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## Skagit Conservation District

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## Skagit Conservation District Conservation Easement Program Liaison Project position

**Annual Salary: \$65,000 - \$75,000**      **Closing Date: Open until filled, first application pull: May 1, 2024 4:00pm**

**Benefits:** Public Employees Retirement System (PERS); health and dental coverage; life insurance policy; annual leave, sick leave, and paid holidays.

### **Qualifications:**

Candidates for this position should have real estate experience, legal background, land conservation experience, and/or familiarity with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) processes and/or the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Program, Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Program, or state/county land conservation programs. Experience implementing conservation easements and working with land trusts is strongly preferred. It is also desired that a candidate has facilitation or conflict resolution skills to resolve issues to achieve successful project outcomes. The successful candidate will have demonstrated project management skills and the ability to advance multiple, complex projects at the same time. The position requires the use of remote technology, strong attention to detail and excellent written and verbal communication skills.

### **Introduction:**

Skagit Conservation District is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to an inclusive work environment and to cultivating a staff team representing the full diversity of the communities in which we live and work. We seek to recruit, develop, and retain talented people from a diverse candidate pool.

The position of Conservation Easement Programs Liaison is to assist NRCS, the State Conservation Commission (SCC), land trust organizations/program applicants, and Conservation Districts with successfully implementing the ACEP and RCP programs offered by NRCS; where feasible, matching federal, state and local conservation easement programs. Funding for this position is currently provided by USDA NRCS and SCC for the period of approximately 24-months with options to extend funding for an additional three years; funding is subject federal or state availability of funds. This position directly reports to the Skagit Conservation District Manager but due to the statewide nature of the work will generally be self-directed in day-to-day coordination with NRCS, SCC, the Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT) and land trust/program applicant partners requesting assistance. The position has the option to



be fully remote or hybrid at the Skagit CD (or other host CD). While this position is housed as an employee of the Skagit CD, the successful candidate will work with a core partnership composed of the following organizations:

The Skagit CD has served the county since 1942. We have a reputation for putting conservation on the ground, meeting the current needs of our people, while planning for future generations. SCD is a non-regulatory, locally-led special purpose district. We are a community-based hub of natural resource expertise and funding, empowering people to care for their natural resources through their own land management decisions using science-based best practices & financial assistance.

Through voluntary conservation programs, NRCS helps producers, soil and water conservation districts, and other partners protect and conserve natural resources on private lands throughout the United States. For more than 80 years, NRCS has helped people make investments in their operations and local communities to keep working lands working, boost rural economies, increase the competitiveness of American agriculture, and improve the quality of our air, water, soil, and habitat. Through one-on-one, personalized advice, NRCS works voluntarily with producers and communities to find the best solutions to meet their unique conservation and business goals. By doing so, NRCS helps address climate change and ensure the long-term sustainability of American agriculture. We're also focused on the American farmer, especially those underserved by our programs as well as those trying to break into new markets, like organics.

The Washington State Conservation Commission is the coordinating state agency for all 45 conservation districts (CDs) in Washington State. Together, the SCC and CDs provide voluntary, incentive-based programs that empower people to practice conservation and ensure healthy natural resources and agriculture for all.

The Washington Association of Land Trusts is the unified hub and central voice for 33 land trusts that are at the forefront of work across our state to safeguard a diverse and connected natural world, support a vibrant working-lands economy, broaden access to the outdoors, and foster an ethic of engagement with the landscapes that sustain a high quality of life. Their mission is to increase the collective strength and excellence of the land trust community in Washington.

**Duties:**

The primary responsibility for this position is to assist, coordinate, and/or support applications to the NRCS ACEP or RCPP programs. The measurement of success is quantitative based on completed conservation easements that include agricultural land and natural resource protection. The incumbent gathers and assembles data as requested by partners, independently schedules their time and follow-up, while coordinating that time with the principle planner in charge of the project, land trust, and NRCS or SCC staff. This person shall become knowledgeable of NRCS ACEP and RCPP program criteria, paperwork, required processes timing and submittals, community coordination, local government filing, and other requirements associated with ACEP or RCPP and other



related state/local conservation easement process requirements. This person will work closely with eligible entities, primarily land trusts, and NRCS to ensure applications are submitted correctly and the project successfully proceeds through the NRCS approval process. Duties include, but are not limited to the following:

Provide project coordination support to ACEP and RCPP program participants such as:

