



The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), Environmental Stewardship Division provides technical services through conservation district grant staff to farmers in identifying, planning, and implementing practices on farms that are protective of the environment and aligned with standards for the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).



Vacancy Announcement: MAEAP Soil and Water Technician

Kent Conservation District is hiring a Conservationist to carry out the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). The MAEAP position is responsible for delivering on-farm technical assistance in Kent County. Technical assistance includes conducting farm-specific risk assessments; coordinating local, state, and federal agency resources to help farmers reduce environmental risks; and assisting farmers in making progress toward MAEAP verification, which recognizes farms as top environmental stewards. The MAEAP position is also responsible for collaborating with Conservation District staff to promote MAEAP and educate diverse audiences on the importance of sustainable agriculture in counties of coverage.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

- Coordinate all aspects of MAEAP in Kent County and be fully familiar with, and adhere to, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) grant agreement and guidelines for conducting the program with in Kent County.
- Promote and conduct on-farm risk assessments for farmstead, cropping, livestock, and Forest Wetlands and Habitat Systems. Assist landowners in developing emergency management plans for their farmsteads and action plans to address any environmental risks identified
- Conduct at least one on-farm field day for the public that highlights MAEAP and qualifies for MAEAP Educational Credit. The educational event should highlight the program, address potential agricultural risks, and introduce sustainable farming practices to reduce risk to the environment.
- Assist producers in responding to Right to Farm complaints, to bring them into conformance with Michigan's Generally Accepted Agriculture Management Practices (GAAMPS).
- Maintain accurate records, in an online database as well as on paper, and a well-organized filing system for those records.
- Work closely with the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) to provide the technical assistance necessary for producers to access Farm Bill cost-share funds.
- Collaborate with Conservation District staff and external partners to promote MAEAP and educate diverse audiences on the importance of resource protection in Kent County.
- Promote other stewardship practices and program aspects through displays and booths, newsletter articles, group presentations, demonstrations, public service announcements, news releases, radio programs, social media, and other means.
- Provide timely monthly reports and updates to MDARD and the Kent Conservation Districts Board of Directors. Assist with annual meetings/showcase event and annual tree sales.
- Promote and conduct pesticide container recycling and water testing events, and assist producers with water sampling, equipment calibration and abandoned well closures
- Support Conservation District programs and activities, such as Clean Sweep and Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection and tree sale, as needed.
- Perform other essential activities as required by the MDARD grant agreement or as assigned by the District Manager of the Conservation District.

STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

Success is measured by the degree to which:

- MDARD grant requirements are met, including training, reporting, goal setting and achievement and on-farm assistance
- Written reports are complete and on time and database records are maintained to high quality
- Program promotional materials or articles are of high quality and distributed in a timely manner
- Public awareness of the MAEAP program increases along with awareness of the importance of sustainable agriculture
- The reported level of farmer satisfaction averages good or better
- The number of farms and forests engaged in MAEAP increases
- Local and regional agricultural initiatives benefit from the contributions and leadership of the MAEAP position

WORKING LOCATION AND CONDITIONS

The position will be based in Kent County, Michigan working out of the USDA/NRCS Area 3 / Kent County field office located in Grand Rapids at the corner of Leonard and Beltline (across from Meijer gardens). There is a diverse variety of agriculture for the region, including fruit farmers on the ridge, row crops, dairy, livestock and urban community support agriculture (CSA). Work time is split between office work and field work on farms. The Kent Conservation District office is co-located with NRCS. The MAEAP position will frequently be on farms, which may involve traversing uneven terrain, wetlands or working around livestock in a wide range of weather conditions. The MAEAP position may occasionally be in the vicinity of agriculture crews on the farm using hand tools, power equipment, and harvest machinery which may require hands-on assistance from the technician in the field.

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

Formal Education:

A minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in agriculture or natural resources management from an accredited college or university.

Related Work Experience:

- Minimum of two years of experience in agriculture or natural resource fieldwork is preferred.
- Knowledge of and experience working with agricultural producers and practices is preferred.
- Experience collaborating on, developing, and delivering agriculture education programs to a variety of audiences in diverse settings.

Skills and Abilities:

- Strong organizational skills
- Excellent work ethic
- Expert use of PC and Microsoft Office Suite
- Working knowledge of databases and computer networks preferred
- Able to work independently without direct supervision and as part of a team
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills in the English language
- Exhibit excellent social and interpersonal skills; relates effectively to diverse clientele and groups
- Working knowledge of ArcMap preferred
- Able and willing to work efficiently outdoors in varying conditions and terrain
- Able to lift and handle materials up to 30 pounds without assistance

- Able to work flexible hours, including some evenings and weekends (Saturday tree sales or special programs)
- Maintain a valid driver's license and safe driving record
- Selected candidate must pass a federal background check, must have a reliable personal vehicle to get to work and occasionally use for work activities.

COMPENSATION

The MAEAP position is a full time, 40 hours/week. Wages will be commensurate with education and experience and range from \$20-25 per hour with potential to increase based on continued training and certifications. Regular work hours are Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. These hours consist of field work, office work, and the possibility of home office work (with approval). Current benefits include paid federal holidays, vacation, and sick leave. Personal vehicle use will be reimbursed at the IRS mileage rate.

TO APPLY

Provide a cover letter, resume, transcripts (unofficial are acceptable), and list of three references, all combined into one PDF, and email to Ms. Jessie Schulte at the Kent Conservation District at Jessie.Schulte@macd.org . Please list "MAEAP Position Application" in the subject line. Any questions pertaining to the position may also be directed to Schulte via email or by calling (616) 222-5801. To review additional District information, please review website at kentconservation.org.

Applications accepted by March 1st 2022 or until filled.

The Kent Conservation District is an equal opportunity employer and will not discriminate in employment, promotions, or compensation on the basis of races, sex, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or veteran status.