## 2. What is the Pathways Program

### 2.1 Student Interns

The Pathways Internship program offers career development opportunities to students enrolled in qualifying educational programs or institutions. Interns and recent graduates receive on the job training and mentorship. The Internship program replaces the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). This Program is designed to provide students enrolled in a wide variety of educational institutions, from high school to graduate level, with opportunities to work in agencies and explore federal careers while still in school and while getting paid for the work performed. While interning, the student must complete 640 hours of training, adequately perform in their job, and maintain their status as a student. The training hours may include previous relevant work experience. Upon successful completion of the program, student interns may be converted to a permanent position. Visit the [OPM website](#) for more information.

## 2.2 Recent Graduates

The Recent Graduates Program affords developmental experiences in the Federal Government intended to promote possible careers in the civil service to individuals who have recently graduated or will be graduating from qualifying educational institutions or programs. To be eligible, applicants must apply within two years of degree or certificate completion (except for veterans precluded from doing so due to their military service obligation, who have up to six years after degree completion to apply), or be within 9 months of an upcoming graduation date. Successful candidates are placed in a dynamic, developmental program with the potential to lead to a civil service career in the Federal Government. The probationary period of this program lasts for 1 year (unless the training requirements of the position warrant a longer and more structured training program). Visit the [OPM website](#) for more information.

## 3. Timeline of the Hiring Event

The Timeline for each component is listed in the following sections.

### 3.1 Critical Dates for POCs

August 1, 2022	SAF Call Letter issued
August 5, 2022	Identify Regional POCs
July 5, 2022	SAF meetings management package
Ongoing	Conference details/info/setup/schedule/registration
August 30, 2022	Positions to be filled approved through eTracker (SF52)
September 9, 2022	HR/Core Team communicates with Regional POCs if needed to finalize position details (GIS Map Content)
September 30, 2022	Volunteer sign-up forms for application review team and two-person teams for interviews due

### 3.2 Online Application Process

September 19 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup>	Vacancy announcements posted for student intern, recent graduate, and merit positions
September 20 <sup>th</sup> -24 <sup>th</sup>	Society of American Foresters (SAF) National Convention

September 29 <sup>th</sup> – October 13 <sup>th</sup>	Applicant qualification and eligibility review by HRM
October 12 <sup>th</sup>	Webinar for Application Review Team
October 17 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup>	Package Splitting
October 20 <sup>th</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup>	Application Review
October 25 <sup>th</sup>	Master applicant list provide by HR
October 26 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup>	Referred candidates (1000) invited to schedule interviews
October 26 <sup>th</sup> – November 6 <sup>th</sup>	Reference checks for those being interviewd initiated using MS Forms
October 28 <sup>th</sup>	Webinar for Interview Teams
November 1 <sup>st</sup> – 4 <sup>th</sup>	Interview period
November 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Webinar for Recommending Officials
November 6 <sup>th</sup>	Reference Checks complete
November 7 <sup>th</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup>	Recommending Officials review available candidates for selection and complete recommendation forms
November 28 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup>	All data is compiled for Selecting Officials. Job Position Matrix created for selection process.

### 3.3 Selections

December 1 <sup>st</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Selection week (Tentative job offers made)</p> <p>Core team, Regional POCs (with significant number of positions) and Selection Official meet inperson to de-conflict, approve recommendations, and make tentative job offers</p> <p>December 1-3 Vets &amp; Intern Positions</p> <p>December 5-9 Recent Grad &amp; Merit</p>
--	--

### 3.4 Post-Selections

December 16 <sup>th</sup>	Notification is sent to candidates not selected
---------------------------	---

## 4. Regional Points of Contact

The Regional POCs will help the region collect information for submitting positions, solicit for application reviewers and interviewers from their region, provide recommendations for selections, and provide pre-developed outreach material to their region. Each region may determine how they approach these items.

## 5. Application Review Team

The Regional POCs will solicit for application reviews and instruct volunteers to sign up no later than September 30<sup>th</sup>. The reviewers should have the capability to screen applications for the forester and forestry technician (focus on timber and silviculture) series. For every 4 positions submitted at least one reviewer is required per Region. Volunteers must be available to complete their assigned applications during the week of October 20<sup>th</sup>.

The application review team will screen qualified applicants to determine whether or not they should be interviewed. Materials used during the screening process will be provided to the reviewer and a training webinar will be conducted on Wednesday October 12<sup>th</sup>. The webinar will be recorded and made available to those who cannot attend in person. This will be an electronic process and as such each reviewer is required to have access to the internet and the ability to be on the network.

