Job Description

Conservation Manager

Location: Kansas (remote eligible; periodic travel to Topeka and statewide travel required)
Reports to: Executive Director
Position type: Full-time

About Ranchland Trust of Kansas

Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) is a nonprofit land conservation organization founded by the Kansas Livestock Association in 2003. RTK works to preserve Kansas' ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through conservation of working landscapes. RTK is affiliated with KLA but operates as an independent organization with its own board of directors, budget, and governance.

Summary of Position

The Conservation Manager leads and coordinates conservation easement projects from initial landowner engagement through closing, with oversight from the Executive Director and approvals required under RTK policy. The position also supports the long-term stewardship of conserved lands. The successful candidate brings professional conservation or natural resources experience, practical mapping skills, strong landowner communication, and the initiative to manage multiple complex projects independently. Specialized easement procedures may be learned with support from RTK and conservation partners, but this is not an entry-level conservation position.
The anticipated allocation of time is approximately 75% conservation easement transactions and 25% stewardship, adjusted as organizational needs require.

Key Responsibilities

Conservation easement project management

- Lead potential projects from initial landowner conversations and site visits through scoping, project proposals, committee and board review, due diligence, and closing.
- Manage multiple project schedules, budgets, documentation, deliverables, and deadlines; coordinate with landowners, attorneys, appraisers, surveyors, title professionals, funders, contractors, and conservation partners.
- Coordinate and review transaction due diligence, including title, appraisals, mineral assessments, environmental assessments, baseline documentation, maps, and other required materials.
- Prepare or coordinate drafts of conservation easement deeds, restrictive covenants, option agreements, amendments, corrections, board materials, and related documents for appropriate professional and organizational review.

- Prepare and maintain project maps using GIS or comparable mapping tools; analyze parcel information, aerial imagery, property characteristics, and conservation resources.
- Coordinate grant applications, funding proposals, grant compliance, reporting, and documentation associated with easement acquisitions and transaction costs.
- Organize closing logistics, final documentation, recording, and permanent electronic and physical records in accordance with RTK procedures.
- Identify risks and decision points early, recommend solutions, and keep the Executive Director informed of significant developments.

Stewardship and landowner relationships

- Coordinate annual monitoring of conserved properties, including site visits, documentation, mapping, and landowner follow-up.
- Maintain positive, respectful relationships with landowners and help address questions about easement terms and conservation practices.
- Identify and document potential stewardship concerns or violations and assist with resolution under RTK policies and required approvals.
- Help improve monitoring, recordkeeping, transaction, and stewardship procedures and support landowner education and outreach activities.

Organizational authority and collaboration

- Manage routine project coordination independently while working collaboratively with RTK staff, board committees, landowners, and outside advisors.
- The Conservation Manager may coordinate discussions and make recommendations but may not execute agreements or otherwise bind RTK. Authority to enter agreements rests with the Board of Directors or the Executive Director acting under Board authorization.
- Support other related organizational activities as priorities permit.

Required Qualifications and Attributes

- Experience in conservation, agriculture, natural resources management, land stewardship, or a closely related field, such as work with NRCS, a conservation district, a land trust, or a comparable organization.
- Working knowledge of conservation practices, land management, and agricultural or working landscapes.
- Working knowledge of GIS or comparable digital mapping tools, including the ability to create and modify basic property and conservation project maps.
- Demonstrated ability to independently manage complex projects, deadlines, records, and multiple stakeholders with accuracy and sound judgment.
- Strong written, verbal, analytical, and interpersonal communication skills; ability to build trust with private landowners and agricultural producers.
- Initiative, professional discretion, attention to detail, adaptability, and respect for private property rights.
- Ability and willingness to travel regularly throughout Kansas, including overnight and multi-day trips.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience with conservation easement transactions, land trusts, agricultural land protection, or related real estate due diligence.
- Familiarity with NRCS programs, including the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program–Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE).
- Experience with ArcGIS, QGIS, or similar software; preparing baseline documentation, conservation plans, or monitoring reports.
- Experience with grants, contracts, and compliance reporting; familiarity with Kansas ranching and agricultural communities.
- Bachelor's degree in natural resources, agriculture, environmental science, geography, or a related field; equivalent relevant professional experience will be considered.

Work Location and Travel

This position may be performed remotely from within Kansas, with periodic travel to the Ranchland Trust of Kansas office in Topeka. Regular travel throughout Kansas is required for landowner meetings, conservation project site visits, easement monitoring, and meetings with conservation partners, including occasional overnight and multi-day trips. The employee must be available for in-person meetings and organizational activities as needed.

Compensation and Benefits

The anticipated starting full-time salary range is $60,000–$67,000, depending on qualifications and experience, subject to organizational approval. RTK offers employee benefits. The overall compensation and benefits package will be determined based on employment status and the needs of the selected candidate. Additional details will be discussed during the hiring process. Approved business travel expenses are reimbursed in accordance with RTK policy.

Application Information

Applications will be reviewed as received. The start date is flexible.

Interested parties should email a cover letter and resume to Dawn Hovey at dawn@kla.org or by mail to:

Dawn Hovey, Executive Director
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Ranchland Trust of Kansas is an equal opportunity employer.