



Forest Range Officer — the state exam nobody warns you about, and the IFS ceiling nobody mentions



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Clear the state PSC, run your own range in a year — then spend the next 20 waiting for the promotion that IFS officers skip entirely.

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THE 30-YEAR JOURNEY

Around year 8–10 the path divides, but how it divides depends on your state. States that run a departmental competitive exam for ACF promotion can move you up in 8–12 years. States that don't rely on seniority-DPC; ACF in 15–20 years is typical there. Either way, DFO is the grade where state cadre officers and IFS officers finally occupy the same room, about 15 years apart in service.

SALARY PROJECTION

If you joined today

Figures as of June 2026

7th CPC pay matrix, DA 60% (January 2026 revision), 16% HRA (Y-class posting — most range and division offices), NPS 10% employee contribution; UP anchor; pay fixation rule applied at promotion. The two paths look similar at year 10 and even at year 20 — this is because 7th CPC pay fixation rules carry forward accumulated L7 increments when an officer is promoted late to L10. The gap opens clearly at year 30: the exam track reaches Conservator of Forests (Level 13); the seniority track typically peaks at DFO (Level 12) in its final years — if it reaches DFO at all.

YEAR	MILESTONE	DPC / SENIORITY ROUTE where most state forest officers settle	DEPARTMENTAL EXAM ROUTE where your state runs the promotion exam
0	Joining (FRO)	L7 · ₹80k Both paths identical so far · Forest Range Officer	
10	Paths split	L7 · ₹1.01L Forest Range Officer (senior)	L10 · ₹1.03L Asst Conservator of Forests
20	Mid-career	L10 · ₹1.43L Asst Conservator of Forests	L12 · ₹1.45L Divisional Forest Officer
30	Retirement range	L12 · ₹1.55L Divisional Forest Officer	L13 · ₹2.15L Conservator of Forests

In-hand figures, Y-class HRA. Paths diverge visibly only at year 25+. Snapshot dated June 2026.

Sarkari Job Guide does not claim this salary structure. The figures come from the verified sources listed on the career page.

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Visual career maps for government jobs in India. Each map shows the full 30-year path: pay at every stage, promotion timelines, and the costs nobody mentions.

Salaries and rules change. Read the latest version:

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