



Habitat Specialist

Permanent Full Time (40 hours per week)

\$45,000 - \$55,000 per year

A competitive benefits package

Priority Application Deadline October 19, 2020

Applications reviewed upon receipt

Thurston Conservation District seeks a dynamic, creative, and critical thinker with interest in designing and implementing habitat conservation projects and working with diverse communities to join our collaborative team in a fast-paced, hands-on and rewarding work environment.

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

This position provides technical assistance services to community members to promote water quality protection, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, and natural resources stewardship. The Habitat Specialist will work collaboratively as a TCD Technical Team member to provide services to Thurston County residents. The primary functions include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Develop and implement habitat restoration, enhancement, and protection projects throughout Thurston County to benefit stream ecology, wetlands, and upland ecosystems, and to improve conditions for fish, wildlife, pollinators, and native plant communities.
2. Work with Education staff to participate in/present during habitat workshops and tours that address a wide variety of audiences, from urban residential homeowners to large scale farms and working timberland property owners.
3. Provide both verbal and written technical assistance guidance to landowners and others.
4. Manage Thurston Conservation District's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, which includes marketing, developing projects and contracts, and implementing riparian buffer restoration projects.
5. Participate in local working groups /meetings as a representative of Thurston Conservation District.
6. Assist with project development and grant-writing to secure funds for habitat restoration and other projects.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Work collaboratively with other TCD Technical Team staff members on projects as needed, and contribute as a team-member to program and project development. While this position requires significant independence, a collaborative work style will be critical to the success of the Habitat Specialist.
- Provide Technical Assistance to Thurston County community members on a variety of topics including: natural resource stewardship and living with rivers, streams and wetlands; recommendations regarding fish, wildlife, and pollinator species habitat requirements and enhancements, botanizing and noxious weed identification & treatment, and more depending on applicant's areas of expertise.

- Assess project sites to develop and write Planting Plans for a variety of habitats and purposes such as: water quality buffers on rivers and wetlands, upland habitat enhancement, residential rain gardens, livestock exclusion hedgerows, etc.
- Conduct site visits with residents across Thurston County to help identify potential resource concerns, and develop projects to address them while incorporating unique landowner needs and goals, and linking sites with potential funding requirements and local regulations.
- Coordinate and market the TCD Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to agricultural and rural communities within Thurston County to identify ready and willing landowners.
- Develop CREP and other riparian buffer enhancement plans and manage riparian buffer project implementation. Activities include assisting landowners with CREP sign-up; coordinating CREP plan review with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office; supporting landowners with CREP applications, cost-share contract management, and project implementation.
- Coordinate maintenance and monitoring of installed CREP projects. Activities include coordinating and inspecting biannual weed control with maintenance contractors for 5 years following implementation; completing Annual Status Reviews for active projects and submitting reports to FSA; evaluating the need for adaptive management and coordinating work with contractors.
- Support and/or coordinate with landowner hired contractors that implement TCD CREP plans to ensure compliance with District planned practices, FSA policy, and NRCS practice standards. Activities include inspecting practice installation, reviewing contractor invoices, and tracking landowner contractor payments and reimbursements.
- Manage the CREP grant and prepare applications for additional funding to support CREP related strategic/special projects. Activities include maintaining all grant activity records, preparing cost-share contract reconciliations, preparing grant invoice vouchers; and preparing grant applications for new funding as needed and time permitting.
- Manage and coordinate project data entry into the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSSC) Conservation Projects Data System (CPDS).
- Manage program budgets and program activities to meet calendar year work plan objectives.
- Develop and support District partnerships with other entities, agencies, organizations and groups involved in watershed restoration activities. Work collaboratively with a diverse population, using educational concepts and values along with communication skills to present information to non-technical audiences.
- Share a vision and passion for natural resource management and conservation practices.
- Continue to improve professional skills by attending training sessions, workshops, working with mentors and coaches, and other methods as identified in a professional development plan.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS:

- Work within tight deadlines and manage conflicting demands while successfully operating in a dynamic work environment with minimal direction from supervisor.
- Share a vision and passion for natural resource management and conservation practices with diverse populations, using educational concepts and values along with strong communication skills.

- Communicate effectively and work collaboratively with District staff, interns, private landowners and residents, and other community members and stakeholders to produce high quality, cost-effective work products.
- Present program information in public settings and meetings; prepare clear, concise and informative written documents and reports; maintain thorough and organized records.
- Write reports, track work progress, prepare and record program/project data and records.
- Travel to various locations throughout Thurston County and occasionally throughout the State.
- Work occasional weekend and weekday evening events.
- Apply appropriate safety practices in the field and in the office. Perform outdoor physical work in all weather conditions; ability to lift at least 40pounds.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

Education: 1) Bachelor’s Degree (B. A. / B. S.) in natural/environmental science, agriculture, agronomy, environmental planning, or closely related technical/scientific/natural resources field –OR– 2) B.A. / B.S. from an accredited institution in combination with experience in natural resource management as described above. – OR– 3) An associate degree in natural resource management from an accredited institution in combination with 2 years direct experience in natural resource management as described above.

AND

Work Experience: A minimum of 4 years of professional natural resource management experience is required in ecology, botany, wetland science, upland or aquatic habitat restoration, or related work. Work experience can come from a government, corporate or other post-secondary training environment –OR– a combination of education, training, and experience that demonstrates the ability to perform the duties of the position is welcome.