## 6. Interview Teams

The Regional POCs will solicit for interview panel member volunteers to sign up no later than September 30<sup>th</sup>. For every 2 positions submitted at least one interview panel team member is required per Region. The panel members will be teamed up to consist of 2 member interview teams. The interview teams will be determined by the National Strategic Recruitment Team (NSRT). Volunteers must be available to complete their assigned interviews during the week of November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Interviews will be conducted consistently. Each team will be provided with electronic forms that include a script of what to say, the questions to ask, and a score sheet. This will be an electronic process and as such each interview team is required to have access to the internet and the ability to be on the network. A webinar outlining the interview process will be conducted on October 28<sup>th</sup>. The webinar will be recorded and made available to those who cannot attend in person.

## 7. Reference Checks

Each applicant that is invited to schedule an interview will be sent an email to request the name and email addresses of two references, one of which must be a current or previous supervisor. Each identified reference will be sent an email to include a Microsoft Forms survey link. References will receive a reply due date and instructions on how to submit the reference check information. Reference check information will be due by November 6th. Information will be submitted with the application package and made available during the recommendation and selection process.

## 8. Selection Process

Application packages that include application materials (resume, cover letter, transcripts, etc.), prescreening sheets, interview sheets, and references will be packaged and provided to the POCs by November 7<sup>th</sup>. Each region will have until Friday November 25<sup>th</sup> to rank qualified and interviewed candidates for each position. The final rankings must be submitted by November 25<sup>th</sup> utilizing the provided Recommendation Form. The Core Team and Regional POCs will finalize selections and HRM will make tentative job offers starting Thursday December 1<sup>st</sup>. The Agency selecting official will be the Senior Advisor for National Recruitment (Tina Terrell).

### 8.1 Veteran's Placement

On Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup> selections for Pathways intern and recent graduate positions with preference eligible veteran applicants will be confirmed and job offers will be extended.

### 8.2 Student Interns

On Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> selections for remaining student intern positions will be made and job offers extended.

### 8.3 Recent Graduates and Merit

Starting Monday December 4<sup>th</sup> through Friday December 9<sup>th</sup> selections for remaining recent graduate positions will be made and job offers extended. Merit candidates will be evaluated with the recent graduates during this process.

## 9. For Questions or Concerns

For questions about this event, please email [SM.FS.SAF-hiring@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.SAF-hiring@usda.gov).

### Appendix A - Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Click on a question below to find out the answer:

***WHAT IS A ONSITE RECRUITMENT AND HIRING EVENT?***

***WHAT IS THE PATHWAYS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM?***

***WHAT IS THE PATHWAYS RECENT GRADUATE PROGRAM?***

***HOW DOES THIS EVENT WORK?***

***WHO ATTENDS THE SAF CONVENTION?***

***WHAT GRADE LEVELS CAN MANAGERS FILL POSITIONS FOR DURING THIS RECRUITMENT EVENT?***

***CAN POSITIONS OTHER THAN FORESTRY BE FILLED AT THE SAF CONVENTION?***

***AS A HIRING MANAGER, WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?***

***DO APPLICANTS NEED TO ATTEND THE CONVENTION TO APPLY FOR A POSITION?***

***WILL WE BE COMPLYING WITH UNION AGREEMENTS?***

***WHO WILL BE CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS?***

***HOW WILL REFERENCE CHECKS BE CONDUCTED?***

***WHAT OTHER HIRING AUTHORITIES ARE AVAILABLE AT THE EVENT?***

***HOW WILL SELECTIONS BE MADE?***

**What is an onsite recruitment and hiring event?** It is an approach to hiring that capitalizes on qualifications and interests of individuals drawn to occupational events and conferences, and utilizes the Pathways Program hiring authorities to target current and recently graduated students for employment. Positions will be advertised under the Pathways Internship Indefinite and Recent Graduate Authorities.

**What is the Pathways Internship Program?** The Internship Program is for current students. To be eligible a student must meet the following definition: an individual accepted for enrollment or enrolled and seeking a degree in a qualifying educational institution on a full or half-time basis (as defined by the institution in which the student is enrolled). The Internship Program provides students in high school, colleges, trade schools, and other qualifying educational institutions, the opportunity to explore Federal careers as paid employees while still completing their education. [Click](#) for more information.

**What is the Pathways Recent Graduate Program?** The Recent Graduate Program is for individuals who have graduated from a qualifying educational institution within the last two years. Veterans who are unable to apply within two years of graduation due to their military service have up to six years from graduation to apply. The Recent Graduate Program provides an opportunity for an individual to enter into





a developmental program for a period of 1 year with the potential to lead to a career in the Agency. [Click](#) for more information.

