

SUMMER RESEARCH ASSISTANT POSITION

Location: Fort Collins, CO and field sites 10-150 miles east of town

Dates: May 13 to September 27 or October 25, 2019

Hired at the GS-2 or GS-3 level of the federal scale, depending on experience

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis

Please email application materials (cover letter, resume, references) and/or questions to both of the following:

Lauren Porensky
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Ellen Badger
Biological Science Technician
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GENERAL JOB DESCRIPTION

Research assistant for the Rangeland Resources Systems Research Unit (RRSRU) of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), based out of Fort Collins, CO. The incumbent will assist with summer data collection for an ongoing project focused on improving the Conservation Reserve Program in the West.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a cost-share program between farmers or ranchers and the United States Government. It aims to reduce soil erosion, enhance water quality, and improve wildlife and pollinator habitat by converting former cropland to perennial vegetative cover. In 2016, the USDA's Farm Service Agency commissioned a study to look into improving establishment of pollinator-friendly CRP plantings in dry areas of the Mountain West. The Colorado branch of this project has five research sites located 10-150 miles east of Fort Collins. Experimental planting treatments have been installed at all five sites, and ongoing monitoring efforts are underway to assess success of different treatments. The Research Assistant will be responsible for collecting scientific data in the field, maintaining positive and friendly relationships with landowners and collaborators, and managing data entry and organization in the office.

MAJOR DUTIES

Collects vegetation, soil, and pollinator data and is responsible for quality assurance/quality control of data collected. Keeps exact, detailed records of experimental data. Provides data in an appropriate format for incorporation into computer spreadsheets. Enters data into computer spreadsheets and performs quality control on entered data. Makes and records observations of unusual happenings, phenomena or trends that might influence interpretation of plot or field data.

Manages fieldwork program semi-autonomously; takes responsibility for solving problems and adapting to current conditions and events without constant supervision.

Operates, maintains, cleans, repairs and constructs equipment used in plot and field experiments including, but not limited to, vehicles, field equipment, and on-site weather stations.

Ensures that all safety and environmental concerns are addressed to provide a safe work environment, and that activities in support of research do not pose an environmental threat.

KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS

Technical knowledge of plant identification, structure and function of plant communities, and theory and practice of rangeland monitoring methods.

Familiarity with principles of soil science and soil sampling methods.

Experience with entomological data collection, especially as it relates to pollinator monitoring.

Knowledge of the methods of biological sciences (including botany, range science, soil science, entomology, ecology, and chemistry) in order to participate responsibly in most phases of the experimental process.

Working knowledge of common native plants and agricultural weeds of Eastern Colorado and familiarity with pollinator species common to the area are highly valued.

Warm and professional interpersonal communication skills in order to build and maintain positive relationships with landowners and other collaborators.

Comfort with working long hours outdoors, frequently in hot and sunny conditions.

Ability to do efficient and high-quality work without direct supervision. Ability to proactively solve problems and manage tasks adaptively in order to get the job done on time.

Skill in the use of personal computers to utilize software packages such as: word processing, data entry and manipulation in spreadsheets (e.g., Excel).

Practical knowledge of general vehicle maintenance and repair. Knowledge of safe operating procedures when using equipment or vehicles.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The work requires standing, walking, bending, and lifting of objects weighing as much as 50 pounds. Certain phases of the work require extended (such as most of a work day) periods of standing or sitting while accomplishing detailed experimental procedures. Some procedures require stamina and endurance. Need to have the physical capability to perform required duties without hazard to self or others.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The job is primarily located in semi-remote agricultural areas of eastern Colorado. The work environment is about 85% in the field and 15% in the office. The work involves regular and recurring moderate risks or discomforts which require special safety precautions, e.g., working outdoors. Throughout the summer, the incumbent may encounter insects, belligerent livestock,

dust, heavy pollen, uncomfortable weeds, and extremes of weather. The incumbent is required to wear protective clothing (e.g., coats, boots, goggles, gloves, and respirator) as conditions warrant.