

Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative (CTAI) Conservationist (CTAI) Position Description

The Branch Conservation District Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative position provides technical assistance to agriculture producers and landowners in Branch, Saint Joseph, and Kalamazoo Counties.

The Conservation Technical Assistance Initiative position provides will provide technical assistance and oversight to agricultural producers to implement conservation practices that have been funded under the Farm Bill. This position is an employee of, and supervised by, the Branch Conservation District. Technical guidance, daily instruction, leadership and primary work assignments will be provided by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This grant is administered by the Michigan Department of Agriculture, with support from the USDA - Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Duties

- Conduct field visits to obtain data and other information as necessary for the implementation of NRCS conservation practices such as, but not limited to, pest management, nutrient management, prescribed grazing, irrigation water management, and tree/shrub establishment.
- Provides on-site technical assistance for the implementation of conservation measures; completes surveys, designs, and layouts for construction of practices; inspects construction to determine adherence to specifications.
- Provides technical assistance to cooperators in the development of Farm Bill contracts, and the application and maintenance of conservation practices.
- Follows up with cooperators who have implemented conservation practices to ensure that the cooperator understands how to operate and maintain the practice.
- Makes infield adjustments in conservation practices, when necessary, in accordance with standards set by NRCS.
- Receives a short-term follow-up schedule, makes own appointments, and adjusts schedule to conform to special requests, weather conditions, or other disruptions.
- Assists in developing the information program; prepares news articles for publication; conducts field tours and demonstrations in order to further the implementation of conservation practices.
- Utilizes references to complete work. These references include, but are not limited to, United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) policy and procedure as outlined in Bulletins, Technical Releases, and the Field Office Technical Guide.
- Works directly with landowners to assess environmental stewardship practices and implement risk reduction plans. Assists landowners with working towards verification under the Michigan Agriculture and Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).
- As directed, attends meetings of the Conservation District governing body, interagency groups, and regional and/or community development groups to gain insight into particular program areas and to observe and develop competence in personal, work relationships, and group meeting techniques.
- Prepares, and helps to prepare, regular and special reports, promotes safety, helps to maintain property, and perform related duties.
- Complete and submit required monthly reporting to the Conservation District, MDA, and NRCS.
- Assists the Conservation District as required or requested with additional work assignments.
- Complies with current and future grant requirements as adjusted in subsequent district agreements.

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

It is expected that the CTAI will:

- Maintain a current general knowledge of local agricultural production practices in order to install conservation practices.
- Communicate clearly and effectively with landowners and partner agencies.
- Knowledge and skill in written and oral communication techniques and public relations sufficient to explain conservation practice specifications for various projects and programs to individual landowners, various agencies, local sponsoring organizations, and other conservation partners.
- Work independently and effectively with co-workers and a diverse clientele.
- Ability to carry out own work schedule in order to provide assistance and follow-up to cooperators on a timely basis.
- Possess a valid Michigan driver's license
- Ability to operate and maintain equipment (computers, vehicles, survey levels, etc.) in a safe manner.
- Maintain and update a valid USDA Federal Security Clearance.

Training and Experience Guideline

The CTAI Conservationist will have Bachelor of Science Degree in an environmental, natural resource or agriculture related field. The technician will also obtain and maintain additional educational certifications and licenses as required by MDARD, USDA-NRCS and the Branch Conservation District.

Scope of Work

The purpose of the work is to provide oversight for the implementation of conservation practices that are scheduled for implementation under the Farm Bill. The work involves treating a variety of conventional agricultural problems, questions or situations (relating to the planning, design, and installation of conservation practices) in accordance with NRCS guidelines.

Working Environment

Work requires personal contact with co-workers, contractors, landowners, and operators for the purpose of exchanging information, providing technical assistance services, and for the implementation of conservation practices under the Farm Bill.

The majority of the work will be conducted in the field. The normal work hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The employee frequently will make field visits that may involve walking on rough terrain, carrying equipment, or climbing steep banks during all weather conditions. The position requires average agility and dexterity during field visits. Protective gear and clothing such as hard hat, boots, and gloves may be necessary during field visits.

The Branch Conservation District and affiliates (USDA_NRCS MDNR & MDARD) delivery of programs and services is carried out without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs. The Branch Conservation District and affiliates are equal opportunity providers and employers.