



Mississippi Valley Conservancy Job Posting

Land Management Strategic Director

Full-time salaried, 40 hours a week

Salary Range: \$55,000 to \$70,000

Location: La Crosse, WI

Job Overview and requirements

Here at Mississippi Valley Conservancy, we are on a mission to conserve native habitats and farmlands in the Driftless Area for the health and well-being of current and future generations.

In this time of rapid climate change, our services help landowners and communities protect their land from development and restore resilience and biodiversity to the land.

We work with landowners who choose to permanently protect their private land through conservation easements. We also own and manage public nature preserves with a goal of restoring native habitats to enhance biodiversity and protect declining species in this time of global climate change. Through the efforts of our colleagues and volunteers we work to restore native habitat by removing invasive species, conducting prescribed burns, planting native species, and other best practices of habitat restoration.

With the recent acquisition of a 1,600-acre mixed-use farmland property, we are also in the position to develop the most innovative and climate-friendly demonstration farm in SW Wisconsin, pending sufficient grant funding. As owners of agricultural land, we have the opportunity to do and show what needs to be done to protect farmland and water in Wisconsin's Driftless Area, for the benefit of all. Our partners in this project include the Savanna Institute and The Nature Conservancy.

Mississippi Valley Conservancy is seeking a highly experienced, self-motivated individual to bring the direction of Conservancy's land management work to a new level. We are looking for a diverse perspective and strong problem-solving skills for the role of Land Management Strategic Director. The lead of land management strategy will become the driving force behind growing the capacity of the Conservancy's land conservation work. A key lead will ensure collaborative interaction with public user groups, hunters, private landowners, lessee graziers and farmers, grant funders, volunteers, and regulatory agencies. This position will require a proven track record of project coordination with multiple stakeholders and the ability to integrate science into long-term, strategic conservation planning for habitat management activities at Conservancy-owned nature preserves. This will be achieved through innovative thinking for restoration techniques, including transitional agricultural and grazing strategies on farmland that we own. We are looking for a professional with vision, drive, and strong strategic and interpersonal skills. Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a nationally accredited, 501c3 non-profit, functioning as a hybrid organization with offices in La Crosse, WI. Our service area includes the Wisconsin counties of Buffalo, Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon. We work to create an inclusive, diverse and equitable workplace. The Conservancy's 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. The Conservancy has protected over 22,000 acres, including over 5,000 acres of nature preserves open to the public.

Reports to: Conservation Director

Supervises: Land Manager

Essential Responsibilities

- Develop, evaluate and share methods and practices for advancing ecological restoration on nature preserves and guiding and directing staff, contractors, intern crews, and volunteers on other habitat restoration projects
- Provide leadership and facilitation in directing an effective land management team, working collaboratively on the planning, coordination, identification, prioritization, and implementation of land conservation projects
- Ensure documentation for preserves and projects is up to date and in accordance with Land Trust Alliance standards and practices, grant funder requirements, and the Conservancy's record-keeping policy
- Develop, research, coordinate, and implement multiple aspects of project development, including habitat management plans, partner agreements, budgeting, agricultural activities, negotiating rental agreements, grazing plans, fuels management, responding to weather events, etc.
- Facilitate engagement with landowners, consultants, partners, agency officials
- Conduct property site visits to evaluate and document natural resources, conservation values, species inventories, land use practices, property boundaries, and boundary encroachments
- Navigate challenging aspects of land ownership, including addressing third party trespass, boundary encroachments, and other issues
- Build successful partnerships with state, federal, and private agencies and organizations to identify pursue and manage project funding sources, including grant applications, proposals, budgets and reports
- Ecological restoration and management of Conservancy lands including: planning and leading prescribed burns, species inventory, timber stand improvement, invasive species control, fencing, trailhead construction, boundary posting and other management activities

Essential Job Capabilities

- Physical 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.
- Excellent record-keeping skills and attention to detail
- Possess valid driver's license and dependable vehicle
- Ability and enthusiasm to showcase the Conservancy's restoration effectively to team members, board members, stakeholders, and supporters; strong public speaking skills
- Ability to safely and effectively use chain saws, brush cutter, tractors, mowers, herbicide sprayers, pumper units, backpack pump cans and other tools for extended periods of time
- Ability to manage multiple projects and priorities, and work under tight timeframes
- Ability to take direction, work independently, and to set and adhere to priorities
- Ability to function as a cooperative and supportive team member with other Conservancy staff
- Available to work occasional evening and weekends
- Experience with dispute resolution and project facilitation
- Approximately 40% field work and 60% office work overall

REQUIRED Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree or higher in natural resources, planning or related field
- Minimum of five (5) years professional experience in directing land management activities
- In depth knowledge of the flora, fauna, habitat types, landscape, economy, and people of southwestern Wisconsin.
- Ability to manage/navigate/direct complex individuals and group dynamics
- Ability to analyze complex research to inform land management practices and land use policy
- Professional interests that align strongly with the Conservancy'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 our service area and occasionally beyond the service area (organizational vehicle available)
- Ability to pass work capacity pack test for wildland firefighters (walk 3 miles in fewer than 45 minutes carrying a 45-pound pack)
- High proficiency in all aspects of Microsoft Office and ArcMap 10.8.1 and handheld Garmin usage

Compensation and benefits:

- **Salary range** \$55,000 to \$70,000 based on experience and specific expertise.
- Full-time, exempt position, working 40 hours per week. We believe in caring for others at work and at home. The Conservancy is committed to keeping the workload in alignment with the true hours worked and respecting the space needed to take personal time to care for your well-being.
- In the first year, 10 days of vacation (increases with years of employment), 12 days medical leave per year, and 12 paid holidays. We offer a flexible, family-friendly schedule whenever possible.
- We provide medical insurance, and 4 percent of annual salary match contribution to a retirement plan.
- After 12 months of employment we offer up to 60 days parental/adoptive/medical leave with 30 days paid.
- We foster a respectful, collaborative, and fun work environment.
- We promote and sponsor individual and joint professional workshops and trainings.
- An organizational culture that seeks, integrates, and nurtures self-direction, collaboration, diversity, equity and inclusion with all employees.

Our hiring process and timeline

- We will review applications on a rolling basis until the position is filled.
- Our hiring team will conduct interviews when qualified candidates are identified.
- Finalists will be invited to a second-round interview; at that time, we will ask for three professional references and two work samples relevant to this position.
- Ideally the selected candidate would begin work as soon as possible.

To apply

- At your earliest convenience: Please submit a qualified resume and brief (one page) cover letter, including where/how you first found out about this position in one PDF to executive director, Carol Abrahamzon at carol@mississippivalleyconservancy.org.
- We look forward to your application!