

# ***Job Vacancy Announcement***

## **High Divide Headwaters Land Protection Specialist**

**Application Deadline: September 22, 2023**

**Location:** Dillon, Montana  
**Salary:** Range \$50,000 to \$55,000 per year  
**Duration:** Fully-funded 2-year position

### **Position Overview**

The High Divide Headwaters Land Protection Specialist is a unique position created to accelerate private land protection in southwest Montana's High Divide Headwaters landscape. This opportunity is part of a collaborative effort between the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Montana, the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). This position will be administered by the IWJV and key funding partners. The successful applicant will be an employee of WMI, and daily guidance will be provided by the IWJV and TNC in Montana. Contributing partner organization staff will provide additional support as appropriate.

The High Divide Headwaters lies between two of the West's most iconic landscapes: The Greater Yellowstone and the Crown of the Continent. Straddling the Continental Divide along the Idaho/Montana border, the High Divide houses headwaters for the great Missouri and Columbia watersheds. The landscape is characterized by numerous high elevation mountain ranges, expansive sage steppe foothills and large, productive valleys that provide a diversity of habitat and serve as a stronghold for wildlife that have disappeared from much of their historic range. This landscape supports productive multi-generational ranches that form a thriving rural culture rooted in deep knowledge and stewardship of the land. But increasingly, development is a significant threat to the biodiversity, habitat and wildlife corridors, and rural way of life in the High Divide.

The successful applicant will assist in identifying, evaluating, and completing conservation easements in the High Divide Headwaters. The partnership's goal in the region is to protect, restore, and maintain a resilient whole system where nature and people can thrive. The contributing partners for this position would like to attract an experienced and capable conservation practitioner to the job – someone able to work closely with the TNC High Divide Headwaters Director (TNC Project Manager), IWJV Water 4 Coordinator, landowners, contractors, and other partners, and assist with a diverse set of tasks that, cumulatively, will allow us to complete a greater volume of protection work each year.

### **Position Description**

The HDH Land Protection Specialist is a full-time position that will add capacity and provide support to TNC's Land Protection Program and is based out of Dillon, Montana or a nearby community. The

successful applicant will be expected to primarily work remotely from a home office, with the potential of occasional work from TNC's office space in Dillon

The HDH Land Protection Specialist will work closely with the TNC Project Manager, IWJV Water 4 Program Coordinator, and other partners to develop and implement private working land protection projects in southwest Montana. This position is responsible for assisting with land and water conservation and protection working with private landowners, conservation organizations, federal, state, and local entities and other partners on conservation easements, fee title acquisitions, conservation planning, and associated activities. This is a unique position with the opportunity to be self-driven to expedite protection of critical habitats focused on maintaining an intact, connected and resilient landscape capable of supporting sagebrush obligate wildlife, Arctic grayling, seasonal big game migrations, and an expanding range of grizzly bears. The successful candidate will be driven to accelerate the pace of land conservation through creative thinking, successful partnerships, and an ability to work with and communicate effectively with landowners and partners while pursuing opportunities to streamline and expedite conservation easements.

### **Position Duties and Responsibilities**

- Track, understand, and help pursue new conservation easement funding opportunities.
- Assist with conservation planning to identify highest priority unprotected private lands.
- Assist with easement outreach efforts to interested landowners and via various forums.
- Collect, review, and collate initial due diligence for new protection opportunities (maps, natural resource information, legal access, water rights, title work, mineral rights, ownership structure, etc.).
- Assist in preparing project funding proposals (NRCS ALE, NAWCA, MSGHCP, etc).
- 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 in a timely and effective manner.
- Prepare/ review habitat management plans, forest management plans, grazing plans, building proposals and other reserved rights/permitted use documents associated with easements.
- Prepare preliminary project summaries for internal and external audiences.
- Complete conservation easement baseline reports for easement properties.
- Complete environmental assessments for easement properties.
- Assist with coordinating appraisers, surveyors, geologists, and other consultants engaged for a project.
- Coordinate and ensure funder (eg: NRCS) process and forms are completed correctly.
- Approximately 50% field work and 50% office work.

