



## **Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District**

**Position:** *Conservation Specialist - Regenerative Soils and Food Systems Program*

**Post Date:** 7/8/2021

**The Quick Pitch:** WNRCD seeks an innovator and community-connector with a strong understanding of agriculture & soil conservation to manage and grow our regenerative soils and food systems program. Can you navigate a corn field as skillfully as you can navigate a multi-tab spreadsheet? Do you like talking with farmers about how the harvest is going as much as you like pitching new ideas to funders in a grant application? If so, read on!

**About Winooski NRCD and the Regenerative Soils and Food Systems Program** The Winooski NRCD was established in 1940, after Vermont passed the [Soil Conservation Act](#), with an original purpose to drive locally-led voluntary conservation through contacts with farmers. In 1968, the Vermont State Legislature amended the Soil Conservation Act broadening our scope to conserve all natural resources. Since 1940, the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District has promoted the wise use, sustainable development, and conservation of our District's natural resources. We connect residents with education and technical assistance to implement on-the-ground projects to improve water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat. We serve residents and communities of Chittenden and Washington County Vermont as well as three towns in Orange County (Orange, Williamstown & Washington).

Through our Agricultural Assistance Program, Winooski NRCD staff work one-on-one with farmers to plan and fund improvements for clean water. We provide free assistance to collect soil and manure samples and teach farmers not only how to complete their 590-Nutrient Management Plans but also how to keep records that might be requested by a state inspector. We also provide technical assistance in conservation practice planning and assist farmers in applying for funding support from federal, state and local organizations.

In an effort to meet emerging challenges from climate change, and a shifting demographic of farmer types within our District the Winooski NRCD Board has opted to reframe our Agricultural Assistance Program into the Regenerative Soils and Food Systems Program. Winooski NRCD is now seeking a Conservation Specialist who can broaden our vision for what sustainable, resilient, and regenerative agricultural lands can look like within our District.

The Conservation Specialist will expand and diversify our agricultural services under this new program to reach more farmers, more farmer types (for example, urban and rural, young and old, new American, indigenous person, small or large operations, and forager, livestock, maple or diversified vegetable producer), and address a larger diversity of natural resource conservation challenges that occur on the lands the grow our foods. The Conservation Specialist will also deepen the technical quality of our services to encourage increased adoption of conservation

practices so that we move from practice recommendations to full implementation assistance all to truly advance resilient and regenerative working landscapes. Excellent growth opportunity for individuals who are seeking a creative experience in program management and development and who are passionate about our natural resources and food systems.

**Position Responsibilities:** With support from the District Manager, the Conservation Specialist will assume all duties as necessary to ensure the successful continuation and growth of this Regenerative Soils and Food Systems Program including workplan and budget development, fundraising and grant research and writing, grant tracking and reporting, partner networking, farmer outreach, education, and technical assistance, and on-site practice implementation where appropriate. The Conservation Specialist will be an employee of the Winooski NRCD and, as such, is expected to take on other tasks as needed to support broader organizational needs.

1. Maintain existing agricultural assistance services and ensure successful completion of deliverables under pre-existing agricultural grants.
  - a. Perform all farmer outreach and recruitment for existing projects. Develop outreach materials; coordinate and host educational workshops; publicize Districts activities and programs. Disseminate information on Best Management Practices, Required Agricultural Practices, and local, state and federal cost share programs. Grow contact lists and increase engagement with the farming community.
  - b. Deliver on-site technical visits, and provide technical assistance in identifying, securing funding for, and installing best practices for soils, water, and wildlife.
  - c. Coordinate with staff from the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts to assist with the development of land treatment and nutrient management plans. This includes conducting field and farmstead assessments, assisting producers with soil and manure sampling, manure application calibration, use of tools for assessing nutrient management and working with farmers to draft NMPs through their GoCrop™ accounts. Follow up to ensure good record-keeping and implementation of NMP practices and provide farmer education on nutrient management practices that will improve water quality and yields.
  - d. Perform water quality sampling on partner farms as part of one or more tile drain studies.
  - e. Perform targeted outreach to farmers on wetland restoration and river corridor easement opportunities.
  - f. Perform survey work to document farmer funded conservation practices.
  - g. Enhance assistance by expanding outreach, recruiting more farmer participation, and engaging in additional follow-up visits and communications to ensure recommended practices get funded and implemented.
2. Diversify the types of producers we serve by utilizing new outreach vehicles and adjusting conservation services to be relevant above and beyond livestock production in a rural setting. Perform necessary research to grow expertise across the range of food producer needs and production types within the District.
3. Improve coordination with network partners like NRCS, Farmers coalitions, Rural Vermont, NOFA-VT and UVM-Extension and attend network events and continuing education trainings. Develop new relationships with non-traditional groups to gain new knowledge of the needs of our farming community and to further achieve the District's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals.

