

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Natural Land Institute (NLI) has an exciting opportunity for a natural resource professional to lead and build a stewardship team that manages its 3,500 acres of land in northern Illinois and adjacent southern Wisconsin. NLI, based in Rockford, Illinois (one of the region's most affordable metropolitan areas), is a growing private not-for-profit, accredited land trust founded by conservation icon George B. Fell in 1958. The position will be responsible for leaving a lasting legacy of protected and well-managed natural lands following NLI's mission.

Director of Land Stewardship Position Description

Job Objectives: Develop and implement ecological restoration and natural area management plans on lands owned by NLI. This position is responsible for conducting prescribed burns, invasive species control, and hydrological management; conducting inventories and studies of natural communities and flora and fauna on protected lands; assist with public outreach, education programs, and NLI events; recruit, train, and supervise volunteers; manage leases, grants, CRP practices, and oversee contractors; oversee conservation easement program; grow the volunteer land management initiatives on lands owned by the NLI; maintain and replace field equipment; plan work schedules and report activities and results; secure permits for prescribed burns; herbicide applications, animal monitoring, seed collection, and restoration projects; provide technical assistance to and partnerships with other land conservation organizations; communicate with neighboring landowners, maintain facilities and carry out other duties as assigned.

Skills Needed: This is a supervisory position and the candidate must have more than three years of supervisory experience with a demonstrated ability to work well with people, be well organized, listen carefully, communicate clearly, and work independently without direct supervision. The Director of Land Stewardship supervises the Field Biologist (currently vacant) and Natural Resources Technician (both full-time positions), volunteers and interns and is responsible for hiring and grant writing. This candidate must have sound up-to-date knowledge of and experience with Midwestern ecosystems and natural resource management, wild land ecology, invasive species control methods, native plants and animals of northern Illinois, and safely using and maintaining farm equipment and power tools. Training or certification in prescribed burn management including (S-130, S-190, and I-100) and Illinois State Pesticide Applicator's license is required as well as the ability to perform physical labor outdoors in all weather conditions including the ability to lift 50 pounds. Possession of (or ability to obtain) Illinois Prescribed Burn Manager Certificate is highly preferred. Proficient in ArcGIS, Excel, Word, PowerPoint, LANDSCAPE, and ability to create maps and organize metadata.

Reports to: Executive Director

Salary Range: \$60,000 to \$70,000 starting salary range dependent on experience, plus benefits

Benefits: two weeks of vacation, two weeks of sick leave, three personal days, and eleven holidays. NLI pays health insurance of an employee at the rate of 80% of the group premium. Employees are responsible for 20% of the group premium. NLI funds a health-related flexible spending account with \$500 a year. The employee can add to this account with pre-tax funds. NLI carries worker's compensation insurance. Employees are eligible to direct funds to a tax-deferred 403(B) retirement plan.

Minimum Requirements: MA or MS degree in biology, natural resource restoration or management, environmental science, or similar field of study. A minimum of 10 years of proven successful land stewardship work will be considered in lieu of a degree. Must have at least five years of experience in land conservation work along with demonstrated experience managing budgets, grants, and collaborative projects. Must have a valid driver's license, and a CDL will be required. Preferred resident of Winnebago County or an adjacent county.

Responsibilities: The Land Stewardship Director is responsible for managing and monitoring NLI preserves and developing and implementing natural area restoration and management plans on lands owned or protected by the Natural Land Institute, including recruiting, training, supervising, and coordinating field staff and volunteers, preparing grant proposals for restoration and management projects, conducting inventories and maintaining databases of plants and animals on preserves, evaluating the restoration potential or management needs of potential preservation projects, providing technical advice and assistance to other organizations in northern Illinois, maintaining facilities and trails, and maintaining, repairing and replacing field equipment and tools used in land management. The Land Stewardship Director also assists the Executive Director in environmental assessments of potential new land or easement acquisitions. Candidate must also be comfortable with public speaking and delivering presentations to a variety of audiences. The successful candidate will build relationships with volunteers, neighbors, conservation partner organizations (examples: Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, Middle Rock Conservation Partners, Natural Area Guardians), and NLI donors.

Work Locations: This full-time salaried position works primarily from NLI's stewardship shop at Nygren Wetland Preserve on Rockton Road one mile west of the Village of Rockton, Illinois. The position also maintains an office at the NLI office building at 320 S. Third Street in the historic Haight Village neighborhood adjacent to downtown Rockford, IL. Occasional evening or weekend work may be required, with the ability to flex hours as needed. Approximately 60% of the work is in the field and 40% is office

work. NLI landholdings are primarily in four locations: 1) near the shop in the Rockton-Roscoe area which is suburban Rockford/Beloit, Wisconsin. The Nygren Wetland shop does not have plumbing nor is fully heated but plans are in the works for a new shop; 2) surrounding the Village of Pecatonica, IL; 3) Southwest of Rockford/Byron area; and 4) Oregon, IL area. NLI's largest outlier holding is Lyndon-Agnew Prairie southwest of Sterling/Rock Falls in Whiteside County. NLI provides vehicles to visit and equipment to manage all of these preserves.

Equal Opportunity Employer: NLI is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes diversity in the workplace.

To apply: Send résumé, three references, and cover letter to info@naturalland.org with "Director of Land Stewardship Position Application" in the subject line of the e-mail. Please address your cover letter to the Executive Director. Closing date for applications is December 10, 2025.

The Natural Land Institute is a non-profit Land Trust operating primarily in northern and northwestern Illinois. It was founded in 1958 by George B. Fell and is funded through private donations, memberships, and grants. NLI currently owns and manages 26 preserves totaling 3,576 acres and holds 53 conservation easements on 4,630 acres. Its mission is to create an enduring legacy of natural land in northern Illinois for people, plants and animals. Information about the Natural Land Institute is available at www.naturalland.org Facebook: Natural Land Institute