



Job Vacancy Announcement

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) - Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Easement Specialist

Application Deadline: Open until filled, preference will be given to applications submitted by February 5, 2024.

Location: Preferred location, Davis, CA. Other locations in Northern CA negotiable
Salary: Up to \$67,500 per year
Duration: Fully-funded 2-year position

Position Overview

A partner-funded position between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) to provide capacity for a new Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) - Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Easement Specialist position. This position will support outreach and implementation of farm and rangeland protection by bolstering California NRCS' capacity to implement ACEP-ALE acquisitions. This position will significantly increase the conservation of important working lands in northeastern California. NRCS and the IWJV have a mutual interest in conserving agricultural lands that provide wet meadows, irrigated pastures, rangelands, and sage brush habitat to sustain Pacific Flyway waterfowl, shorebird, and waterbird populations on private lands.

This agreement will support timely delivery of the ACEP-ALE and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) programs and provide application assistance for land trusts and other eligible entities. The addition of this capacity, and the coordination it brings, will result in a more predictable and streamlined application review process and will provide California NRCS with assistance needed to close conservation easements in a timely manner and provide a higher level of customer support to our conservation partners.

Position Description

This position supports a growing interest among land trusts, non-governmental organizations, and other eligible entities to apply for ACEP-ALE funding and will support coordination between applicants and NRCS to:

- Communicate applicant and land eligibility of proposed easements for ACEP-ALE funding and RCPP-ALE.
- Clearly outline ACEP-ALE and RCPP-ALE application process and funding criteria.
- Support the ACEP-ALE and RCPP-ALE application eligibility and obligation process, post-obligation acquisition work, and associated long-term obligations such as monitoring.

- Inventory current and future farm and rangeland protection opportunities in northeastern California and conduct appropriate outreach and training to interested partners and landowners.

Position Duties and Responsibilities:

- Assist ACEP-ALE and RCPP-ALE applicants to complete NRCS documentation requirements:
 - Work closely with NRCS and anticipated easement applicants to communicate program application requirements. This will include: providing specific guidance, outreach, training, and feedback on required ALE application forms, inventories, waiver processes, proof of physical and legal parcel access, land eligibility (specific map requirements), entity eligibility, signature authority, environmental record searches, landowner eligibility and farm record establishment, and title requirements to ensure all items on the application checklist are submitted correctly during the ACEP-ALE and RCPP-ALE application announcement period.
 - Maintain a tracking tool for application progression to meet state specific timelines; provide follow up with applicants as necessary to ensure the application progression will be accomplished in a timely and efficient manner.
 - As directed by NRCS communicate information related to application ranking outcomes, application deferrals, waiver requests, obligations, and other ALE information as needed.
- Assist NRCS with review and tracking of applications and administration of agreements.
 - Ensure application information is properly documented in business tool software such as Protracts, Conservation Desktop (CD) and Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART).
 - Ensure agreements and closings are accomplished according to state and national program deadlines.
 - Support NRCS application review procedures, including pre-obligation review, deed review, internal control reviews and easement acquisition.
 - Assist with development of program agreements and parcel contracts for the enrollment of approved applications and administrative management of program agreements.
 - Assist eligible entities (i.e., program applicants such as land trusts) and NRCS with acquisition work products needed to acquire conservation easements. This may include assisting with the development, submission, review, and tracking of conservation easement deeds, appraisals, appraisal technical reviews, title commitments and title exception assessments, baseline reports, management plans, and internal controls reviews.
- Enhance communication and clarity between eligible entities (i.e., program applicants such as land trusts) and NRCS State Office.
 - Proactively develop annual training and outreach plan for ACEP-ALE and RCPP-ALE to interested parties including land trusts, RCPP recipients, non-governmental organizations, and the general farming and ranching public.
 - Produce and maintain annual report of the number of applications received and obligated agreements as well as outreach conducted, and training completed accessible to NRCS and partners.

- Act as a liaison between NRCS, eligible entities, and other applicants. Organize, facilitate and lead conference calls, meetings, and workshops between NRCS, IWJV, and other partners to streamline communications and address issues as they arise.
- Facilitate coordination and resource-sharing between NRCS California and the community of potential eligible entities for application and funding deadlines, materials needed and application process.
- Conduct outreach and training to eligible entities, RCPP recipients, and other interested partners on the ACEP-ALE application process and checklist of materials needed for new applications.
- Coordinate tracking of applications annually and work with eligibility entities to ensure application materials are complete and received in a timely manner to meet programmatic deadlines for submission and internal controls reviews.
- Develop parcel contracts and programmatic agreements for the enrollment of new ACEP-ALE and RCPP-ALE obligations. Assist with the administration of agreements including modifications needed for time extensions or in-scope adjustments.
- Track, coordinate, and complete annual easement acquisition work needed to acquire and close conservation easements. Conduct regular coordination meetings with NRCS and eligible entities with active easement projects to ensure workflow and deadlines are met.

Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

- Ability to communicate effectively with private landowners, government agency personnel and conservation partner organizations.
- Ability to work independently with minimal supervision.
- Ability to work cooperatively with diverse clientele.
- Knowledge of wetland and rangeland ecology.
- Ability to obtain USDA Security Clearance and NRCS Conservation Planning certification.
- Excellent verbal/written communication and organizational skills.
- Valid driver's license.
- A general qualification guideline for this position is a bachelor's degree, or equivalent, in natural resource planning, wildlife biology/management or ecology, agronomy, and related conservation work experience.
- Computer skills are required, and applicant should be familiar with Microsoft Word and Excel.
- Ability to use NRCS Conservation Desktop, GIS applications, and GPS systems would be beneficial.
- Workspace, ArcGIS, and with handheld GPS, and Field Tablet data collection tools.

About the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps producers, soil and water conservation districts, and other partners protect and conserve natural resources on private lands throughout the United States. With approximately 2,300 Service Centers in communities nationwide, NRCS and other USDA employees work side-by-side with producers in every State and territory.

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."

Supervision

In this unique partnership, the position is hosted by the Wildlife Management Institute and the position is fully integrated into NRCS's easement team to accelerate the pace of private land conservation. Daily activities will be supervised by the designated NRCS staff lead. ACEP-ALE Specialist will participate in annual job performance reviews with the IWJV Water 4 Coordinator and NRCS.

Benefits and Additional Information

WMI does not currently offer health insurance for limited-term employees. As such a health stipend equivalent to 10% of the employee salary will be provided to help offset the cost of health insurance. WMI may offer health insurance to limited-term employees in the future. If you are selected for this position, WMI begins providing health insurance for limited term-employees, and you elect to accept health insurance provided through WMI, the health stipend will be redirected to cover the costs of the health insurance benefit. 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 with the subject line "ACEP-ALE Specialist" by the application deadline.

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