Employment Opportunity for a

PROGRAM SPECIALIST

BACKGROUND:
The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) is a non-regulatory special district that helps people protect, conserve, and restore natural resources through information, education, and technical assistance programs. The RCD has ongoing projects that promote natural resource conservation in relation to farming and ranching operations and watershed-based habitat restoration. The RCD Board of Directors and staff work closely with the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The RCD seeks a Program Specialist to join a dynamic team of conservation and agriculture professionals. The Program Specialist will work closely with partners to lead watershed coordination, development and implementation of stewardship in agriculture programs throughout Santa Cruz County and in the Pajaro Valley in particular. Example projects the Program Specialist will lead include coordination of the Community Water Dialogue (a landowner driven effort to reduce aquifer overdraft in the Pajaro Valley), projects to reduce sediment and pesticide loading from farms, and stormwater collection and infiltration projects. This work supports agriculture’s efforts to steward water supplies and protect water quality. The work environment is fast paced, collaborative, and creative.

The ideal candidate is an experienced watershed coordinator and/or conservation project manager with a background in environmental science and policy and a solid history of multi-stakeholder collaboration. The successful candidate must have working knowledge of agricultural production and resource concerns, ideally with experience relevant to central coast agricultural commodities and communities. Experience grant writing, developing budgets, managing contracts and subcontractors is essential, as is a demonstrated ability to work within a collaborative team. Additional experience with NRCS conservation planning, permitting and construction project management is a plus.

This position is funded through contracts between the RCD and local, state, and federal agencies. The position is funded for 25-35 hours per week, possibly increasing to full time. This position will report to the RCD Executive Director and will work closely with other district staff to fulfill the RCD mission and the scope of work from the state and federal contracts, as summarized below:

SUMMARY OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Manage projects to reduce pesticide use and toxicity in the Pajaro River Watershed. Outreach to growers to recruit collaborators and identify project sites (including integrated pest management, edge-of-field treatment practices, sediment basins and carbon filter systems). Oversee project design, permitting, and implementation. Manage subcontractors and budgets. Evaluate and communicate results.

- Coordinate the Community Water Dialogue (and other multi-stakeholder watershed coordination efforts as needed). Engage agricultural community leaders, facilitate strategic planning and community forums, catalyze action, track and communicate progress and outcomes. Identify needs and opportunities to accelerate progress. Communicate with and on behalf of the CWD to
local and state entities. Support and lead CWD fundraising in collaboration with members of the CWD Guidance Team.

- Manage a USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program focused on stormwater collection and infiltration practices on agricultural lands (including managed aquifer recharge and cover crop rotations). Coordinate with project partners including NRCS district conservationists. Conduct outreach, support conservation planning and EQIP applications. Support project permitting and construction oversight as needed.
- Scope the needs, legal, financial, and policy aspects of emerging issues related to agriculture and natural resources to inform future program development.
- Promote available services and financial assistance programs within the grower community through direct outreach with area farmers and partner organizations. Present at grower and other public forums.
- Write reports, complete and submit deliverables to meet grant requirements.
- Track relevant policy and funding opportunities at the local, state, and federal level.
- Contribute to additional RCD programs (as appropriate based on skills) such as Irrigation and Nutrient Management and climate change resiliency.
- Write grant proposals as part of the RCD Ag Stewardship team. Proactively identify, solicit and expand upon funding and partnership opportunities for agricultural conservation and stewardship programs in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley.
- Participate in regional collaborative efforts with growers, technical service providers, agencies and other diverse stakeholders to address conservation priorities in the region.
- Represent the RCD, its partners and funders in a positive and proactive manner.
- Perform additional tasks or responsibilities as directed by supervisors.

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:**

**Required**

- Knowledge of and interest in California agricultural systems, including crops, production methods, and resource concerns including surface and groundwater management, ideally in the Central Coast region.
- Demonstrated experience leading multi-stakeholder groups to identify common ground
- Bachelor’s degree or higher in environmental science/studies or related field. Relevant degrees may include Environmental Science, Environmental Management, Water Resources Management, Soil Science, Hydrology
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team. Experience working collaboratively within partnerships including farmers, researchers, public agencies, and others.
- Highly motivated and self-directing with the ability to prioritize and coordinate workload to respect deadlines. Project goal oriented with initiative in fulfilling programmatic and grant-related obligations.
- Strong oral and written communication skills.
- Experience working under, writing and managing grants
- Valid CA driver’s license
Preferred

- Graduate degree (MS or higher) in environmental science or related field
- Minimum 5 years of work experience
- Spanish proficiency or fluency
- Knowledge of Integrated Pest Management and experience advising farmers on management practices to reduce pesticide use, promote beneficial insects, and/or reduce off-farm movement of pesticides in soil or water
- Conservation planning experience and familiarity with the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Construction project management experience
- Understanding of permit requirements and application processes for conservation projects.
- Experience working with private landowners and farmers in a non-regulatory context

The Program Specialist is a part time position (25-35 hours per week) possibly increasing to full time, based on a Monday through Friday daytime schedule. Some job related travel is required and will be billed on a cost reimbursable basis. Salary will be commensurate with experience and qualifications. Benefits package (after three months probationary employment period) includes paid health and dental. Retirement Plan with employer matching contribution of 1 to 1 up to 4.5% of salary available after one year of employment. Paid holidays and vacation available.

To apply, please submit a resume, letter of interest, and names and phone numbers of at least three references to: The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, c/o Tangi Chapman, 820 Bay Avenue, Suite 136, Capitola, CA 95010 or via email to tchapman@rcdsantacruz.org. If you would like additional information, please contact the RCD: Phone: (831) 464-2950.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICANTS: August 29, 2018

The RCD is an equal opportunity employer.