- Experience designing, coordinating, and implementing riparian enhancement projects. Experience with stream and wetland restoration techniques, invasive species management, native plant species, and uses of native plants to enhance Pacific Northwest aquatic and upland habitat.
- Awareness of farmer and landowner conservation interests, local natural resource concerns, and conservation practices associated with livestock management and crop production, regulations associated with farming activities, and approaches to promoting voluntary conservation.
- Licensed to operate a motor vehicle in the State of Washington or can obtain a valid Washington State Driver’s License.
- Proficiency with computers to write reports, track progress, and prepare and record field and technical data using Microsoft Office Suite (MS Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint).
- Proficiency with using GIS.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills and an ability to communicate sometimes complex science to community members in understandable language.

DESIREABLE SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:

- Experience designing and coordinating aquatic restoration and/or enhancement projects to meet NRCS standards.

- Knowledge of Thurston County watersheds, common rural land use practices, and the resource management issues and challenges facing the region.
- Knowledge or understanding of the biology of local fish species, and planning, designing, installing fish enhancement projects.
- Experience and training to conduct fish barrier assessments; experience with culvert removal projects, and programs such as FFFPP.
- Knowledge or understanding of physical stream processes (e.g. hydraulics, channel configuration, geomorphology, etc.).
- Knowledge or understanding of forest health, urban forestry or upland habitat management principles.
- Currently hold or can obtain a WSDA Pesticide Applicators Permit.
- Working knowledge of local, state and federal environmental regulatory programs and resource conservation priorities, and ability to apply that knowledge to developing and implementing resource conservation programs and/or the design and permitting of water quality protection and enhancement, and/or forest health management, and/or freshwater or marine enhancement projects.
- Experience overseeing construction projects, including working with contractors and consultants during project design and implementation.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER:

Here at Thurston Conservation District our employees and the people we serve come from all walks of life. We strive to hire great people from a wide variety of backgrounds. We believe in the importance of recognizing the value that each of us contributes to the success of the District’s mission. Having a diverse workforce is the District's greatest resource of strength and knowledge. It is through the combination of talents and abilities that we can pursue finding effective ways to best serve our community. We are committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace for everyone. All qualified applicants receive consideration for employment without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, disability, age, or veteran status. Please let us know if you need accommodation to participate in the application process.

SCHEDULE & WORKING CONDITIONS:

This position is permanent, overtime non-exempt, and full-time (40 hours per week) with flexible work hours. Local and out-of-town travel, occasional evening and weekend hours are possible. Currently, as a as part of TCD’s response plan to COVID-19, work will primarily be performed at home with occasional work in the District’s office, as well as in the field. Employees are provided with necessary TCD-owned equipment to perform their job responsibilities outside of the office.

This position description represents a general outline of the job duties, essential functions and minimum required qualifications and is not intended to be comprehensive in nature. Specific statements of duties not included does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related, or a logical assignment to the position. Job descriptions are subject to change by the District as the needs of the District and requirements of the job change. Eligibility for this position is contingent upon the individual’s ability to perform the essential functions with or without reasonable accommodation. This position requires frequent sitting and standing.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS:

This position is budgeted for an annual salary starting between \$45,000 and \$55,000 depending on the applicant's qualifications. The Thurston Conservation District observes twelve (12) paid holidays (including two personal holidays). Employees also accrue sick and vacation leave. The District offers medical, dental, vision and life insurance coverage for employees, with an option to cover 75% of spouse or dependent coverage. Additional voluntary supplemental insurance opportunities are also available. Participation in regular professional development opportunities are strongly encouraged and supported. Thurston CD employees participate in [Public Employees Retirement System \(PERS\)](#). Staff also has access to an additional voluntary retirement savings programs within the State of Washington's Department of Retirement Systems – [Deferred Compensation Program \(DCP\)](#). This position is represented by the Washington Federation of State Employees, AFSCME Council 28. The current Collective Bargaining Agreement can be found here: <https://www.thurstoncd.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Collective-Bargaining-Agreement.pdf>

TO APPLY:

Priority application deadline is October 19th. Applications will be reviewed upon receipt. First round interviews will be scheduled immediately following the priority deadline.

Please include the following in your application package :

1. Resume
2. Cover letter
3. Three (3) professional/educational references
4. Responses to attached Application Questions

Be sure to describe your interest and unique qualifications for the position and the skills that you bring to the Conservation District team. Your cover letter is not to exceed one page. Letters of recommendation may be included.

Send electronically (*please no paper copies*) to: ***job-applications@thurstoncd.com***

Please include: **Habitat Specialist – YOUR NAME** in the subject line.

**We sincerely thank you for your interest in joining the
Thurston Conservation District team!**

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Please read the following prompt and answer the questions below. Submit your responses with your application.

Prompt: The Old Greengrass Dairy is a 100 acre dairy farm with about 1,200 feet of salmon-bearing creek running through the farm fields. The property upstream has an existing riparian buffer project, and at first glance the Old Greengrass Dairy could potentially be an opportunity for increased habitat connectivity. You have identified this farm for a possible riparian buffer project. Please discuss the following:

1. How would you prepare for your first meeting with the landowner of the dairy? What strategies for initial outreach would you use? What about a pitch for a potential project?
2. What considerations would you discuss with the landowner to help determine whether this property is appropriate for a habitat project?
3. Suppose that the landowner agrees to work with TCD on a riparian buffer project and gives you the go ahead to develop a plan. What are the main components of a riparian buffer restoration plan? Please list and briefly describe each.