



CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY

POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Director of Conservation

STATUS: Full time, Exempt

DEPT: Conservation

REPORTS TO: President/CEO

UPDATED: April 2017

ORGANIZATION:

The Catalina Island Conservancy “(Conservancy)” an independent, California 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was formed in 1972 to protect and restore the natural and cultural resources of Santa Catalina Island, and to make them available for public recreation, education, and enjoyment. As one of the largest and oldest land trusts in Southern California, the protected lands of the Conservancy amount to approximately 42,000 acres or 88% of the Island. The Conservancy’s mission is to be a responsible steward of its lands through a balance of conservation, education and recreation. The organization takes this balance as both an obligation and an opportunity – its science, restoration, education and outreach activities serve as a model for the conservation of protected lands worldwide in the context of human use. As a “living laboratory,” Catalina Island, and the restoration work of the Conservancy, represents one of the largest, most diverse landscape-level scientific experiments being conducted in community-based conservation in the nation. This role creates an exceptional opportunity to build and run a next-generation, conservation biology field station in a human-impacted environment with ecosystems of great diversity.

POSITION SUMMARY:

The Director of Conservation will report to the President & CEO. In turn, the Director will manage a Conservation Department, which will consist of approximately eight (8) staff members including a Conservation Operations Coordinator, Plant Conservation Manager, an Invasive Plant Program Manager, two (2) Plant Technicians, a GIS/IT Manager and two (2) Wildlife Biologists. Several of these positions manage a team of seasonal, part time, or full time employees, or volunteers. The organizational structure of the Conservation Department, as well as individual positions within it, may change, over time, to respond to the biodiversity and ecological needs of the land, and as a result of securing funding to strengthen programs and meet changing department and organizational goals. The Conservation Director will be responsible for developing, implementing and overseeing the conservation management program, including but not limited to wildlife management, biological and cultural programs. The role requires an entrepreneurial spirit eager to create funding opportunities, and a business/programs model ideally suited for our Catalina field station. The Director will work closely with the President & CEO, and with the senior management team to achieve the mission and strategic goals of the Conservancy.

The Director of Conservation will implement a conservation vision, which includes and elevates key aspects of conservation, with the goal of improving and maintaining the biodiversity and ecological health of Catalina Island. Developed using an adaptive management approach, the conservation program is comprised of the management of all aspects of wildlife, vegetation, rare species and habitat, small and large-scale restoration projects, wildlife and plant community monitoring, invasive

and introduced species control, plant conservation, propagation and installation, and rare and endemic species surveys.

Additionally, the Director will participate in and provide leadership of other habitat restoration projects related broadly to Santa Catalina Island, other Channel Islands and Southern California. This will include oversight of an annual Conservation and Education Symposium and leadership/participation in the Channel Islands Symposium held approximately every four years.

SUMMARY OF ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Oversees program work, while adhering to budgets, ensuring that work is performed in accordance with best practices and standards.
- Manages staff, consultants, university partners and volunteers with a focus on professional development, evaluation of performance and safety practices.
- Directs the Conservation Department's efforts to proactively identify funding opportunities, write grant proposals, and solicit funding from foundations, organizations and government agencies to assist in financing programs and projects, research, and data collection.
- Designs, redefines and hones programs and practices to relate accomplishments and goals to the Conservancy's mission and strategic goals developed jointly with the President & CEO.
- Develops and manages operating and capital budgets, including purchasing services and materials, preparation of capital equipment specifications, and coordinates budget expenditures.
- Recommends to President & CEO biologically-sound habitat improvements and practices to better achieve the balance outlined in the Conservancy's mission.
- Effectively communicates project and program results through professional organizations and scientific publications, staff training, presentations and external media.
- Prepares baseline vegetation and wildlife survey documentation, conservation reports, biological assessments, vegetation studies, current condition reports, land management plans, GPS data reports and historical tracking of conservation issues on the Conservancy's landscape.
- Develops and/or works with various databases to track projects, history and activities.
- Oversees the Conservancy's outreach to and hosting of various researchers in order to secure solid scientific data to inform management decisions on Catalina and elsewhere (including, but not limited to soils, botany, ornithology, mammalogy, entomology, taxonomy, genetics, and ecology).
- Gives tours of the wildlands and speaks publically to various audiences about the work of the Conservancy, including its successes and challenges, as well as the relationship of the work to other islands/lands.
- Coordinates with government agencies, NGOs, universities, and colleges in planning and implementing ecological and educational programs and projects.
- Works closely with management team, to implement projects that support the balanced mission.
- Works with other stakeholders on Catalina Island, representatives of the Channel Islands, other land trusts, government agencies, the Conservancy's Board of Directors and external funders.
- Updates and enhances knowledge by continuing education for professional growth, i.e., attends relevant conferences, seminars and certification programs.
- Supports the Conservancy's potential land trust accreditation process.
- Submits a yearly work program and performs other duties as needed or assigned.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

