



Agricultural Stewardship Association

Job Description

Position Title: Stewardship Assistant Date: August 2024
Reports to: Stewardship Manager
Status: Full-time, Salaried, includes benefits

Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) is a nonprofit land trust that protects our community's working farms and forests, connects people to the land, and promotes a vibrant future for agriculture and forestry in the region. The Stewardship Assistant aids in the monitoring and management of ASA's portfolio of conservation easement properties, creates baseline documentation reports, and facilitates communication and relationship building with easement landowners. The Stewardship Assistant also helps to steward community lands owned and/or managed by ASA. The Stewardship Assistant will incorporate the practice and promotion of ASA's core values, which include a passion for farmland and forestland conservation, respect, integrity, teamwork, accountability, problem solving, a "can do" attitude, confidentiality, professionalism and acting in the organization's best interest.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Conservation Easement Stewardship (~65% of time)

Assist with the day-to-day easement stewardship activities for all conservation easements. Ensure program meets or exceeds Land Trust Standards and Practices, Land Trust Accreditation, and TerraFirma requirements. This includes:

Monitoring Program

- Assist with the annual monitoring program including scheduling visits, and sending letters to easement owners on the method (ground or aerial) and timing of visit, and follow-up letter after visit or flyover;
- In conjunction with the Stewardship Manager, conduct easement monitoring (both ground and aerial) and ensure each easement property is monitored once per calendar year and according to ASA's monitoring policies and procedures;
- Create written report for each site visit, enter visit into Landscape software, send follow up letter to easement landowner, copy report filing original for archives and copy for in-house files;
- Review and manage any potential violations or questions with Stewardship Manager and according to ASA policies;
- Track actions and resolution of any easement violations;

- Send monitoring reports, summaries, etc. as applicable to organizations that have interest in property or requirement for funding (such as USDA NRCS easement projects);
- Follow, review and make recommendations to ASA policies and procedures as it relates to easement monitoring program;
- Assist with the creation of easement owner communication material;
- Keep project managers, Stewardship Manager and Executive Director informed on findings of monitoring visits; invite board members and staff to attend a few ground visits, as appropriate

Easement Landowner Relations

- Establishes and maintains positive relationships and communications with easement landowners, including landowner's caretakers, farm managers or agents, and organizational partners and any co-grantees on easements;
- Corresponds with easement landowners regarding annual site visits, land transfers, easement interpretations, notifications/approvals regarding permitted uses and rights, and resource management/educational offerings;
- Handles potential or actual violations, in coordination with Executive Director, Stewardship Manager, ASA attorney and others as appropriate;
- Coordinates annual questionnaire to easement landowners asking about planned activities and changes to the conserved properties and requests for programming topics and events;
- Plans for 1 to 2 activities or programs a year to continue to engage with easement landowners and provide opportunities to build community among easement landowners

Baseline Documentation Reports

- In conjunction with Stewardship Manager, divide in-progress projects and create baseline documentation reports
- Meet with project manager to review survey, land planning, areas to note, etc. Contact landowner or farm manager to schedule a site visit;
- Meet with landowner or manager if possible to identify any known dumps, mining sites, recreational structures, or other features as well as electric fences or other aspects of the farm operation to be aware of;
- Photograph the property, clearly identifying all structures, improvements and conservation values protected by the easement and collecting a GPS point for all photos;
- Create maps, written description, copies of deeds, appraisal, soil descriptions for BDR
- Meet with landowners to review and initial photos prior to easement closing. Create bound original copy of BDR for the grantor and ASA, create office copy.
- Follow, review and make recommendations to ASA policies and procedures as it relates to baseline documentation reports
- Provide updates/supplemental materials to baseline documentation reports as needed based on monitoring visits, amendments or violations to the easement

Cartography:

- Produces maps utilizing GIS applications and GPS-enabled equipment for analysis and project facilitation, board and committee meetings, grant proposals, baseline documentation reports, marketing materials, farm tours, etc., as required.

Supervision:

- The Stewardship Assistant does not supervise any staff members. However, they may be asked to help oversee aspects of internships or special projects.

Community Lands Management (~15% of time)

Assist with the day-to-day activities for all community lands held and/or managed by ASA. Ensure fee land management meets or exceeds Land Trust Standards and Practices, Land Trust Accreditation, and Terrafirma requirements. This includes

- Assisting with the creation, facilitation and implementation of community conservation projects, such as community forests (ex. Cambridge Community Forest). Works with ASA staff, board, supporters, municipal officials, community members and donors to facilitate projects. In partnership with applicable community support, creates and implements land management plans and assists with fundraising efforts, as appropriate;
- Ensures annual monitoring and periodic assessment visits to all community lands to ensure safety of visitors, look for signs of encroachment, identify needed repairs to infrastructure, etc. Complete monitoring forms, maps, photo documentation and identify new impacts, issues or threats to property and trails;
- Assist with recruiting, training and retaining volunteers and trail crews to assist with the ongoing management of community lands. Provide supervision, motivation and direction to volunteers in land management and trails program to align with ASA's strategic plan and objectives;
- Work with vendors and landscape businesses to assist with land management goals and seasonal upkeep, as needed.