### **Qualifications:**

Required

- Undergraduate degree (or equivalent), ideally, in a natural resources field (wildlife, range, conservation, forestry, hydrology, environmental science, botany) or related field.
- Possess valid driver's license and dependable vehicle.
- Strong understanding of natural resource issues in SW Montana preferred.

- Ability to engage with private landowners in effective ways to support landowner needs and communicate conservation objectives.
- Ability to think strategically, develop and simultaneously manage multiple complex projects from start-up to completion, and adopt new approaches in response to changing circumstances.
- Passionate about wildlife conservation, functioning ecological systems, and working lands.
- Collaborative, open-minded, and community-oriented.
- Outstanding verbal and written communication skills.
- Demonstrated integrity, and the ability to exercise confidentiality and sound judgment.
- Ability and willingness to work independently, work in outdoor conditions over rough and uneven terrain, and maintain a flexible work schedule, if needed.
- Ability and willingness to travel frequently within the High Divide Headwaters landscape of Montana and nearby areas as needed.
- Ideally, experience and knowledge identifying local habitat types, species and natural communities, and an awareness of general ecosystem principles and habitat management techniques.
- 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.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, ArcGIS, and with handheld GPS, and Field Tablet data collection tools.

#### Preferred

- Master's degree in a natural resource field and two years of experience, or a bachelor's degree in a natural resource field and five years of experience in a related capacity;
- Experience developing and managing grants and grant reporting.
- Experience in conservation land acquisitions, conservation easement development, and real estate transactions in a land trust, agency, or comparable setting.

#### **About the Intermountain West Joint Venture**

The Intermountain West Joint Venture's mission is to conserve and enhance bird habitats at meaningful scales through capacity building, science, communications, and strategic partnerships. The funds for this position contributed by the IWJV are primarily of federal origin, managed through Cooperative Agreements with the hiring entity (WMI).

#### **About the Wildlife Management Institute**

The successful applicant will be an employee of Wildlife Management Institute (WMI). WMI is a professional conservation organization that works to improve the foundation of wildlife management. Their mission is: "dedicated to the conservation, enhancement and professional management of North America's wildlife and other natural resources."

#### **About the The Nature Conservancy's High Divide Headwaters Program**

The High Divide Headwaters is one of three priority landscapes for The Nature Conservancy in Montana. TNC launched its conservation program here in 1998. Our goal is to protect, restore, and maintain a resilient whole system where nature and people can thrive. We continue to work toward this

goal by advancing land protection and restoration in high-priority areas, including wildlife corridors, floodplain habitats, and sagebrush steppe. Across the High Divide's large, diverse landscape, we employ a collaborative, community-based approach guided by science. Our strategy combines science, stewardship, restoration, land protection, and community vitality to protect and restore the ecological integrity of this system. We strategically cultivate opportunities and build relationships within this priority landscape. We prioritize protecting more resilient lands: within relatively undeveloped watersheds, with high biodiversity and connectivity value that are at considerable risk for development.

### **Supervision**

The HDH Land Protection Specialist will participate in annual job performance reviews with the IWJV Water & Coordinator and TNC. Daily activities will be supervised by the TNC Project Manager. In this unique partnership, the HDH Land Protection Specialist position is hosted by the Wildlife Management Institute and the position is fully integrated into TNC's land protection team to accelerate the pace of private land conservation.

### **Benefits and Additional Information**

As a limited-term employee of the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), incumbents will be expected to work no more than an average of 74 hours per two-week pay period. Because the position does not include health insurance benefits, a health stipend equivalent to 10% of the employee salary will be provided to help offset the cost of health insurance. 401(k) retirement benefits, workers' compensation, general liability protection, professional liability protection and unemployment insurance benefits will be provided by WMI.

**To Apply:** Send a cover letter that describes your familiarity with and passion for the landscape, a resume, and three references with contact information.

**Email:** Send application materials to [kasey.bader@iwjv.org](mailto:kasey.bader@iwjv.org) with the subject line "HDH Land Protection Specialist" by the application deadline.

**Application Deadline:** September 22, 2023.