

POSITION TITLE: Agricultural Resource Conservationist

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Allegheny County Conservation District (ACCD) is part of a national regulatory network and plays an important role in how communities in Allegheny County preserve, protect and improve natural resources. ACCD is a progressive district with a creative approach to conservation work and has a diverse portfolio including urban and rural agriculture, watershed and wetland stewardship and improvement, as well as regulatory enforcement of four state laws that protect soil and water health.

POSITION SUMMARY

The purpose of the Agricultural Resource Conservationist is to liaise with the agricultural sector in Allegheny County and to manage programs that provide important technical and financial resources to help protect and improve farmland. The primary responsibilities of this position are to manage three programs: the Agricultural Conservation Technical Assistance (ACT) Program, the Agricultural Conservation Assistance (ACAP) Program and the Allegheny County Farmland Preservation Program.

The successful candidate will develop relationships with farmers, various partner agencies and other diverse stakeholders through exceptional interpersonal and diplomatic communication skills. Duties include connecting with farmers and assessing their conservation needs, informing producers about state and federal programs and encouraging their participation, overseeing eligibility and reviewing applications for ACCD-managed programs, providing soil health technical assistance, maintaining required reporting, attending governmental and other relevant meetings and supporting the Allegheny County Agricultural Lands Preservation Board.

POSITION DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Farmland Preservation Program (40 percent FTE):

- Outreach and education to potential applicants on program eligibility and program policies.
- Processing applications, scoring and ranking applicants, commissioning appraisals and guiding the Allegheny County Farm Preservation Board through the offer process.
- Working with farms that have accepted an offer on all the paperwork and materials required to receive approval from the State Board. This includes payment and tax paperwork, title searches and an easement survey.

- Supporting the Allegheny County Agricultural Lands Preservation Board by attending meetings, giving updates, taking minutes and setting the agenda alongside the Board Chair.
- Developing an annual program budget in concert with the Program Team Director.
- Inspecting each preserved farm on a bi-annual basis to ensure program compliance and assess farmer technical assistance needs.
- Promote the program via press releases and other media in partnership with ACCD's Communications Coordinator.
- Maintaining program records as required by the state and updating maps and data sets of all preserved farms.

Agricultural Conservation Assistance (ACAP) Program (40 percent FTE):

- Work with ACCD staff to implement the state-funded Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP), a multi-year opportunity to pay for the implementation, or construction of, best management practices (BMPs) on eligible farms.
- Oversee outreach and education for ACAP and assist farmers with understanding the program guidelines and submitting applications.
- Review and approve applications along with other District staff. Manage awardee contracts and inspect completed projects before approving final payments.
- Administer ACAP funds and submit project and expense quarterly reports to the State Conservation Commission.

Agricultural Conservation Technical Assistance (ACT) Program (20 percent FTE):

- Provide assistance to local farmers with planning and implementation of agricultural best management practices.
- Assist farms in understanding their obligations under PA Chapter 102, Manure Management and Nutrient Management laws.
- Advance District partnerships with cooperating agencies and partners including USDA NRCS, USDA FSA, PASA, Penn State Extension, PA Farm Bureau, Farmland Preservation Board and other key agricultural stakeholder groups.
- Perform education and outreach activities to inform farmers about conservation best practices and opportunities available to them through USDA-NRCS and the PA Department of Agriculture.
- Assist with conservation farm planning and implementation of BMPs to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality.

- Work with other ACCD program leads to align projects and grants, where appropriate, in order to maximize conservation outcomes.
- Submit quarterly activity reports to the State Conservation Commission.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- A minimum of five years' professional experience.
- Degree in agriculture, agronomy, environmental studies, natural resource management, engineering or similar area of study.
- Basic knowledge of soil and water conservation issues, land use practices, innovative planning techniques, best management practices (BMPs) and applicable local, state, and federal laws, rules and regulations. Additional training in state and federal programs will be provided by ACCD and partners.
- Ability to read and interpret administrative procedures manuals, technical literature, topographic maps, contracts, engineering plans, bid documents, cost estimates, construction standards and specifications.
- Excellent project management skills, ability to plan, implement and oversee all phases of a project from planning through final reporting.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of individuals and groups, both verbally and in writing.
- Knowledge of computer word processing, spreadsheets, and databases and the ability to operate computers.
- Ability to work proficiently in remote, hybrid and in-person formats, with minimal supervision.
- Maintain all appropriate records for all grants and delegated programs including quarterly reporting and reimbursement requests.
- Assist with demonstration projects, field days, workshops and tours.
- Assist other District staff with projects and programs as needed, including Envirothon, training events, workshops, field days and other educational activities.
- Provide construction oversight on projects, some which may include bidding and prevailing wage in accordance with state law.
- Possess a valid driver's license and safely operate motor vehicles while carrying out assigned duties.
- Possess a reliable vehicle that can be utilized for fieldwork purposes daily. Mileage will be reimbursed at the state rate.
- Other duties as assigned.

WORK CONDITIONS

ACCD is a flexible, hybrid workplace that prioritizes employee and community health. The position will require field and office work and allows for some work from home. Fieldwork will require reliable transportation and the ability to work in all weather conditions and navigate uneven terrain. The office duties require traditional interpersonal and technological skills. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations will be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of this job. ACCD encourages both prospective employees and current employees to discuss potential accommodations with ACCD.

Compensation Overview

ACCD offers a highly competitive compensation package and a motivated but employee-centered workplace. Beyond salary, compensation includes a 3% Simple IRA match, health insurance with family coverage, short- and long-term disability insurance, life insurance, paid sick, and a generous paid holiday and vacation package in accordance with the ACCD Employee Manual. Salary will be competitive and commensurate with experience.

ACCD is an Equal Opportunity Employer

ACCD is an EOE employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. ACCD follows Pennsylvania's at-will employment policy. People of diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Applicants must provide references upon request and pass background checks as one consideration of employment. These are just two factors of determining candidacy. ACCD requires staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before beginning employment, unless an approved exemption is sought.

To apply, please email cover letter, resume and three references with 'Agricultural Resource Conservationist' in the subject line to resumes@accdpa.org. The position will remain open until filled.