



---

*Employment Opportunity for a*

## **PROGRAM SPECIALIST: AGRICULTURAL TECHNICAL SPECIALIST**

---

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) is a non-regulatory special district that helps people protect, conserve, and restore natural resources through information, education, and technical assistance programs. The RCD has ongoing projects that promote natural resource conservation in relation to farming and ranching operations and watershed-based habitat restoration. The RCD Board of Directors and staff work closely with the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The RCD seeks an Agricultural Technical Specialist to join a dynamic team of conservation and agriculture professionals. The Agricultural Technical Specialist will work closely with RCD Agricultural Program staff and with outside partners including University of California Cooperative Extension and the NRCS to provide irrigation water management assistance to agricultural water users in Santa Cruz County, primarily the Pajaro Valley. The Agricultural Technical Specialist will provide growers and irrigators with education, technical assistance, tools and information to evaluate and improve water use efficiency on farms, and will report on program outcomes to funders and stakeholders. They will also apply their skills with irrigation water management to help growers improve nutrient use efficiency, and assist with erosion control and conservation planning on farms. Most of the work is in the Pajaro Valley, where an over \$600 million agriculture industry is heavily dependent on an overdrafted groundwater basin. Watersheds in the region drain into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, and many surface waters are impaired for pollutants such as sediment, nutrients and pesticides. This position supports agriculture's efforts to reduce groundwater pumping on a basin-wide scale, and protect our watersheds.

The ideal candidate is comfortable communicating in English and Spanish, enjoys field work, has advanced data management and analysis skills, and several years professional experience working with growers and/or irrigators. The successful candidate must have knowledge of agronomy (or agricultural engineering), irrigation water management, soil science, and crop production. Experience installing, troubleshooting, and adaptively managing field equipment (such as flow meters, soil sensors, data loggers and telemetry units) is essential, as is a demonstrated ability to work within a collaborative team. Opportunities for professional development and training will be available.

### **SUMMARY OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Evaluate irrigation system efficiency using standard professional methods (such as Cal Poly Irrigation Training and Research Center or UC Cooperative Extension methods).

- Install, manage, and troubleshoot water measurement and monitoring equipment including flow meters, pressure gauges, soil sensors, telemetry units and data loggers.
- Support growers in tracking water and nutrient applications and use decision-support tools to maximize water and nutrient use efficiency.
- Collect data through irrigation system evaluation or irrigation monitoring and analyze data. Work with growers to interpret field data to inform management decisions; generate timely reports for growers.
- Design and coordinate implementation of on-farm practices to improve water and nutrient use efficiency and/or to minimize sediment transport (e.g. irrigation system improvements, soil moisture monitoring, soil and nutrient management).
- Promote available services and financial assistance programs within the grower community through direct outreach to farmers and partner organizations. Present at grower and other public forums.
- Write progress reports and formally present on program outcomes and effectiveness (e.g., changes in water use and/or water management practices) to funders and stakeholders; incorporate stakeholder feedback to improve program effectiveness.
- Contribute to additional RCD programs (as appropriate based on skills) such as Integrated Pest Management, erosion control, water quality protection, project maintenance, and climate change resiliency.
- Contribute to fund-raising and partnership-building for agricultural conservation and stewardship programs in Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro Valley.
- Help guide development of new projects and programs that align with the RCD's mission, meet community needs, and leverage personal skills and interests.
- Participate in regional collaborative efforts with growers, technical service providers, agencies, researchers, and other diverse stakeholders to address conservation priorities in the region.
- Represent the RCD, its partners and funders in a positive and proactive manner.
- Perform additional tasks or responsibilities as directed by supervisors.

## **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:**

### **Required**

- Knowledge of hydraulics, irrigation methods, irrigation scheduling, and irrigation management. Understanding of agricultural systems and hydrology, including crops, irrigation systems and design, and resource concerns, preferably in California.
- Hands-on experience with irrigation system equipment in the field (for example installing flowmeters, gluing and drilling PVC, use hand tools, hose, pipe and tape fittings, banjo connectors).
- Experience with data loggers and logging data from flowmeters and various sensors (temperature, humidity, pulses, voltage, analog and digital measurements).

- Data processing and analysis skills with data processing software (MathLab, R, SAS or similar); Excellent Excel skills.
- Comfortable communicating with farm managers and irrigators in English and Spanish.
- Highly motivated and self-directing with the ability to prioritize and manage workload to meet deadlines.
- Bachelor's degree or higher in agronomy or related field such as plant science, soil science, hydrology, agricultural/civil/environmental engineering or similar field.
- Three or more years of relevant professional experience.
- Demonstrated interest and effectiveness at educating and training others.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team. Experience working collaboratively within partnerships including farmers, researchers, public agencies, and others.
- Ability to work outdoors on a regular basis, for extended periods, doing physically challenging tasks (e.g. long periods stooping or kneeling, walking on uneven ground, working in rainy or actively irrigated conditions, etc.) Capacity to dig a trench, lift 50 pounds, and carry equipment.
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Valid CA driver's license

### **Preferred**

- Graduate degree (MS or higher) in agronomy or related field
- Spanish language fluency
- Experience using CropManage software or similar irrigation and nutrient management decision-support tools
- Familiarity with California CIMIS network data
- Knowledge of on-farm best management practices related to water management, soil health, nutrient management, erosion control and integrated pest management
- Knowledge and experience with soil sensors, tensiometers, volumetric moisture sensors, and how to install and collect data from them
- Experience developing nitrogen management plans
- Experience working with private landowners and farmers in a non-regulatory context
- Experience managing field assistants
- Experience working under, writing and/or managing grants

The Agricultural Technical Specialist position is a full time 40 hour per week position based on a Monday through Friday daytime schedule. Some job-related travel is required and will be billed on a cost reimbursable basis. Salary will be commensurate with experience and qualifications, ranging from \$28-

\$38/hour. Benefits package (after three months probationary employment period) includes paid health and dental. Retirement Plan with employer matching contribution of 1 to 1 up to 4.5% of gross salary available after one year of employment. Paid holidays and vacation available.

**TO APPLY:** Please email a resume, letter of interest, and names and phone numbers of at least three references to Tangi Chapman at [tchapman@rcdsantacruz.org](mailto:tchapman@rcdsantacruz.org) noting "Agricultural Technical Specialist Application" in the subject line. If you would like additional information, please contact [tchapman@rcdsantacruz.org](mailto:tchapman@rcdsantacruz.org).

**DEADLINE FOR APPLICANTS:** January 27, 2021.

The RCD is an equal opportunity employer.