Easement Project Assistance (~10% of time)

- Assist project managers with ordering and reviewing title work, appraisals, surveys and environmental site assessments.
- Assist with keeping project information current in Landscapes software and assist with project filing and organizing.
- Assist with initial landowner inquiries, mailings, and follow-up communications.
- Depending on aptitude, may learn to assume the project lead on some projects to provide more capacity to the land protection program.

Other Duties (~10% of time)

- Participate in land protection team meetings and staff meetings by providing input, contributing to discussions, and participating in decision making processes
- Assist other stewardship staff and land staff with mapping, research and other activities as needed
- Assist with managing any gifts of real estate while in-process or held by ASA

- Research and organize programs of interest to rural landowners and easement owners; assist with stewardship grant program work
- Work with project managers to create archive and in-house records for each easement project
- Add materials to archive facility in twice a year (typically August and February)
- Assist with ASA's fundraising efforts, including events and donor cultivation
- Attend ASA board meetings and board committees, board/staff retreat, as requested
- Assist with speaking engagements and presentations, as requested
- Keep current on ASA's mission, strategic plan, acquisitions and programs
- Keep abreast of Land Trust Standards and Practices, Land Trust Accreditation, Terrafirma, and IRS requirements affecting your responsibilities at ASA
- Other duties as assigned by the Executive Director or Stewardship Manager

QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree or combination of education and work experience in agricultural, forestry, natural resources management, ecology, environmental science or related fields
- Conservation easement or fee land stewardship experience or applicable land management experience preferred
- Existing connections with farming, forestry or land trust community and service providers; understand agriculture in our service area
- Proficiency in GIS mapping software desired; GPS proficiency is helpful
- Proficient with Windows, Microsoft Office and Google Suites and eagerness to learn databases
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including conflict resolution
- Excellent problem-solving skill and ability to work both independently and as part of a team
- Strong organizational skills with a commitment to follow through and particular attention to detail
- Ability to build and maintain strong working relationships with staff, supervisor(s), board members, landowners, government partners, donors, volunteers and other stakeholders
- Field experience and ability to work long hours in challenging outdoor conditions
- Physical fitness to walk several miles at a time and ability to negotiate difficult terrain
- Photography skills a plus
- Valid driver's license, insured and reliable transportation

ATTRIBUTES

- Strong passion for working landscapes, community lands, and commitment to ASA's mission and success
- Flexible
- Diplomatic
- Willingness to learn and develop new skills
- Ability to work on multiple tasks with interruptions in an energetic environment. Work well under pressure
- Organized, independent and reliable
- Inspires trust and is able to keep sensitive information confidential

- Is able to work effectively in rural and urban communities
- Strong work ethic and focused on success
- Demonstrates high integrity and commitment to goals
- Demonstrates strong problem-solving attributes: drive, energy and creativity
- Enjoys working alone and as part of a team
- Enjoys and deploys an appropriate sense of humor
- Demonstrate sensitivity to, and respect for, diversity, equity and inclusion
- Must be aligned with ASA's mission and be committed to all forms of local agriculture that provides food on the table, protection of natural resources and affords dignified livelihoods to community members while addressing pressing problems of climate change, agricultural viability and food security

WORK ENVIRONMENT

- This position is approximately 60% office work and 40% field work, typical hours are 9-5 Mon-Fri with flexible schedule options. Evening or weekend work is occasionally required. Must be able to travel to site visits and meetings and the occasional conference/training.

PHYSICAL FACTORS

- Requires ability to work in different environments, including spending up to 8 hours in the office at a computer, on the phone or in meetings with intermittent walking, standing, bending, squatting, and climbing stairs. Requires ability to walk/hike on varied terrain on farms and in forests, to carry equipment and supplies, and possibly work in inclement weather.

Compensation and Benefits: \$42k-\$48k depending on relevant experience and qualifications. ASA offers health, dental, vision and life insurance; Cafeteria plan for dependent care and health care reimbursements; retirement contributions; paid vacation, sick and holiday time. Paid training and professional career advancement opportunities.

How to Apply: Email resume and cover letter to asa@agstewardship.org with "Stewardship Assistant" in the subject line, or mail to Agricultural Stewardship Association, 2531 State Route 40, Greenwich, NY 12834. No phone calls, no walk-ins, no recruiters. Position is open until filled.

Additional Information: Candidates must be prepared to provide at least three professional references and undergo a background check. 1st round interviews to be conducted in-person or via Zoom. Those invited to a 2nd round interview will be in-person.

ASA is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion in our organization and in land conservation. People of color, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply.