# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry |
| Agency Mission | To provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition and related issues based on public policy, the best available science and effective management; to provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds and healthy private working lands. |
| Position Overview | The undersecretary for natural resources and environment is the principal advisor to the secretary on policy to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the nation's natural resources. The undersecretary oversees the Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service on a variety of natural resource issues. |
| Compensation | Level III $165,300 (5 U.S.C. § 5314)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The Forest Service has about 28,000 permanent employees plus about 4,500 seasonal employees. The National Resources Conservation Services has about 10,000 employees. The budget across the two agencies is about $10 billion. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Oversees the Forest Service, which sustains the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations * Oversees the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which provides leadership, technical assistance and financial assistance to help farmers, ranchers and forest owners conserve natural resources on working lands * Advises the secretary on natural resource conservation policy |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Understanding and background of natural resource conservation and forestry * Experience managing large organizations as the undersecretary manages the budget and employees of the two largest agencies at USDA * Partnerships and relationships with local communities, conservation and landowner stakeholder groups, natural resources and recreation businesses |
| Competencies | * Willingness to travel a lot * Ability to work with diverse stakeholder groups |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Robert Bonnie (2013 to 2017): Senior Advisor to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack for Environment and Climate Change; Vice President for Land Conservation and Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund; Managing Director, Center for Conservation Incentives, Environmental Defense Fund | |
| Harris D. Sherman (2009 to 2013): Executive Director, Colorado Department of Natural Resources; Senior Partner, Arnold & Porter LLP; Executive Director, Colorado Department of Natural Resources | |
| Mark Edward Rey (2001 to 2009): Staff Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; Chief of Staff, Senator Larry Craig (R-ID); Vice President of Forest Resources, American Forest and Paper Association | |

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)