- A. Maintain a tracking tool for program activity deadlines for individual projects that is accessible to ACEP and RCPP applicants, monitor adherence to required timelines and procedures, and analyze program activity data.
- B. Maintain a current edition of a visual representation (flyer, brochure, graphic etc...) for the customer/landowner of the process from application to closing to include NRCS and matching fund/program milestones and deadlines.
- C. Provide timely communication to ACEP and RCPP eligible entities, potential RCPP applicants, easement entities, and participating partners regarding the receipt and approval of documents submitted for NRCS review, as well as the status and completion of internal NRCS documents necessary for project implementation.
- D. Coordinate with ACEP and RCPP eligible entities (the eligible entity will work directly with landowners), local agency staff such as conservation districts if needed, and NRCS state and program leadership as needed to address barriers to project completion, such as establishment of landowner eligibility with FSA, appraisal expiration, etc.
- E. Assist to resolve deed, access issues, and title exceptions not allowable.
- F. Provide templates or samples of program forms to eligible entities.
- G. Coordinate the annual ALE kick-off meeting and/or other educational resources for partners.
- H. Assist in disseminating changes in programs or policy are communicated timely to eligible entities and partners.
- I. Provide outreach and education to eligible entities and partners, including promotional materials, sign-up information, programming for conferences, Land Camp, and other events. Travel to events, conferences, workshops, and site visits.
- J. Facilitating discussion when opportunities for improvement arise
- K. Providing boots-on-the-ground assistance in Western WA to NRCS Easement Program Manager and RCPP Coordinator, including assistance in evaluating potential project sites for land eligibility determinations.
- L. Organize and facilitate monthly check ins between ACEP Program Manager, OFP Coordinator, WSCC RCPP lead, Skagit CD (or alternate host CD) Manager, and others as needed to prioritize work tasks etc.



- M. Organize, facilitate, and convene key ACEP and RCPP stakeholders and NRCS state leadership quarterly to ensure robust information sharing and coordinate responses to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- N. In coordination with key partners, develop and implement workshops and training modules for ACEP and RCPP eligible entities on topics of importance, such as application submittal, acquisition checklists, FSA landowner eligibility, etc.
- O. Produce and maintain summary reporting of completed projects and success metrics accessible to NRCS and external stakeholders. Coordinate with partners to identify important completed projects and support external communications to highlight partnerships and success stories.
- P. Through research and meetings with funders and applicants, identify barriers to using state and local match sources and recommend policy changes. Convene NRCS and other grant-making agencies to document and compile barriers observed to inform recommendations for better coordination of funding and increased match for projects.
- Q. Other duties as assigned

**Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities:**

This position requires a professional background in conservation easements intended to address preservation of agricultural and natural resource lands that provide public benefit. It is also strongly desired that applicants have at least one year of experience or exposure with NRCS processes and ACEP or RCPP programs, and three-years' experience desired or certificate of training associated with conservation easement acquisition and stewardship.

This position requires the following knowledge, skills, and abilities to:

- A. Maintain flexibility and utilize adaptive management to lead to project success.
- B. Ability to assist the conservation district planner to motivate individuals to adopt and implement resource management practices on their properties. This may include presenting to public groups, students, organizations, or clubs.
- C. Use computer, database creation and maintenance, scheduling, PowerPoint, virtual meetings, and other uses as needed.
- D. Safely operate a motor vehicle. Must possess a valid WA State driver's license and certify annually via FPAC-MSD-516 Motor Vehicle Authorization Form.
- E. Ability to pass a federal background check and obtain a USDA LincPass.
- F. Ability to traverse uneven terrain and under various weather conditions
- G. Ability to occasionally lift 30 lbs.
- H. Work alone or closely with others in the field or in a public office environment.
- I. Organize, prioritize, and plan own schedule of activities.



- J. Maintain accurate records regarding time-keeping and authorized expenses.
- K. Travel for professional trainings, conferences, and conservation easement promotion may exceed 15%.

**Training and Evaluation:**

Performance standards will be developed as needed to assist in evaluating work abilities and work products.

The person in this position will be evaluated in accordance with the Skagit Conservation District policy. These guidelines include a three-month probationary period and a review bi-annually or annually through the duration of funding.

Training needs will be developed as a result of performance evaluations described above.

**Conditions of Employment**

The physical location for this position will be determined based on the physical location of the successful candidate. For successful candidates in Northwest Washington, the Skagit CD office in Mount Vernon, WA is an option along with working remotely or from a home office with regular reporting of activities. May be required to provide own reliable transportation if primarily working from remote location and/or based on availability of NRCS or district vehicles. Mileage compensation would be provided for use of personal vehicle.

**To apply for this position:**

Applicants must provide a resume, cover letter, completed [application form](#), and three professional references. Applicants will be notified before references are contacted. This position will remain open until filled; the first cutoff date for review of applications will be 4:00 pm, Wednesday, May 1st. Applications will be accepted by email to [Skagitcd@skagitcd.org](mailto:Skagitcd@skagitcd.org). Applicants may be subject to a background check. For more information contact Emmett Wild at 360-428-4313.

**Skagit Conservation District**  
**Attention: Emmett Wild**  
**2021 E. College Way, Suite 203**  
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**Contact:**  
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