Employment Opportunity for a

FOREST HEALTH AND FIRE RESILIENCY PROGRAM SPECIALIST

BACKGROUND:

Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) across California serve as local hubs for conservation, connecting people with the technical, financial and educational assistance they need to conserve and manage natural resources. RCDs help landowners, land managers, government agencies, and others to voluntarily protect, restore, and enhance natural resources on private and public lands. A defining characteristic of RCDs is that our assistance is generally non-regulatory, confidential, and free.

The RCD of Santa Cruz County seeks a full-time Forest Health and Fire Resiliency Program Specialist to join a dynamic team of conservation professionals. The Program Specialist will work closely with RCD staff and partners to lead forest health and wildfire resiliency programs throughout Santa Cruz County, providing technical assistance and planning services for large and small-scale projects to facilitate fire resiliency, fire prevention/preparedness, and improved watershed function.

The Program Specialist will work closely with partners including the Fire Safe Council of Santa Cruz County, CAL FIRE, the Central Coast Regional Prioritization Working Group, the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network, tribes, neighboring RCDs, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and public and private landowners. The work environment is fast paced, collaborative, and creative.

This position is funded through contracts between the RCD and local, state, and federal agencies. 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 local, state and federal contracts, as summarized below:

SUMMARY OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to develop, fund and implement priority forest health and fuel reduction projects such as vegetation management for defensible space (countywide chipping program), strategic fuel breaks, pile burning, prescribed burning, forest stand improvement, and invasive species removal and management. Specific tasks include:
  - Coordinate the development of project designs and logistics for project implementation.
  - Coordinate with project partners and consultants to develop environmental documentation and permits.
  - Execute Landowner Agreements.
  - Conduct or oversee monitoring activities, including photo, biological, and archaeological monitoring.
  - Manage contracts with funders, consultants and subcontractors.
  - Provide oversight of implementation activities.
  - Manage budgets, invoicing and reporting.
  - Manage communications between project partners and stakeholders.
- Respond to landowner requests for technical assistance as appropriate, including site-specific forest management practices and conservation planning, feasibility analysis, and pre-design work.
- In collaboration with landowners, support contracted Registered Professional Foresters with development of Forest Management Plans.
- Provide technical input to regional forest health project prioritization processes.
• Coordinate and support the Fire Safe Council of Santa Cruz County. This includes preparing meeting agendas and minutes, maintaining the website, and assisting the FSSCC Board of Directors in developing a long-term funding strategy.
• Contribute to grant proposals as part of the RCD team. Proactively identify, solicit and expand upon funding and partnership opportunities for forest health and fire resiliency programs in Santa Cruz County and the greater Santa Cruz Mountains.
• Write reports and complete and submit deliverables to meet grant requirements.
• Conduct outreach and build relationships with landowners and community groups.
• Deliver educational presentations at RCD and partner events.
• Represent the RCD, its partners and funders in a positive and proactive manner.
• Contribute to additional RCD programs (as appropriate based on skills and interests).
• Perform additional tasks or responsibilities as directed by supervisor.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:
The ideal candidate is an experienced forest/fire ecologist, forester, or related natural resource conservation project manager with a background in forest health and fire resiliency and a solid history of landowner collaboration. The successful candidate must have working knowledge of forest ecology and related resource concerns, ideally with experience relevant to Central Coast forests and plant communities. Experience with conservation planning, overseeing project implementation, managing contracts and subcontractors is essential, as is a demonstrated ability to be self-directed while working collaboratively with other staff members and partners. Additional experience with permitting and construction project management is a plus. Successful applicants will “wear many hats” at the RCD. They will work across many disciplines and therefore must have technical, administrative, communication, and interpersonal skills.

Required

• Knowledge of forestry, vegetation management, wildfire behavior, watershed stewardship and conservation, resource management, basic hydrology, basic soil science, native plant and animal communities, and/or forest ecology
• Bachelor’s degree or higher in forestry, natural resource management, watershed science, conservation planning or a related field
• 3 + years of relevant professional experience
• Ability to work independently and as part of a team. Experience working collaboratively within partnerships including landowners, researchers, public agencies, and others
• Highly motivated, organized, and self-directing with the ability to prioritize and coordinate workload to fulfill deadlines. Project goal oriented with initiative in fulfilling programmatic and grant-related obligations
• Strong oral and written communication skills and ability to work with a variety of people with diverse interests and temperaments
• Strong computer skills, including Word and Excel
• Proficiency with ArcGIS and GPS
• Physically able to work in the field (climbing in and out of streams, lifting, carrying supplies and equipment, planting, etc.) during all seasons
• Creativity, sense of humor, “can do” spirit, collegiality, flexibility, strong desire to learn
• Valid CA driver’s license and current auto insurance
Preferred

• Graduate degree in forestry, watershed science, or related field
• Minimum 5 years of relevant work experience
• Registered Professional Forester or related certification
• Familiarity with local threatened and endangered species, including habitat needs and legal protections.
• Familiarity with local, state, and federal permits required for vegetation management and restoration projects. Understanding of permit requirements and application processes for conservation projects.
• Experience working with fire safe councils, watershed groups or other conservation groups
• Construction project management experience
• Experience working under, writing and managing grants

The Program Specialist is a full-time position (35-40 hours per week), 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: Position is open until filled. Application review will begin March 16, 2020**

The RCD is an equal opportunity employer.