



Mason-Lake Conservation District Vacancy Announcement Biologist

The Mason-Lake Conservation District is seeking a Biologist to serve as a consultant to farms and private landowners looking to manage their natural resources. This position will be part of a welcoming team in beautiful western Michigan, where there is a diverse variety of agriculture (including row crops, orchards, dairy, livestock, floriculture, silviculture) forests, dunes, inland lakes and streams. This project is funded by a grant through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Job Status: Hourly, full-time, grant funded

Term: Approximately 15 months, through November 2024. Potential to extend dependent on applicant's ability to manage projects and successfully obtain future grants

Compensation: \$20 - \$24/hour (equivalent pay to federal GS 7/9)

Benefits: Paid federal holidays, vacation leave, sick leave, health insurance option, IRA retirement plan with employer match

Schedule: Monday – Friday, 8:00am-4:30pm. Occasional evenings or weekend days

Location: Scottville, MI.

Start Date: September, 2023

Closing Date: August 23 or until filled

Workplace Overview:

Conservation Districts are local government agencies that provide technical and financial assistance for private landowners (including farms) that want to implement conservation activities or practices on their land. Mason-Lake Conservation District (MLCD) staff positions and projects are solely grant-funded, making for an innovative and challenging workplace. The Conservation District office is co-located with federal partner Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and this strong partnership generates a fun, charismatic and busy office, with over 3,000 walk-in clients and presentation attendees annually.

Position Summary:

The Biologist will serve in a capacity similar to a consultant with aspects of outreach and education. Services provided by the Biologist may include farm or property site visits, providing technical advice to landowners and farmers implementing conservation practices, developing conservation plans, and providing guidance on Farm Bill program sign-ups. Projects will focus on agriculture operations and their intersection with natural resources. Wildlife habitat, forestry and stream restoration are also a large component of the workload in the area.

The current project focus for the Biologist is on promoting the ideals of regenerative agriculture and holistic land management through field days, workshops and on-the-ground conservation activities. The Biologist promotes water quality and soil health improvements by guiding landowners to implement practices such as filter strips, field borders, biodiverse riparian buffers and drainage ditches, cover cropping and more. The Biologist will utilize current research and NRCS conservation planning standards to help landowners better understand, plan, manage and conserve their natural resources. Over the long term, this position offers room for growth and creativity in interdisciplinary projects for a candidate who can recognize natural resource needs in the community, create a plan of action to address those needs and pool resources to implement that plan. As a main approach to helping facilitate and fund these landowner projects, the Biologist will work directly with NRCS to complete landowner “grant” applications to the Agricultural Act of 2014 and 2018, generally referred to as the Farm Bill.

Position Duties:

- Provide, as a public service, on-site technical advice to private landowners for the implementation of conservation practices. Work closely and maintain a good working relationship with other resource management professionals, both public and private, in support of a holistic approach to the management of natural resources, building local partnerships to achieve land management goals
- Organize and promote peer-to-peer learning among farmers to incentivize implementation of regenerative agricultural practices through workshops, seminars and farm field days
 - Compile current research on regenerative agriculture and holistic management to utilize in outreach events as outlined above and market or promote implementation of said activities on private lands
- Track grant deliverables and client interactions accurately using StepL model, Conservation Desktop, Excel or similar programs; report progress via monthly staff reports, annual grant program reports
- Support Conservation District programs and assist with office walk-in clients, answering telephones, general office up-keep, major events such as tree sale, annual meeting and other duties as assigned by the MLCD Executive Director
 - Promote District events, Farm Bill programs and general conservation education through website, newsletters, other media, demonstrations and workshops
 - Prepare and provide presentations to groups on soil and water conservation topics, as requested
- Work cohesively with NRCS and assist clients with utilizing Farm Bill programs including, as needed, application processing, contract development and administration, application ranking and document preparation for program selections, survey, design, and construction inspection

Required Qualifications:

- Bachelor's of Science in biological sciences, agriculture, natural resource management or a related field
- A minimum of two years of experience in agriculture, field biology, or other conservation fieldwork
- Self-directed, creative problem solver with a sense of humor and ability to connect with landowners to "sell" conservation
- Excellent computer skills and ability to navigate on shared computer network and Google Drive workspaces, utilizing specialized planning programs (GIS-based), modeling software
- Possess technical knowledge of natural resource management as applicable to private lands and farms
- Excellent organizational, time management, written and verbal communication skills
- Able to work efficiently in and outdoors in varying conditions and rough terrain; able to lift 50 pounds
- Must maintain a valid driver's license and clean driving record
- Occasional travel for trainings and meetings is required, including overnight
- Must be able to pass a Federal Background Security Check

Preferred Qualifications:

- Familiarity with agricultural operations and the ability to quickly learn basic wildlife habitat, forestry and stream management techniques OR vice versa
- Able to utilize pertinent scientific research and disseminate that information to appropriate audiences
- Experience collaborating on, developing, and delivering conservation education programs to a variety of audiences in diverse settings
- Experience writing grants and related grant reporting or ability to learn quickly

To Apply:

Send cover letter, resume, unofficial transcripts and three professional references as a single PDF to Dani McGarry, Executive Director of Mason-Lake Conservation District, at dani.mcgarry@macd.org with "Application – Biologist" in the subject line. Applications received by August 23rd will be most competitive. Please direct any questions to Dani McGarry, Executive Director, at (231) 757-3707 ext. 102. Learn more about Mason-Lake Conservation District and projects at www.mason-lakeConservation.org