

Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District

Field Office Assistant / NRCS Liaison

Reports to: District Manager
Employment Status: At Will Employee
FSLA Status: non-exempt

General Position Purpose

This position exists to assist Wasco County Soil & Water Conservation District (District) staff and local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partners in the performance of their duties.

- a. The Field Office Assistant will meet assigned training objectives and assist District and NRCS staff in the job functions described in the remainder of this job description.

Field Office Assistant / NRCS Liaison Job Description

The Field Office Assistant is responsible for providing assistance as assigned to District and NRCS staff in a variety of ways. Functional areas of responsibility: Clerical - typing, filing, organizing, copying, data input, records management, research, prepping for workshops and other clerical functions; Conservation Technicians/Planners – assist with construction of conservation plans by learning GIS and creating maps, assist with surveys, field inventories, site inspection, data input, field monitoring checks, taking photos at specified GPS photo points, and helping in whatever capacity is necessary to complete tasks identified in the District and NRCS annual work plans.

This position is limited duration and will serve for one year or until grant funds expire (estimated duration 12 months). The position is located in The Dalles, Oregon and will work throughout Wasco County. The position will be supervised through the Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The position falls under the direction of the Wasco County SWCD Board of Directors and the supervision of the SWCD Manager.

Essential Functions / Major Duties

The primary purpose of this position is to provide local NRCS partners with programmatic technical and clerical assistance with the development and management of new and existing conservation program contracts. This position will provide technical assistance to private landowners and occasionally to partner organizations.

1. Technical
 - a. Assist planners and clients in the development of conservation plans for program participants. Primary programs will be Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).
 - b. Assist in surveys, staking, inspections, site visits, photography using GPS photo points.
 - c. Assist planners in field visits, which may include helping load/unload/operate ATVs over rough terrain safely.
2. Clerical
 - a. Using Microsoft Office Suite to type correspondence, reports, and to create spreadsheets.
 - b. Records management including labeling, filing, and document retrieval.
 - c. Making copies, document assembly, preparations for meetings, assist with outreach workshops.
 - d. Answering phones, transferring calls, and general customer assistance.
 - e. Obtaining client signature on contract and eligibility documents, and scanning and uploading documents to NRCS's online Document Management System (DMS).

Demands / Complexity

The Field Office Assistant position will vary in complexity and requires the ability to smoothly transition between tasks and take direction from others. This position requires an ability to learn on the job specifically to be able to learn conservation planning and procedures, develop a working knowledge of

conservation practices commonly employed within the District and NRCS, and to complete clerical functions timely and accurately.

The Field Office Assistant must be able to work both independently and as part of a team, with minimal supervision, including prioritizing daily work tasks, scheduling field work, and meetings. This is a very diverse working environment. The Field Office Assistant is responsible for documenting their own time for monthly reporting purposes. This is a very diverse working environment with unexpected deadlines and demands often arising. The Field Office Assistant will need to be able to smoothly shift gears from one task to another to meet unexpected demands.

Background Screening

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service requires everyone who uses USDA equipment and has access to producer records to pass a background screening and receive a favorable adjudication. This is essential for employment with the District. The District also conducts regular DMV records checks to screen for serious violations.

Supervisory Responsibility

This job has no regularly assigned supervisory responsibility.

Contacts with Others

This position has daily, face to face interactions with District and USDA Service Center staff, including short weekly staff meetings. Frequent interactions in person, via phone, email, and written correspondence occur with other SWCDs, and the many state, federal and local agencies with whom the District works. In addition, similar interaction occurs between staff and the District's clientele, primarily local farmers and ranchers. Typical interactions may include exchange of information, sharing of technical information, coordination of on-going projects or discussion of potential new projects, or providing technical assistance. Care must be taken to avoid sharing information governed by the privacy act, most of which is private landowner information. The Field Office Assistant most frequently will work with landowners in developing plans that may become legally binding contracts under various USDA Farm Bill Programs and must clearly communicate those potential obligations to landowners without confusion.

Specific Job Skills

The Field Office Assistant is required to have a good command of the English language and be able to communicate clearly and effectively by writing and by speech. They must be proficient in the use of computers and in the use of certain software including Microsoft Office Suite products such as Excel, Word, and PowerPoint. Knowledge of GIS software and current USDA Conservation Planning software including Conservation Desktop is highly desired. The Field Office Assistant must have good problem-solving skills, take direction well, and a willingness to work at a variety of tasks. Typing/keyboarding skills are a must.

Physically, the Field Office Assistant must be able to sit, stand, lift up to 50 lbs, to walk moderate distances over uneven terrain, and work outside in all seasons. Occasional overnight travel, primarily for training is required for this position. The position occasionally requires work in excess of 8 hours per day. The position requires a valid Oregon driver's license and the ability to operate vehicles with either automatic or manual transmissions as well as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) Employees must take an ATV safety training course before operating any District owned ATV.

Education / Experience

Minimum education requirement is a high school diploma or GED certificate. Knowledge of farming and ranching practices and basic office procedures is essential. Education in any natural resources field is beneficial to the position. A BS or AS degree is desirable, although not required. Familiarity with Wasco County's natural resource concerns is preferred.

The ideal candidate will have working knowledge of the wide range of laws that govern District operations including state and federal permitting requirements; NEPA, Endangered Species Act, and Privacy Act; as well as detailed knowledge of USDA NRCS Technical Standards, the field office technical guide, conservation planning standards and procedures, and familiarity with the types of conservation practices commonly employed within the District.

Job Conditions

Working conditions for this position is mostly office environment, though travel to meetings, training, and field work with technicians is also expected. Employee must be willing to work in a variety of job conditions ranging from field work in summer heat, winter cold, and office work. Employees can expect multiple interruptions during their tasks to answer questions or fulfill various immediate needs around the office. Job also requires a level of public relations that extends into personal time, including answering questions from producers while off duty in the community. The Field Office Assistant may be required to work some long days and evenings, including occasional evening meetings throughout Wasco County. Hours beyond normal business hours earn compensatory time.

Compensation

Compensation will be based upon qualifications and experience. Salary increases subject to additional funding availability and job performance. Hours beyond 40 hours per week earn compensatory time at an overtime rate in lieu of overtime pay. Benefits include health care, dental, vision, and life insurance, and participation in the Public Employees Retirement System. Wasco County SWCD is an at-will employer.

Additional Information

- 1) This is a limited duration position, with funding secured for one year.
- 2) There is potential for work to continue beyond one year, subject to additional funding availability and job performance.
- 3) Wasco County SWCD is an equal opportunity employer.