



American Conservation Experience Staff Position Announcement



ACE Easement Biologist, NRCS Indiana As of: April 16, 2021

Title: ACE Easement Biologist – NRCS Indiana
Department: EPIC NRCS
Reports to: Assigned NRCS supervisors; with additional mentorship and administrative reporting to ACE Director, NRCS Division

Location: Position is stationed at the NRCS Area Office in Vincennes, IN
Status: Regular Full-time, exempt (eligible for full benefits)
Compensation: Starting salary range: \$41-43k
Term: Position is funded through September 2023
Start Date: Mid- June 2021

Position Summary:

American Conservation Experience (ACE), a non-profit Conservation Corps, is seeking an ACE Easement Biologist to provide direct technical assistance to Indiana NRCS agency staff, landowners and partners involved in habitat improvement on easements. Specifically, the ACE Easement Biologist will assess the ecological and habitat function of NRCS easements across southern Indiana, and propose ecological enhancement opportunities. The Easement Biologist will also assist Indiana NRCS with new easement enrollments.

This opportunity is intended for emerging professionals with a professional and/or academic background in biology, botany, ecology, or natural resource management – with an interest in jointly advancing their career and the stewardship of private lands conservation through purposeful fieldwork, programmatic support and hands-on training and experience with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Program Background and Objectives:

Indiana NRCS has had a long history of involvement in easement acquisition for the conservation of environmental benefits. Currently there are 860 easements statewide for 80,000 acres under permanent or 30- year easement. Easements are located throughout the State of Indiana, with concentrations along the lower and middle portions of the Wabash River, Muscatatuck River and the northern one-third tier of counties in the state. One of the main objectives of an easement is to restore both wetland and upland habitat and to ensure this habitat remains in place.

The ACE Easement Biologist will evaluate the ecological function of Indiana NRCS easements to determine if additional restoration or enhancement on the easement area is needed. They will also provide biological technical and planning assistance for the timely delivery and support of USDA Farm Bill Programs; Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)-Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE), Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) as well as the repealed Farm Bill Programs-Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and Healthy Forest Easement Program (HFRP). Planning assistance will involve technical assistance to NRCS on prescribed burn plans, pollinator and monarch habitat plans, and invasive species control plans, and training may be provided to successfully complete such plans to NRCS standards.

In addition, Indiana NRCS adds to the number of easements each year through new Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) enrollments. It is estimated that Indiana NRCS will receive 45 applicants per year for the easement programs. For these new enrollments, the ACE Easement Biologist will provide assistance as requested to NRCS in the ranking of the sites and development of related easement restoration plans. The position is office based with associated field work.

For more information about Indiana NRCS, please visit:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/in/home/>

For more information about NRCS Easements, please visit:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/>

For more information regarding ACE, please visit: <http://www.usaconservation.org/>

Essential Duties:

The ACE Easement Biologist will support the Indiana NRCS Easement Program by (1) promoting a systematic approach to the ecological assessment of easements to evaluate habitat needs; (2) providing technical planning assistance through the promotion of specific ecological enhancement/improvement opportunities; and (3) assisting with new Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) enrollments.

- Ecological assessment of easements
 - Comprehensively review technical documents, property deeds and compatible allowed uses for each easement, and appropriately interpret findings with observations in the field.
 - Conduct site visits in the field to assess the ecological and habitat function of the easement.
 - Collect field data as trained, and report findings and observations in a systematic and timely way.
- Planning and technical assistance for habitat improvement
 - Propose easement ecological enhancement opportunities based on field observations from ecological assessment work.
 - Develop and write habitat enhancement/improvement plans (e.g. prescribed burn plans, pollinator and monarch habitat plans, and invasive species control plans) or specifications as determined by NRCS
- Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) enrollments
 - Conduct site visits and data collection for WRE enrollments as assigned
 - Support in ranking and development of restoration plans related to new WRE enrollments
- Attend and successfully complete trainings as assigned in order to obtain skills and to meet applicable NRCS standards, specifications and program requirements.
- Support Indiana NRCS, and specifically Area Easement Program Specialists, with other related tasks as requested or assigned
- Work collaboratively with partners (NRCS staff, consultants, scientists, engineers, landowners) and maintain strong working relationships.
- Participate in regular calls with ACE NRCS Division staff.

- Maintain records of time, travel expenses, logistics, and accomplishments; report to ACE in a timely manner.

Qualifications:

Applicants should have a degree in biology, botany, ecology, natural resource management, environmental planning, range science, wildlife biology, conservation biology, engineering, or a related field. Candidates with an advanced degree and interest in a career in agriculture, habitat restoration and/or resource management within a public/private context are strongly encouraged to apply.

Required:

- Undergraduate degree (BS) in Biology, or closely related field
- Genuine interest and/or knowledge in upland, wetland and riparian resource management
- Plant identification skills, and/or willingness to learn
- Some field work experience; wetlands and associated upland habitat exposure a bonus
- Proficient research, analytical, organization and writing skills
- Strong time management skills; ability and desire to perform multiple and variable tasks
- Comfortable communicating directly with federal agency staff, resource professionals, and landowners
- Proven ability to work independently and be a positive, contributing member of a group
- Strong computer management skills including experience with online personnel databases and email, iOS, Google Docs, Excel, MS Office, and Adobe Suite software
- Knowledge and experience with GPS units and ArcGIS software
- Ability to work independently in remote outdoor areas; able to hike and walk for extended periods of time, and be capable of lifting up to 50 lbs
- Proficient in English
- Must be able to legally work in the US
- Valid driver's license and an insurable driving record; comfortable driving ACE vehicles as needed
- Ability to pass a federal criminal background check
- Willing to be drug free throughout position term. ACE reserves the right to drug test at any time

Preferred:

- Advanced degree in biology, botany, ecology, natural resources management or related field
- Knowledge of ecological functions and plant communities associated with wetlands, including riparian and upland habitats
- Experience with various field data collection methods
- Experience evaluating habitats and ecological functionality
- Proven communication skills with diverse audiences including landowners, contractors and scientists
- Knowledge of legal methods for private land conservation, e.g. conservation easements
- Experience driving four wheel drive vehicles over rugged roads

Compensation: Salary starting at \$41-43k, depending on experience and qualifications.

Benefits: A full benefits package including vacation and sick time, paid holidays, 401k retirement, and health, dental and vision insurance options. Additionally, these positions offer emerging professionals the opportunity to gain professional experience within the Natural Resources Conservation Service, attend trainings, and be mentored by ACE staff.

To Apply: Please visit <https://usaconservationstaff.applicantpool.com/jobs/569299.html> to submit your resume, a cover letter describing why this position is a good fit for you and your career goals, and contact information for three professional or academic references. Qualified applicants will be contacted by email to arrange an interview. Applicants must follow all application instructions in order to be considered for this opportunity.

Deadline to apply: May 14, 2021. Accepting applications and interviewing on a rolling basis. Target start date: mid-June 2021.

***EOE:** American Conservation Experience provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or genetics. In addition to federal law requirements, American Conservation Experience complies with applicable state and local laws governing non-discrimination in employment in every location in which the company has facilities.*