Knowledge and Skills:

- Demonstrated experience in designing and implementing innovative conservation management programs.
- Knowledge of a wide range of natural resource stewardship and land management issues; familiar with all aspects of conservation and land management, including understanding of legal, financial, regulatory issues involved in land conservation and wetland restoration/protection.
- Strong experience in project and grant management.
- Understanding of the range of bird, mammals, invertebrates that inhabit or are native to Catalina Island.
- Ability to utilize GPS equipment, read detailed maps interpret aerial photos and navigate in the field.
- Strong management experience in supervising (exempt and non-exempt employees, and volunteers).
- Demonstrated skills in budget management and proposal/grant writing.
- Strong natural history field skills (wildlife, birds, plants, geology, etc.) and familiarity with Southern California flora, ecology, indigenous cultures and natural history desirable.

COMPLEXITY/PROBLEM SOLVING:

- Able to think critically and creatively to develop solutions to complex environmental education, cultural change, conservation, facility operations and land use problems
- Ability to adapt and respond to unexpected or unplanned educational, ecological (e.g. fire, drought, new invasions) or programmatic (e.g. changes in organizational priorities or funding) circumstances while still progressing towards core program objectives.
- Excellent communication skills (verbal and written), visionary, and problem solving; planning and goal setting.
- Ability to analyze diverse facts and develop clear, concise reports and recommendations.
- Solid understanding of the social, legal, and ecological basis for land management policies that influence ecosystem restoration and management decisions.
- Ability to function flexibly and effectively in a complex organizational environment with a range of different departments and operations.
- Ability to work both independently or as part of a team.

COMMUNICATIONS/INTERPERSONAL CONTACTS:

- Strong management experience in supervising full-time and part-time staff and volunteers required.
- Strong organizational, coordination, project management and negotiation skills.
- Strong customer service skills (internal and external) extremely important.
- Ability to function and thrive as an “internal consultant” within a complex, multi-goal (conservation, education, recreation) organization with diverse professional staff (scientists, operations professionals, guest experience managers, marketing and public relations) is crucial.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills are needed; ability to communicate effectively with diverse or specific audiences and with those with opposing points of view.
- Ability to work both independently and as a part of a team is essential; strong team building and relationship building skills critical.
- Positive attitude, sense of humor, energetic, creative and transparent, focused on strategic goals of the Conservancy; not limited to conservation.

EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE:

- Ph.D. preferred, but not required; Masters Degree in relevant discipline (biological science, environmental studies, ecology, conservation or combination of science and management education and experience.
- Five to seven years of progressively more complicated and more responsible supervisory and applied conservation management experience expected, especially within a land trust, conservation or governmental land use, or similar organizational environments.
- Field work in biology, bio-science, botany/plant science, earth science, ecology, geology, geography, and land management. Marine science/oceanography or sustainable development planning a plus.
- Demonstrated experience with various regional, state and federal agencies (e.g. County of Los Angeles, Regional Planning; CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Army Corps of Engineers) with regards to plant, animal and environmental concerns, protocols and procedures; familiarity with the CA Private Lands Management Program. A familiarity with SEQA, NEPA and CA Coastal Commission and SEA programs preferred.

WORK ENVIRONMENT/ PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job or that an employee encounters while performing the essential function of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

- Employee must live and work on Catalina Island and be comfortable with the major aspects of island life including schools, medical care, housing, shopping, and transportation.
- The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. The office environment has moderate noise levels and is a non-smoking environment. Field conditions are strongly weather-dependent and may be hot, dusty, cold, muddy, and/or wet depending on season and degree of exposure. Work may be conducted independently or with groups of staff and volunteers. Hiking conditions include steep, rugged terrain with unstable rocky substrate and cactus. Wild animals, including bison and rattlesnakes, may also be encountered in the field and pose some threat.
- The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Position involves functioning in both field and office environments. The office environment has moderate noise levels and is a non-smoking. Field work involves manual labor, hiking long distances over rugged terrain and through dense scrub, in varied weather conditions, and routine handling of plants. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus.