



*Employment Opportunity for a*

**FOREST HEALTH PROGRAM SPECIALIST**

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**BACKGROUND:**

The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) is a non-regulatory special district that helps people protect, conserve, and restore natural resources through information, education, and technical assistance programs. The RCD has ongoing projects that promote natural resource conservation in relation to farming and ranching operations and watershed-based habitat restoration. The RCD Board of Directors and staff work closely with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on a number of projects.

The RCD seeks a Forest Health Program Specialist to join a dynamic team of conservation professionals. The Program Specialist will work closely with RCD staff and partners to lead forest health and wildfire resiliency programs throughout Santa Cruz County, providing technical assistance and planning services for large and small-scale projects in cooperation with owners of forested lands to facilitate fire resiliency, fire prevention/preparedness, and improved watershed function.

Example projects the Program Specialist will lead include but are not limited to:

- The RCD's no-cost chipping program which helps landowners create defensible space adjacent to structures and along private roads
- Neighborhood-scale fire prevention projects (i.e. shaded fuel breaks)
- Landscape-scale forest health projects geared towards creating ecosystem resiliency in the event of wildfire (i.e. forest stand improvement, prescribed fire, strategic vegetation management, etc.)
- Associated education and outreach events

The Program Specialist will work closely with partners including Fire Safe Santa Cruz County, CAL FIRE, the Central Coast Regional Prioritization Working Group, the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network, tribes, neighboring RCDs, and the NRCS. The work environment is fast paced, collaborative, and creative.

The ideal candidate is an experienced forest/fire ecologist, forester, or related natural resource conservation project manager with a background in forest health and fire resiliency and a solid history of landowner collaboration. The successful candidate must have working knowledge of forest ecology and related resource concerns, ideally with experience relevant to Central Coast forests and plant communities. Experience with conservation planning, overseeing project implementation, managing contracts and subcontractors is essential, as is a demonstrated ability to be self-directed while working collaboratively with other staff members and partners. Additional experience with permitting and construction project management is a plus.

This position is funded through contracts between the RCD and local, state, and federal agencies. The position is funded for 32-40 hours per week. This position will report to the RCD Executive Director and will work closely with other district staff to fulfill the RCD mission and the scope of work from the local, state and federal contracts, as summarized below:

## **SUMMARY OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to develop, fund and implement priority forest health and fuel reduction projects such as vegetation management for defensible space (countywide chipping program), strategic fuel breaks, pile burning, prescribed burning, forest stand improvement, and invasive species removal and management. Specific tasks include:
  - Coordinate with project partners and consultants to develop environmental documentation and permits.
  - Execute Landowner Agreements.
  - Coordinate the development of project designs and logistics for project implementation.
  - Conduct or oversee monitoring activities, including photo, biological, and archaeological monitoring.
  - Manage contracts with funders, consultants and subcontractors.
  - Provide oversight of implementation activities.
  - Manage budgets, invoicing and reporting.
  - Manage communications between project partners and stakeholders.
- Respond to landowner requests for technical assistance as appropriate, including site-specific forest management practices and conservation planning, feasibility analysis, and pre-design work.
- In collaboration with landowners, support contracted Registered Professional Foresters with development of Forest Management Plans.
- Provide technical input to regional forest health project prioritization processes. Work closely with partners across the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Central Coast on regional project prioritization and implementation.
- In collaboration with Fire Safe Santa Cruz County, implement the Santa Cruz County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
- Contribute to grant proposals as part of the RCD team. Proactively identify, solicit and expand upon funding and partnership opportunities for forest health and fire resiliency programs in Santa Cruz County and the greater Santa Cruz Mountains.
- Write reports and complete and submit deliverables to meet grant requirements.
- Conduct outreach and build relationships with landowners and community groups.
- Deliver educational presentations at RCD and partner events.
- Represent the RCD, its partners and funders in a positive and proactive manner.
- Contribute to additional RCD programs (as appropriate based on skills and interests).
- Perform additional tasks or responsibilities as directed by supervisors.

## **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:**

### **Required**

- Knowledge of forestry, vegetation management, wildfire behavior, watershed stewardship and conservation, resource management, basic hydrology, basic soil science, native plant and animal communities, and/or forest ecology
- Bachelor's degree or higher in forestry, natural resources, watershed management, or a related field
- 3 + years of professional experience related to forestry
- Proficiency with ArcGIS and GPS
- Demonstrated ability to establish cooperative working relationships

- Ability to advise on state-regulated defensible space requirements (based on site conditions, wind patterns, slope steepness, vegetative type, etc.) while balancing vegetation clearing with the need to maintain wildlife habitat and ecological value.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team. Experience working collaboratively within partnerships including landowners, researchers, public agencies, and others
- Highly motivated, organized, and self-directing with the ability to prioritize and coordinate workload to fulfill deadlines. Project goal oriented with initiative in fulfilling programmatic and grant-related obligations
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Strong computer skills, including Word and Excel
- Physically able to work in the field (climbing in and out of streams, lifting, carrying supplies and equipment, planting, etc.) during all seasons
- Creativity, sense of humor, “can do” spirit, collegiality, flexibility, strong desire to learn
- Valid CA driver’s license and current auto insurance

**Preferred**

- Experience working with forest landowners in a non-regulatory context
- Graduate degree in forestry or related field
- Minimum 5 years of work experience
- Registered Professional Forester or related certification
- Familiarity with local threatened and endangered species, including habitat needs and legal protections
- Familiarity with local, state, and federal permits required for vegetation management and restoration projects. Understanding of permit requirements and application processes for conservation projects.
- Experience working with fire safe councils, watershed groups or other conservation groups
- Familiarity with production forestry
- Construction project management experience
- Experience working under, writing and managing grants

The Program Specialist is a full-time position (32-40 hours per week), based on a Monday through Friday daytime schedule. Some job-related travel is required and will be billed on a cost reimbursable basis. Salary will be commensurate with experience and qualifications. Benefits package (after three months probationary employment period) includes paid health and dental. Retirement Plan with employer matching contribution of 1 to 1 up to 4.5% of salary available after one year of employment. Paid holidays and vacation available.

To apply, please submit a resume, letter of interest, and names and phone numbers of at least three references to: The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, c/o Tangi Chapman, 820 Bay Avenue, Suite 136, Capitola, CA 95010 or via email to [tchapman@rcdsantacruz.org](mailto:tchapman@rcdsantacruz.org). If you would like additional information, please contact the RCD: Phone: (831) 464-2950.

**DEADLINE FOR APPLICANTS: Position is open until filled. Application review will begin November 4, 2019**

The RCD is an equal opportunity employer.