**How does this event work?** Jobs will be advertised on USAJOBS prior to the start of the convention (September 19<sup>th</sup>) and will close after the convention concludes (September 28<sup>th</sup>). Forest Service subject matter experts will be on-site and available in a “Recruiting Room” to answer duty location questions. There is also a “Computer Lab” established to assist onsite applicants enter their application via USAJOBS. Interviews will be conducted virtually after announcements close.

**Who attends the convention?** The convention is the largest gathering of foresters in North America. Last year over 4,000 foresters and natural resource professionals attended the SAF Convention. This included approximately 500 students. Competition for funding to attend the Convention is strong, making the quality of students who attend the event high. [Click](#) here for more information about the Convention.

**What grade levels can managers fill positions for during this recruitment event?** Internship positions are generally filled at grades- GS-02 through GS-07, depending upon the individual’s qualifications and the vacancy announcement. The following is a general guideline for students applying for an internship: students enrolled in an undergraduate program generally qualify at a GS-3, 4, or 5; students enrolled in a master’s program generally qualify up to a GS-7; and students enrolled in a PhD program generally qualify up to a GS-9. Upon graduation, program completion and successful work performance, a student employee may convert to a permanent technician or professional position. The grade levels for conversion include promotion potential of at least a GS-6 for those in a technician series and at least a GS-9 or GS-11 for those in a professional series. Recent graduates will likely qualify for at least a GS-5 to start. Starting grade level at conversion depends upon academic and professional qualifications; future promotions depend upon successful performance and supervisor recommendation.

**Can positions other than forestry be filled at the SAF convention?** Yes, although most positions that are filled at the SAF convention are forestry and forestry tech in the GS-460 and 462 series because the target audience for the convention is students majoring in forestry or a related field. The forester series (460) includes positions such as silviculture, timber sale preparation, timber sale administration, and general forestry. Forest technician (462) positions can be filled as well. These are the series that we will be focusing on at the Convention. Because we are limited in the number of positions we can take for the recent graduate positions, we will not be accepting positions outside of the 460 and 462 series at this time.

**As a hiring manager, what are my responsibilities?** The responsibilities of the hiring manager are as follows: 1) Identify the position you would like to fill and determine whether or not you would like to use the Pathways Internship or Recent Graduate authority, 2) Submit and have the SF 52 approved no later than August 30<sup>th</sup>. 3) Begin the paperwork process by working with your regional point of contact and conduct outreach using the supplied outreach materials, 4) Provide any required information to your designated HR coordinator, and 5) Be available for any questions that the hiring committee may have for you.

**Do applicants need to attend the Convention to apply for a position?** No. There will be an opportunity for people to apply online through USAJOBS. We expect positions to be posted to USAJOBS beginning on September 19<sup>th</sup> for interns, recent grads and merit. Applicants who apply and are moved forward to the interview process will be interviewed beginning November 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> via Microsoft Teams.

**Will we be complying with union agreements?** Yes. All Article 16 requirements and USDA and Forest Service regulations will be followed. All recent graduate positions advertised, at matching series, grades, and position descriptions, will include a merit announcement which will be posted concurrently on USAJOBS. These announcements will be open for 7 days (or more). All merit applicants will go through

the same interview and reference check process as the recent graduate applicants. Those merit applicants who receive a high interview score will be combined with the recent graduate applicants for consideration. There currently is not a requirement for outreach in Article 16 unless the position has been previously outreached.

**Who will be conducting the interviews?** Each region/station will be asked to provide volunteers for interview teams for the online applicants. Two person teams will be established by the National Requirment Team, you may not be partnered with other members from your Forest/Unit due to the program/process established. We expect those that are invited to be interviewed to do so beginning November 1<sup>st</sup>. Interviewers will be given a script to read from which contains the interview questions and clear instructions on how to conduct the interview and score the applicant.

**How will reference checks be conducted?** Reference checks will be conducted using MS Forms. A link to MS Forms will be provided to the identified references. References must be received by November 6<sup>th</sup> to be considered as part of the application.

**What other hiring authorities are available at the event?** The Schedule D authority (e.g., Pathways Intern Indefinite and Recent Graduate) will be the primary external hiring authority used at this event. Forest Service internal and some external merit applicants will be considered alongside recent graduate applicants. Land Management eligibles whose last appointment was with the FS; ICTAP/CTAP/RPL eligible candidates; Peace Corps & AmeriCorps VISTA; Public Land Corps; Resource Assistants; VEOA.). HR Specialists and recruiters will be involved to provide assistance and answer questions.

**How will selections be made?** Regional recommendations will be forwarded through a TBD online tool that will be used to deconflict selectees of mulitple positions. Agency designated representatives, will make final selections.