

## **Job Announcement: "Ag Lands Solutions Specialist" Needed in the Chippewa River Watershed**

The Land Stewardship Project announces the creation of a new full-time salaried position with benefits within the Chippewa 10% Project, a joint watershed improvement initiative with the Chippewa River Watershed Project, Pope County SWCD and other project partners.

The person filling this new "Ag Lands Solutions Specialist" position will conduct outreach to farmers and agricultural landowners within the Chippewa River watershed to help them plan the right mix of conservation incentives, production practices and market-based farming enterprises and/or strategies to enhance land stewardship and farm profitability and mitigate environmental and production risks.

### **Chippewa 10% Project**

With about three-quarters of the land in the Chippewa River Watershed devoted to agriculture production, how the land is farmed plays a huge role in the health of the Chippewa River, surrounding ecosystems and farm communities. The Chippewa 10% Project aims to show that when agricultural practices include more perennials, meaningful improvement in water quality and wildlife habitat can come from even just a 10% increase in perennials on the landscape.

The Chippewa 10% Project is based on the idea that ecological diversity in an agricultural landscape can add many benefits, including a clean environment, local food and fuel, more farmers on the land and stronger rural communities. Both scientific studies and practical experience also suggest an essential link between diverse farming systems and the economic sustainability and resiliency of farms and farming communities. The success of the Chippewa 10% Project rests upon helping farmers and landowners pencil out practical and profitable ways to add economic and ecological diversity to their farms through enterprises that make use of perennials and innovative crop and livestock production systems.

The Chippewa 10% Project is co-led by the Land Stewardship Project and the Chippewa River Watershed Project. Project partners include the USDA's North Central Soil Conservation Research Lab, University of Minnesota-Morris, University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center and Louisiana State University AgCenter, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, with funding provided by USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Walton Family Foundation and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund of the state of Minnesota.

For more information, visit the Chippewa 10% Project web page at <http://www.chippewa10.org>.

### **Position Location**

This Land Stewardship Project position will be based out of the Pope County Soil & Water Conservation District Office, Glenwood, Minn., with outreach responsibilities to farmers and landowners throughout the entire Chippewa River watershed.

### **Primary Duties**

Seek out and work with willing individual farmers and agricultural landowners within the Chippewa River watershed to help them develop customized farm stewardship and profitability plans that:

- keep valuable soil and nutrients on the land and out of ditches, streams, rivers and lakes; and
- help them connect to the appropriate community and agency resources to implement or complete their farm plans.

## **Supporting Duties**

- Familiarize farmers and agricultural landowners with the importance of addressing land and water stewardship issues for both farm profitability and resource management.
- Illustrate the benefits of land use and/or farming practices that bring more perennial cover and/or biological diversity into ag production systems at either a field scale or whole farm level.
- Discuss the wide array of options that are available for consideration in the development of their farm plans, such as:
  - new or improved grazing systems or leasing land for grazing;
  - perennial biomass production;
  - conservation practices that capture water and other runoff on sensitive fields and provide wildlife habitat in ways that are consistent with the cropping systems being used;
  - diversified cropping systems that provide more soil cover and improve soil health.
- Assist willing farmers and landowners in implementing their farm plans. For example:
  - identify options that make most sense for them based on field characteristics (location, soil type, etc.) or whole farm needs;
  - pencil out production and labor costs as well as savings and profits;
  - assist with cost share applications or conservation program sign-ups;
  - help find lessees and/or draw up rental agreements for contract grazing or other contract arrangements;
  - help them make connections with entrepreneurs in the biomass and local/regional foods markets.

## **Qualifications**

- Well-honed networking skills, adept at working with farmers and agricultural landowners in particular.
- Able to connect and work successfully with SWCD, NRCS, other agency staff and NGOs like The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever and Ducks Unlimited.
- Comfortable making “cold calls” and using a “sales” approach to the work.
- Understanding of wide-range of farming systems and enterprises, including planned grazing.
- Understanding of working lands farm programs (CSP, EQIP, WHIP) and set aside for wetlands (WRP, USFWS programs, state programs).
- Familiar with whole farm planning or Holistic Management, gross profit analysis, enterprise record keeping.
- Able to interpret scientific data and talk about it in practical language.
- Able to share water quality and wildlife information with farmers and landowners.
- “Match-maker” skills and familiarity with common and alternative land rental leases.
- Optional:
  - Able to conduct and analyze soil & forage sampling, stalk nitrate testing, etc.
  - Able to learn/use simple on-farm modeling programs like CanVis image editing software.

**The application deadline for this position is November 7, 2011. To apply, please submit a cover letter and resume to:**

Julia Ahlers Ness  
Chippewa 10% Project Coordinator  
Land Stewardship Project  
301 State Road, Suite 2  
Montevideo, MN 56265  
janess@landstewardshipproject.org