



Organization: Mississippi Valley Conservancy
Date Posted: January 3, 2020
Location: La Crosse, WI
Position: Conservation Specialist
Full-time salaried, 40 hours a week

Mississippi Valley Conservancy was founded in 1997 and is a nationally accredited land trust that has permanently protected over 20,000 acres in southwestern Wisconsin. We primarily work with private landowners to help them realize their dreams of protecting their land from development come true.

By building relationships with local communities and businesses in a nine-county area, our work permanently protects forests, bluffs, prairies, wetlands, streams and farmlands that enrich our communities for the health and well-being of current and future generations.

Position Description: The Conservation Specialist will be a member of a team dedicated to permanent land protection, habitat restoration, and public outreach. This position is responsible for implementation of the Conservancy's land conservation and protection efforts by working with private landowners, federal, state, and local units of government, conservation organizations, and other partners on conservation easements, land acquisitions, easement stewardship and implementation of the Conservancy's strategic plan.

Key Responsibilities:

- Work collaboratively on the planning, coordination, identification, prioritization, and implementation of land conservation projects.
- Prepare and negotiate conservation program documents (conservation easements, purchase/option agreements, easement amendments, subordination agreements, abridgements, escrow instruction, title documents and others) in close collaboration with the Conservation Director and outside legal counsel.
- Complete project due diligence including site assessments and evaluations, internal review of title exceptions, independent appraisals, legal descriptions and property rights.
- Ensure all projects and project documentation complies with Conservancy policy, grant funder requirements, and Land Trust Alliance standards and practices.
- Conduct property site visits to evaluate and document natural resources, conservation values, species inventories, land use practices, property boundaries, and boundary encroachments.
- Address landowner and project partner questions and requests.
- Review habitat management plans, forest management plans, grazing plans, building proposals and other reserved rights/permitted use approval requests and other compliance issues.
- Fulfill conservation easement stewardship requirements such as property documentation, monitoring compliance, and implementation of education strategies to prevent easement violations.
- Provide public outreach in the forms of presentations, guided hikes, use of demonstration sites, workshops and other needs as assigned.
- Build successful partnerships with state, federal, and private agencies and organizations to identify and pursue project funding sources, including grant applications, proposals, and reports.
- Support the writing of news articles, press releases, and reports on conservation achievements.
- Other duties as assigned.

Essential Job Functions and Abilities:

- Ability to traverse 400+ acre sites on foot, through steep, rugged terrain in a timely manner in remote areas all four seasons of the year.
- Experience and knowledge identifying local habitat types, species and natural communities, and an awareness of general ecosystem principles and habitat management techniques.
- High proficiency in ArcMap10.7 and handheld Garmin usage.
- Possess valid driver's license and dependable vehicle.
- Ability to manage multiple projects and priorities, and work under tight timeframes.
- Ability to work independently and to set and adhere to priorities.
- Available to work some evening and weekends.
- Approximately 35% field work and 65% office work overall.
- Ability to function as a cooperative and supportive team member with other Conservancy staff.

REQUIRED Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree or higher in natural resources, law, planning or related field. Legal experience preferred.
- Minimum of five (5) years' experience in conservation land acquisitions, conservation easement development, and real estate transactions in a land trust or comparable setting.
- Demonstrated ability to independently initiate, structure, negotiate, manage, and close complex land transactions and manage project budgets.
- Experience negotiating and relationship building with landowners, private partners, federal and state agencies, county, and municipal partners.
- Experience developing and managing grants and grant reporting.
- In depth knowledge of the flora, fauna, landscape, economy, and people of southwestern Wisconsin.
- Knowledge of current tax and conservation laws.
- Professional interests that align strongly with MVC's vision, values, and conservation goals.
- The successful candidate will be self-directed, highly motivated, flexible, and detail-oriented.
- Outstanding verbal and written communication skills.
- Desire and demonstrated ability to identify and address personal knowledge gaps; to learn on the job; and to cultivate sources of knowledge, expertise, and skill.
- Able and willing to travel frequently among the nine counties in MVC's service area and occasionally beyond the service area.
- Proficient in all aspects of Microsoft Office and ArcMap.

Supervisor: Conservation Director

Compensation: Salary range \$50,000 to \$60,000 commensurate with experience. Mississippi Valley Conservancy offers competitive compensation, benefits and a collaborative work environment based in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

This position will remain open until filled. **Only applicants meeting the above required qualifications will be considered.** Email a cover letter and resume to Carol Abrahamzon at carol@mississippivalleyconservancy.org.