

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position: John Day Basin Conservation Officer

Location: John Day, Oregon

Reports to: Blue Mountain Land Trust Conservation Director

Position Type: Full-time, 40 hours per week

Position Term: Two years with long-term potential based on availability of resources

Compensation: Target compensation is \$45,000 per year plus paid personal leave. Compensation is dependent on qualifications.

Background

The John Day River Basin is an extraordinary landscape. It hosts the longest undammed river in Oregon, which flows through a rich mosaic of public and private lands that support significant wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, and cultural riches. A generational transfer of farms and ranches is underway across the state that has landowners contemplating future plans. Consequently, there has been an upswing in interest from landowners to voluntarily protect the agricultural heritage of their land, explore new income sources from their land, and preserve wildlife habitat. In partnership with an advisory group of local stakeholders, BMLT is hiring a Conservation Officer to explore and pursue conservation opportunities in the John Day area.

Position Summary

The John Day Basin Conservation Officer promotes private land conservation efforts in five counties in central Oregon (Grant, Wheeler, Sherman, Gilliam, and Morrow). This full-time position is part of a two-year pilot program that has been created in partnership with the John Day Land Protection Advisory Team (“Advisory Team”, a team of local stakeholders. This Advisory Team includes the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Gilliam Soil & Water Conservation District, Grant Soil & Water Conservation District, Wheeler Soil & Water Conservation District, The Land Trust Alliance, Sustainable Northwest, and Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts. The Conservation Officer will work closely with these partner organizations and with private landowners to promote private land conservation through conservation easements and other voluntary conservation programs. Members of the Advisory Team may also be members of the Blue Mountain Land Trust’s John Day Conservation Committee.

The Conservation Officer has two primary roles. (1) The Conservation Officer will advance BMLT’s conservation efforts by promoting conservation easements to landowners in the area and working with BMLT’s Conservation Director to pursue conservation easements with interested landowners. (2) The Conservation Officer will serve as an advocate for voluntary conservation programs in the John Day region, conducting community outreach, building support for private land conservation, and working with both landowners, the John Day Conservation Committee “Conservation Committee,” and the Advisory Team to promote programs that encourage resource conservation on privately-owned land.

The Conservation Officer reports to the BMLT Conservation Director and will work closely with the partner organizations making up the advisory group. The position will be housed within the John Day region, and will require substantial travel throughout the John Day area.

Duties

- Develop and maintain expert knowledge of private land conservation options and applicable funding sources, including conservation easements, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, and other voluntary stewardship programs promoted by BMLT and partner organizations.
- Communicate conservation options to landowners through both in-person presentations and printed materials and answer property-specific questions.
- Discuss land protection goals with interested landowners and recommend appropriate conservation tools.
- Work with the BMLT Conservation Director to pursue and complete conservation easements within the John Day area.
- Maintain close working relationships with members of the Conservation Committee, the Advisory Team and other organizations with related missions working within the region to cultivate landowner interest in voluntary land protection programs.
- Educate other conservation professionals in the area about the use of conservation easements to preserve private lands.
- Maintain expert knowledge of all current land protection programs (CREP, ALE, OWEB land acquisition grants).
- Prepare inventories of the conservation values of specific parcels. This may require physically demanding field work
- Provide regular work updates to the BMLT Conservation Director, the Conservation Committee and the Advisory Team.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's Degree in an applicable field of study or five years of related experience.
- A strong record of working collaboratively with diverse interests, especially in rural areas.
- Experience interacting with farmers, ranchers, and private landowners and business owners.
- Knowledge of agriculture, conservation practice, land use, and natural resource planning.
- Knowledge of conservation easements including the timeline for drafting, qualifying criteria, documentation of baseline conditions, valuation, funding sources, tax implications for landowners, and ongoing monitoring obligations.
- Familiarity with state and federal programs that support conservation on working lands.
- Understanding of rural community economics.
- Experience and connections in the John Day River Basin region are preferred but not required.
- Strong communication and presentation skills, and the ability to connect with multiple stakeholders, including landowners, contractors, political figures, and agencies.
- Capable of managing diverse tasks and a demonstrated track record of initiative and results.

- Demonstrated ability to attract support, build relationships and develop strategic partnerships.
- Good project management and organization skills.
- Willingness to be flexible and adaptive when needed.
- Ability to travel 50% of time, sometimes over long distances by car.
- Ability to perform physically demanding field work in remote locations.