



Conservation Technical Assistant Position Description

POSITION SUMMARY:

The Conservation Technical Assistant is an employee of the Manistee Conservation District (MCD) who supports the district's partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) by assisting with the planning, implementing, and processing of USDA NRCS contracts in Manistee and Benzie Counties. The employee will provide technical assistance to producers and landowners in Manistee and Benzie Counties to help them understand, plan, manage, protect, and utilize their natural resources through the implementation of conservation programs funded through the Farm Bill.

Deliverables will include farm/property assessments, development of conservation plans, providing guidance on federal program signups and contracts, as well as providing technical assistance. Work may also include conservation practice implementation activities such as inventory and evaluation, survey, design, layout, construction inspection, and contract administration activities such as document collection/compilation, application ranking, and contract correspondence preparation.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

- Provide on-site technical assistance to private landowners under contract with the USDA NRCS for the implementation of conservation practices.
- Work closely and maintain a good relationship with MCD, BCD, and NRCS staff and other resource management professionals, both public and private, in support of a holistic approach to natural resources management.
- Assist landowners with applying for financial assistance through USDA Farm Bill Programs including application processing, contract development, application ranking and document preparation for program selections.
- Assist contract holders with technical guidance regarding implementation of their practices.
- Lead education events/presentations to educate and inform the community of available programs.
- Create and implement plans to reach historically underserved communities.
- Assist the District Conservationist (DC) with monitoring progress of contract implementation, reviews, processing contract modifications and payments, and general correspondence.
- Learn program rules and regulations concerning administration of applications and contracting procedures for each Farm Bill program under NRCS responsibility.
- Use agency-specific software related to mapping, planning & contracting.
- Maintain accurate, well-organized records of customer interactions.
- Maintain client confidentiality.
- Prepare monthly, quarterly, and annual grant reports.

OTHER FUNCTIONS:

- Assist with NRCS and MCD office operations such as answering telephones, greeting and assisting walk-in clients, and general office upkeep.
- Participate in MCD events such as the annual meeting, household hazardous waste collection, stream monitoring, and other district events.
- Contribute articles for the MCD newsletter and contribute content for social media, flyers, reports, etc., in collaboration with other NRCS staff.
- Assist in the preparation of District records, reports, and annual & long-range work plans.
- Obtain conservation certifications through NRCS such as "certified conservation planner", "certified pest management plan writing", "nutrient plan writing".
- Other duties as assigned by the MCD Executive Director or MCD Board of Directors.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Bachelor's Degree in agriculture, forestry or other natural resources related field.
- Preferred: one-two years of experience working in natural resources, agriculture, forestry, with agricultural producers, habitat management/restoration, or other related fieldwork.

SKILLS & ABILITIES:

- Strong knowledge of environmental concepts, conservation principles, and sustainability practices.
- Passion for environmental conservation and a commitment to promoting sustainable practices.
- Strong public speaking and relationship building skills.
- Excellent computer skills required. Computer workstation will be provided, including a standard laptop, on a shared network with Windows-based software.
- Mastery of Microsoft Excel and GPS software required.
- Excellent record-keeping, organizational, time management, written and verbal communication skills.
- Exceptional social and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to work cooperatively with district personnel and other agencies, ability to work independently as well as collaboratively within a team.
- Ability to work efficiently outdoors in varying conditions and rough terrain; ability to lift 50 pounds.
- Must maintain a valid driver's license and clean driving record for the past 3 years.
- Must be able to pass a Federal Background Security Check.
- General knowledge, operation or maintenance of agriculture equipment preferred.
- Flexibility to work evenings, occasional weekends, and travel for off-site events and training (occasional overnight trainings), as needed.

RELATIONSHIPS:

The Conservation Technical Assistant is supervised by, and reports to, the Executive Director of the Manistee Conservation District and works directly with the NRCS District Conservationist. They also work as part of a team with all other Manistee Conservation District & Benzie Conservation District employees.

SALARY, BENEFITS, WORK HOURS, LOCATION:

The position will be housed at the Manistee Conservation District and USDA Service Center office in Bear Lake, MI. This is a full-time, grant funded position. Hours are 40 per week, with time often split between office and field work. Benefits including health insurance, paid holidays, and vacation and sick leave are offered after a 60-day probation period. Pay rate will be \$22 per hour. The typical workweek is Monday-Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm or 9am-5pm with a paid 30 minute lunch. Some evening and weekend work is required. This position is funded by a one year grant through the National Association of Conservation Districts, with potential for continuation after the initial grant cycle.

TO APPLY:

Submit resume and detailed, one-page cover letter via email to manisteecd@macd.org. Application will remain open until position is filled.

Contact the Manistee Conservation District at manisteecd@macd.org or 231-889-9666 with any questions related to the position.

The mission of the Manistee Conservation District is to implement programs and provide services, including technical assistance, that foster an appreciation of the beauty and quality of the natural resources of Western and Northwestern Michigan to promote positive stewardship of the land, water, soil, and wildlife, and to serve the communities that depend on those natural resources.

The Manistee Conservation District is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate against any person on the basis of age, race, religion, color, handicap, sex, physical condition, sexual orientation or national origin.