

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Climate Smart Farms Conservation Technician

POSITION DESCRIPTION

The Michigan Climate Smart Farm Project (MCSFP, miclimartsmart.org) is looking for a Climate Smart Farms (CSF) Conservation Technician who will be based at the Washtenaw County Conservation District (WCCD) and serve Washtenaw, Lenawee, Monroe, and Wayne Counties. The CSF Conservation Technician plays a critical role in promoting sustainable agricultural practices aimed at mitigating climate change impacts while ensuring efficient land management. Working within the agricultural sector, this position focuses on implementing conservation strategies to enhance the resilience of farms to climate variability and reduce their carbon footprint. The technician works closely with farmers, agricultural experts, and environmental organizations to provide technical assistance, education and outreach, and marketing support for MCSFP, while ensuring conservation goals are effectively and efficiently achieved.

The technician must have the ability to perform duties on own initiative while receiving minimal direct supervision. The technician must be able to use good judgment in making decisions, exhibit a good working relationship with people, and be highly dependable in planning, implementing, and reporting activities. Individual must be able to relate to diverse, underserved rural/urban people as well as professionals. Finally, the technician will represent the project and its partners on committees and/or task forces as directed by the supervisor including establishing and maintaining a positive working relationship with other federal, state, and local agencies, units of government, and interested groups.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

Technical Assistance & Administration (80%)

- **Resource Assessment:** Conduct on-site evaluations of farms to assess current land management practices, soil health, water usage, and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Conservation Planning:** Collaborate with farmers to develop customized conservation plans aligned with climate-smart agriculture principles. This includes identifying suitable practices such as cover cropping, crop rotation, reduced tillage, and agroforestry.
- **Soil Health Management:** Provide guidance on soil conservation techniques, organic matter management, and nutrient cycling to enhance soil fertility, structure, and carbon sequestration capacity.

- **Water Conservation:** Advise on water-efficient irrigation methods, rainwater harvesting systems, and wetland restoration to minimize water usage and protect water quality.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Promote the integration of habitat conservation measures, such as hedgerows, buffer strips, and pollinator-friendly plantings, to support biodiversity and ecosystem services on farms.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement monitoring protocols to track the effectiveness of conservation practices in improving farm resilience and reducing environmental impacts. Analyze data to inform adaptive management strategies.
- **Education and Outreach:** Conduct workshops, training sessions, and outreach programs to educate farmers, community members, and stakeholders about the benefits of climate-smart agriculture and conservation practices.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Stay abreast of local, state, and federal regulations related to agricultural conservation and environmental stewardship. Assist farmers in complying with relevant laws and incentive programs.
- **Collaboration and Networking:** Establish partnerships with government agencies, non-profit organizations, research institutions, and industry stakeholders to leverage resources, share best practices, and foster a supportive network for climate-smart farming initiatives.
- **Administrative Responsibilities:** Manage contracts, data reporting, and general paperwork, overseeing contract development, ensuring compliance, collecting, and analyzing project data for reporting, maintaining organized administrative records, and coordinating logistical arrangements for various activities.

Professional Development (15%)

- Commit to ongoing professional development through the Employee Development Plan (EDP).
- Participate in WCCD quarterly staff meetings/trainings.

General WCCD (5%)

- Prepare a monthly report for and/or occasionally participate in monthly board meetings.
- Participate in annual meetings and other WCCD related meetings and events.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Bachelor's degree in agriculture, environmental science, natural resource management, or related field.
- Strong understanding of agronomy, soil science, hydrology, and ecological principles.
- Experience in agricultural conservation, sustainability, or environmental stewardship.

- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills for engaging with diverse stakeholders.
- Passion for sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, and environmental conservation.
- Knowledge of SE Michigan agriculture, forestry, and ecosystems.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a dynamic, flexible, hybrid-remote and field-based environment.
- Excellent computer skills are required. Computer workstation will be provided, including a standard PC, on a shared network with Windows-based software.
- Ability to learn and integrate use of project and time management software (ASANA and Toggl), plus Google Workspace.
- Able to work efficiently outdoors in varying conditions and rough terrain; able to lift 20 pounds.
- Must maintain a valid driver's license.
- Willingness to travel regularly for regional partner events, meetings, farm site visits.
- Must be able to pass a security background check.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Reports to: MCSFP Specialist
Supervises: None
Works with: WCCD Farmer Programs Team
External Stakeholders: MCSFP Partners, Producers and Landowners

SALARY, BENEFITS, WORK HOURS, LOCATION

This position will be based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Work time will be generally split between county offices, remote (home) office, and field work across SE Michigan. Washtenaw County Conservation District office is located at the Washtenaw County Service Building at 705 N. Zeeb Rd, #201, Ann Arbor 48103. Typical work hours will be Monday-Friday, 8:00am - 4:30pm. Some evening and weekend work will be required.

This is a full time, FLSA exempt, grant-funded salary position commensurate with experience and ranges from \$53,000 to \$58,000 (secured funding through September 2028). As a full-time, exempt employee, the Climate Smart Farms Conservation Technician is entitled to the Washtenaw County Conservation District's benefits package, which includes full medical insurance (medical, dental, vision, other ancillary benefits) or ability to waive this benefit and take as a taxable cash payment, 13 paid vacation days, 13 paid sick days, 11 paid federal holidays, and 2.5 hours of flextime per week. Other benefits as described in the Employee Handbook.

ABOUT THE MICHIGAN CLIMATE SMART FARM PROJECT

MCSFP is developing and launching a Climate Smart Farm Verification (CSFV) system, based on the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). The CSFV pilot program is designed to assist small/diversified farms in Washtenaw, Monroe, Wayne, and Lenawee Counties with verification of GHG reduction benefits and the marketing of commodities produced using climate smart and regenerative agricultural practices. Farmers interested in participating in the CSFV program will be eligible for cost-share payments for climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices implemented with a goal of attaining CSFV. Verified farms will be able to utilize the newly developed CSF branding package and logo to market their commodities as Climate Smart Farm Verified. The long-term goal of MCSFP is to develop a scalable statewide program that can be utilized in verifying a diversity of commodities.

ABOUT THE WCCD

The WCCD is a local government agency and has played a significant role in assisting residents and landowners with access to trees, plants, and conservation tools in Washtenaw County since 1948. Our mission is to assist residents with the conservation, management, and wise use of natural resources in Washtenaw County. Since 1951 the WCCD has distributed over 7.1 million trees, shrubs, and native plants for various conservation purposes.

TO APPLY

Please submit a cover letter, resume, and two professional references by email to goldenbergm@washtenawcd.org by 4:30 p.m. on June 7th, 2024. Please combine all application materials into one PDF file for review and state "Application - CSF Conservation Technician" in the email subject line. Contact Megan Phillips Goldenberg at the above email address with any questions related to the position. To obtain further information about the Washtenaw County Conservation District visit our website at www.washtenawcd.org.

The Washtenaw County Conservation District does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, military service, disability or other non-merit factor.