



## Mason-Lake Conservation District Vacancy Announcement Conservation Program Assistant

*The Mason-Lake Conservation District is seeking a Conservation Program Assistant to help manage applications, contracts and related documents for clients applying to federal conservation programs. This position will be part of a welcoming team in beautiful western Michigan, where there is a diverse variety of agriculture, forests, dunes, inland lakes and streams. This project is funded by a grant through the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.*

**Job Status:** Hourly, full-time, grant funded

**Compensation:** \$16-17/hour starting pay; opportunities to increase with achieved trainings

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

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

**Location:** Scottville, MI. Some remote work possible for the right candidate

**Desired Start Date:** Oct 23, 2023

**Closing Date:** October 3rd or until filled

### **Position Summary:**

Conservation Districts provide technical expertise and financial assistance for farmers and other private landowners that want to implement conservation activities or practices on their land. The Mason-Lake Conservation District office is co-located with federal partners Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) service center. Conservation District and NRCS staff work together to help facilitate and fund landowner conservation projects. This strong, organizational relationship generates a fun, charismatic and busy workplace, with over 2,000 walk-in office clients each year. This region is home to diverse agricultural systems, including row crops, orchards, dairy, livestock and horticulture. Forestry and wildlife habitat management are also a large component of workload in the area.

This is an administrative position, providing day-to-day support to NRCS projects within Mason, western Lake Counties and the surrounding areas. The Program Assistant will support natural resource management activities on private lands by efficiently processing and maintaining records. The purpose of the work is to provide oversight, administrative, and technical support for voluntary conservation programs implemented through the Farm Bill. The majority of work time will be spent in the office completing landowner applications and related contract work. Occasional field visits will be necessary to assist with project reviews, obtain signatures, etc.

### **Position Duties:**

- Provides landowners information and assistance pertaining to program and eligibility requirements, and guidance on completing application materials, payment process, and paperwork requirements.
- Reviews customer applications for completeness and eligibility.
- Enters contract and program data into NRCS Software programs and prepares reports.
- Reviews payment requests and verifies payment documents to ensure complete information is provided and all data is added to files.
- Works with land operators to ensure they are current with program eligibility and payment limitations
- Reviews and processes administrative letters and documents, waiver requests, status reviews, contract implementation, contract modifications, and cancellations or terminations.

- Tracks the status of Farm Bill contracts through reports and communications with staff.
- Tracks program performance and generates reports on workload process, contract status, expiring contracts, required modifications and payments.
- Assists with the presentation of progress reports and expiring contracts.
- Receives and completes requests for statistical or informative material regarding NRCS programs.
- Assists with assigned functions related to financial and programmatic audits.
- Serves as the programmatic support specialist for the designated NRCS representative within the service area, or as directed by NRCS.
- Works closely and maintains 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.
- The assistance provided by the program assistant shall be in accordance with applicable NRCS policy, procedures, and practice standards.
- The program assistant shall work cooperatively with other conservation districts and employees in the service area to support the goals and programs of the Mason-Lake Conservation District.
- Completes other essential activities as assigned.

**Required Qualifications:**

- High School diploma or equivalent.
- Ability to work independently of direct supervision and effectively with co-workers as a team.
- Ability to build relationships with individual landowners, various agencies, and conservation partners.
- Knowledge of administrative processes in order to follow extensive filing and tracking procedures with many steps.
- Proficient use of a PC and Microsoft Office Suite, including MS Excel and Power Point.
- Proven ability to analyze problems and take corrective actions.
- Excellent organizational, written, and verbal communication skills.
- Excellent computer skills and ability to navigate on shared network and Google Drive workspaces, utilizing specialized planning programs (GIS-based), and ability to learn new programs quickly.
- Excellent organizational, time management, written and verbal communication skills.
- Able to work efficiently indoors and provide quality customer service.
- Must maintain a valid driver's license and clean driving record.
- Must pass a federal background check.
- Occasional travel for trainings and meetings is required, including overnight.

**Preferred Qualifications:**

- Associates Degree in Business, Administration or similar field, OR progress towards Bachelor's of Science in Natural resources or similar fields.
- Experience working in an office environment daily.
- General knowledge of local agricultural production and forestry practices, or passion for the outdoors.
- Experience working on grants or managing contracts, or ability to learn quickly.

**To Apply:**

Send cover letter, resume, unofficial transcripts (if using to qualify) and three professional references as a single PDF to Dani McGarry, Executive Director of Mason-Lake Conservation District, at [dani.mcgarry@macd.org](mailto:dani.mcgarry@macd.org) with "Application – Program Assistant" in the subject line. Applications received by October 3rd will be most competitive.

If you have any questions, please call Dani McGarry at (231) 757-3707 ext. 102. Learn more about Mason-Lake Conservation Districts and projects at [www.mason-lakeConservation.org](http://www.mason-lakeConservation.org)