4. Broaden relevance of conservation services through on-going surveys and research so that the practices we recommend and help fund address emerging environmental stressors as well as meet the shifting needs of our food producers.
5. Work with District Manager to grow program and services to align with Winooski NRCD Core Values and Mission.
6. Research, apply to, and assist with the administration of funding through grants, foundations and donations. Track and report project and program progress. Develop new grant funded projects and programs based on local needs in coordination with the District Manager, statewide technical staff, Board of Supervisors, and partners.
7. Act as a liaison between the District, its partners, and the general public as an outreach and information source. Represent the District at public functions, a responsibility shared among staff & Supervisors, including but not limited to local and regional planning commissions, town meetings, and other local civic activities as appropriate.
8. Participate in regular staff and Board meetings to report on programmatic progress, and collaborate on shared responsibilities. Perform additional responsibilities as need arises.
9. Take photos and videos regularly of field work and activities and contribute to Districts' broader communications efforts including regular social media postings and newsletter blurbs.

### **Required Qualifications**

- 2 to 3 years of relevant practical experience or BA or BS in natural resources, agricultural sciences, or related field.
- Familiarity with agricultural systems and regulations. Working knowledge of organic and regenerative land management, and agricultural conservation practices that benefit soils, water, wildlife, and climate.
- Knowledge of and/or experience working within Vermont's (or similar) farming, agricultural and food systems.
- Strong communications skills and ability to effectively deliver education in environmental and conservation topics. Ability to understand and interpret scientific data, and communicate effectively with the public.
- Strong interpersonal, written and verbal communication, and public speaking;
- Commitment to Winooski NRCD [Mission and Core Values](#) and passion to help realize these values and mission through program development.
- Ability to identify and prioritize tasks & to work independently and as part of a team.
- Comfort with performing manual labor outside in variable weather conditions, across rough terrain for long periods of time. Ability to walk at least 5 miles with 10 lbs of gear.
- Ability to work cooperatively with varied and diverse audiences, landowners, municipalities, peers and staff from a variety of agencies.
- Candidate must be able to clear a thorough federal background check to work on the USDA NRCS computer system and have access to Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
- Strong computer literacy including experience with Windows, MS Office, Google Drive, and social media platforms.

### **Desired Skills and Experiences**

- Professional experience with nutrient management planning and GoCrop
- Working knowledge of Required Agricultural Practices (RAP's), soil sciences, water quality challenges in Vermont.
- Experience navigating the federal Natural Resource Conservation Service EQIP program and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's BMP program.
- Experience in non-profit and/or government work environments.
- Familiarity with funding opportunities for sustainable agriculture and regenerative soils work.
- Experience in grant research, writing and administration.
- Strong research skills, survey development, data collection, and detail-oriented project tracking and reporting.
- Project management experience including identifying and developing budgets, deliverables, and work plans;
- Familiarity with map development, interpretation and experience with ArcGIS
- Conservation Practice installation experience including buffer plantings, fence work, etc.

**Supervision:** The Conservation Specialist will be an employee of the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District. Direct supervision will be by the District Manager, who is responsible to the District's Board of Supervisors. Guidance, training, and workload prioritization will be provided by the District Manager and other District staff where appropriate.

**Job Type:** Part-time (20 hrs/week) with strong potential to move to full-time within the calendar year pending funding.

**Duration:** Through September 2022 with option to extend pending funding.

**Location:** Office space is co-located with NRCS offices in Williston, VT. Position may alternate between office and home-based work but should expect extensive travel across Winooski NRCD service area and must have access to reliable transportation and valid driver's license. Mileage reimbursement included.

**Target Start Date:** 8/1/2021

**Compensation:** State of Vermont Pay Grade 19 Step 1 (currently \$18.99 per hour). Predictable step-wise pay increases with satisfactory employee evaluations.

**Compensation Benefits:** Paid holidays and personal/sick leave. \$3000/year health stipend. A higher health stipend, annual leave and retirement contributions available should the position become full-time.

### **To Apply:**

Please e-mail [info@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:info@winooskinrcd.org) a cover letter and resume (PDF or Word format) with "Agriculture Conservation Specialist Application" in the subject line. Position is open until filled. Direct any questions to [info@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:info@winooskinrcd.org). No phone calls, please.

Winooski NRCD is an equal opportunity employer. Review of interested candidates shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, or gender identity or expression. Protected classes strongly encouraged to apply. Thank you for your interest!