

Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District

Conservation Technician / Planner

Reports to: District Manager
Employment Status: At Will Employee
FLSA Status: Non-exempt
RUS Salary Grade: 5-9

General Position Summary

The Conservation Technician/ Planner is responsible for providing technical assistance to private landowners and occasionally to partner organizations. Functional areas of responsibility are **Planner**: working with cooperators to develop and implement conservation plans, and **Technician**: design and technical assistance with the implementation of conservation practices. Secondary functions include clerical, technical, outreach / education, equipment, vehicles, and partner support. The Technician/ Planner assists in the development, updating, and implementation of the District's annual work plan and long-range plan. This position exists to provide technical assistance as the cornerstone of the District's program.

Essential Functions/ Major Duties

1. Planner
 - a. Develop conservation plans with cooperators to address resource concerns
 - b. Use NRCS nine-step planning process and Field Office Technical Guide standards when developing conservation plans
 - c. Provide in-office assistance as necessary to follow plan through approval process
 - d. Provide follow-up assistance as necessary to cooperators during plan implementation
2. Technician
 - a. Develop designs / specifications for planned practices
 - b. Design individual conservation practices for cooperators as necessary
 - c. Include NRCS standards and specifications as part of design package
 - d. Ensure NRCS technical review is done with appropriate job approval authority
 - e. Ensure operation and maintenance plan is included with design as appropriate
 - f. Provide technical assistance to cooperator during practice implementation to include survey, layout, staking, construction inspection as required to assure quality and functionality
 - g. Perform contract inspection during construction contracts as needed
 - h. Monitor important aspects of projects as assigned, documenting success and failure

Secondary Functions

1. Clerical
 - a. Use Microsoft Office Suite to type correspondence, reports, spreadsheets, and perform database management
 - b. Records management including labeling, filing, and document retrieval
 - c. Make copies, assemble documents, prepare for council/board meetings, take and type minutes from meetings, assist with preparing handouts
 - d. Assist other District staff with grant writing and project management
2. Technical
 - a. Assist with seasonal water sampling on local creeks, surveys, monitoring reports and photos

- b. Assist with the District Annual Conservation Tree and Shrub Sale
 - Arrange for equipment and supplies needed for the sale
 - Put together customer orders
 - Assist landowners with labor source and technical information for plantings as requested
 - c. Maintain District's H. A. Miller Demonstration Nursery
 - d. Assist in implementation and updating of the Lower Deschutes Ag Water Quality Management Plan
3. Outreach / Education
 - a. Promote (market) the Conservation District and its programs through written articles, speaking at public events, and participating in radio spots
 - b. Participate in educational opportunities, including workshops, tours, and youth activities as a District representative
 - c. Participate in community activities and with other organizations such as Watershed Councils and Irrigation Districts as a Conservation District representative
 - d. Assist with fair booth and District displays as needed
 - e. Assist with preparation of bimonthly newsletter, annual report, newspaper articles, press releases, and website updates as necessary
 - f. Develop and maintain landowner and agency contacts
 4. Equipment
 - a. Perform routine maintenance on District conservation equipment
 - b. Coordinate cooperator sign-ups for using conservation equipment, including rental agreements, scheduling, and inspecting equipment between users.
 - c. Maintain and care for assigned field equipment, including but not limited to flow meter, GPS units, phone, radio, compass, camera, etc.
 5. Vehicles
 - a. Manage routine maintenance of District vehicles, oil changes, etc.
 - b. Maintain record of vehicle maintenance and vehicle use, monthly miles, etc.
 6. Partner Support
 - a. Provide technical and administrative support to Area Watershed Councils
 - b. Provide technical and administrative support to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as needed
 - c. Conduct status reviews on Farm Bill Programs for NRCS and Farm Service Agency as needed
 7. Carry out assigned tasks in annual plan of work
 8. Other duties as assigned.

Demands/ Complexity

The Technician/ Planner position is highly complex, requiring familiarity with a wide range of laws that govern District operations including state and federal permitting requirements; NEPA, Endangered Species Act, Privacy Act, Public Contracting, and Oregon Ag Water Quality requirements. This position also requires a 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.

The Technician/ Planner 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 Technician/ Planner is responsible for documenting their own time for monthly reporting purposes. Conservation planning involves a working knowledge of soil and

water conservation principles, practices, methods and procedures of soil types, of land use factors having effect upon soil erosion and water quality. The Technician/ Planner deals with aspects of agronomy, hydrology and engineering related to the planning and installation of soil and water conservation projects and systems. The Technician/ Planner must understand the principles and techniques of surveying and drafting, as well as the operation of common farm machinery.

This position will also entail helping at the District's nursery which may include setting out irrigation, sawing down trees, pulling weeds, burning organic debris, and other maintenance chores as required.

This position works with public employees at all levels both within and outside the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, other government agencies, federal, state and local officials and the public.

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. May occasionally be required to supervise planting crews, or trainees for limited periods of time.

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 the Technician/ Planner 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 Technician/ Planner 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 Technician/ Planner is required to have a good command of the English language and be able to communicate 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 including Excel, Word, and Power Point; GIS software, and current USDA Conservation Planning software including ToolKit. The Technician/ Planner must have sound math skills including basic mathematics, plane geometry, and algebra. The Technician /Planner must have good problem-solving skills, take direction well, and a willingness to work at a variety of tasks.

Physically, the Technician/ Planner must be able to sit, stand, lift up to 50 lbs, and 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 or over 40 hours per week. The Technician/ Planner must possess a valid Oregon driver's license and be able to operate vehicles with either automatic or manual transmissions as well as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). Although the District owns vehicles, occasional use of the employee's own vehicle may be necessary, with prior approval. Approved personal vehicle mileage will be reimbursed at the District's established mileage rate. Employees must take an ATV safety training course before operating any District owned ATV.

This position is required to obtain and maintain NRCS certification as a Conservation Planner. The Technician/ Planner must have knowledge of basic surveying principles including, data collection and reporting; knowledge and understanding of the public lands survey system and mapping skills; knowledge of land measurement principles in determining acreages and common measurements.

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.

Job Conditions

Working conditions for this position are office environment 49%; local travel and field work 49%; other travel 2%. Employee must be willing to work in a variety of job conditions ranging from field work in summer heat and winter cold to office work. Employee can expect interruptions during their tasks at work to answer questions or fulfill various immediate needs and tasks around the office. Prompt and courteous customer assistance is required. Job requires a level of public relations that extends into personal time, including answering questions from producers while off duty in the community. The standard work week is 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday with a 30-minute unpaid lunch break; however, the Technician/ Planner may be required to work some long days and evenings, including evening meetings for Watershed Councils across Wasco County.

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 insurance, dental, vision, life, and participation in the Public Employee Retirement System. Wasco County SWCD is an at-will employer.

Application Process

Supply the following documents in a single PDF in the order listed below:

- Cover letter
- Resume
- Three professional references

Email application materials by 5:00 PM on Thursday, December 27, 2018 to Tammy Tripp, Office Administrator at tammy.tripp@oacd.org. Questions can be directed to Tammy Tripp at (541) 296-6178 ext. 3. Interviews will be held during the second week of January. Anticipated start date is January 28, 2019, or sooner if possible. New and rehired employees shall serve an introductory service period of three months, commencing with their first day of employment.

Wasco County SWCD is an equal opportunity employer.