



### Central Valley Farmland Trust Executive Director Position Description

***Painter Executive Search is supporting the Central Valley Farmland Trust (CVFT) in their search for an Executive Director with the wisdom and passion required to grow support for their work to ensure agricultural land in the Central Valley remains in cultivation for generations to come.***

The Central Valley of California (Valley) is an agricultural treasure. Extending 450 miles north to south, the Valley yields a third of the produce (fruits, nuts and vegetables) grown in the United States. It is the world's largest patch of class 1 soil, the best quality and most productive soil on the planet. This soil, combined with the nearly 300 days of sunshine each year and moderate temperature swings from day to night, make the Valley ideal for farming with the conditions to grow more than 230 varieties of crops. California is the number one agricultural state in the United States. In 2014, the total economic impact of agriculture within the 5 counties currently serviced by CVFT was over \$42 billion dollars. Agriculture drives the economy of the Valley.

Unfortunately, Valley farm land is under constant threat, primarily from urban sprawl. Acreage lost to cultivation is increasing and with that comes the loss of a way of life, as well as the world's ability to feed a growing population. Preservation of the Valley's agricultural lands is vital to protecting the local economy, the capacity for local food production, and the heritage of the region including the rural quality of life.

The mission of the CVFT is to preserve the Valley's agricultural lands for future generations. CVFT is engaged in the preservation of prime irrigated farmland, working with willing landowners to preserve local farmland by securing agricultural conservation easements. CVFT is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and adheres to the high standards for conservation by maintaining active accreditation by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission. CVFT currently holds easements protecting about 13,500 acres in four counties within the Valley, from Sacramento in the north extending south to Madera County. CVFT's current goal is to protect 20,000 acres of prime farmland by 2020.

#### **POSITION SUMMARY**

The Executive Director (ED), reporting to the Chair of the Board and accountable to the Board of Directors, will lead the execution of CVFT's mission. Building upon a foundation of high-quality conservation easements and a reputation as a reliable partner, the ED will engage the agricultural community in preserving farmland by developing, stewarding and monitoring conservation easements. The ED will be seen as a partner to agriculture, able to speak the language of soil, crops and ag business in order to facilitate transactions that ensure the highest quality land will be productive, working farms in perpetuity. Partnering with willing-landowners, the ED will facilitate the resources of the organization in navigating the complex process of establishing authorizations and funding for easements; ensuring that overall, the resources available are flowing to ensure the highest quality and most-threatened lands

are prioritized. CVFT works with a wide range of partners including federal, state, regional, county and city agencies and a range of funding sources, including developers with mitigation requirements. The ED will need exceptional communication skills and a broad understanding of the dynamics of land use in the Valley, in order to navigate, execute and build support for this work.

The Board seeks a forward-thinking leader, who along with the Board and advisory committee, will help shape and articulate the vision for agricultural land conservation in the Valley and increase the impact of CVFT's conservation efforts. The ED will work with and engage the Board and staff to achieve the strategic and fundraising goals set forth in the current strategic plan and continue to be aspirational in pursuit of the mission.

The ED will have responsibility for all CVFT functions including fundraising, operations, transaction development and monitoring and public engagement programs. The ED will be expected to sustain and build collaborative relationships with a broad range of partners within the current counties of Madera, Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin and Stanislaus and expand CVFT's presence in adjoining counties. The ED will be the external face of the organization and will engage landowners, agricultural leaders, partners, current donors and volunteers, as well as the public in order to grow visibility and support for CVFT and for preserving high quality farmland. It is expected that the ED will be out of the office and visible to the community routinely.

The ED will oversee an operating budget of about \$675,000, with total assets of \$8.8 million consisting primarily of funds set aside for future transactions, stewardship and legal defense. At fiscal year-end CVFT held approximately \$7.4 million in mitigation fees received from various municipalities to facilitate their respective farmland mitigation programs.

There are 9 members of CVFT's Board of Directors and an active Trustee Council. Members of the Board have deep ties to the Valley and provide a strong understanding of agriculture in the region. The Board is comfortable in its responsibility for oversight and is increasing its engagement in outreach and fundraising activities. The Trustee Council deepens CVFT's network in the Valley and provides additional knowledge into the complex realities of running working farms.

### **Organizational Summary**

CVFT was formed in 2004 via the merger of three existing land trusts, and has been capably served by its longtime Executive Director, Bill Martin, who will be retiring in early 2017. With a small staff and an active Board, CVFT has grown a significant presence within the Valley and is seen as a key partner in agricultural land transactions.

The staff of three (including the ED), utilizes a number of consultants and volunteers to support critical areas of their work including real estate transactions development, finance, easement monitoring, public relations and fundraising. The offices are currently located in Elk Grove a relatively short distance from Sacramento where key partners are located. The organization is open to considering other strategic locations within the Valley for their headquarters.

CVFT currently holds 37 easements representing 13,500 acres of prime agricultural land across four counties and is currently processing six agricultural conservation easement (ACE) applications totaling in excess of six hundred acres and spanning three counties.

### **Current Focus and Opportunities**

On May 27, 2015, under agreement with Merced and Madera County Farm Bureaus, CVFT received approximately \$4.1 million in funding to be utilized to acquire conservation easements in the two counties. This money is the result of a settlement agreement between the Farm Bureaus and the California High Speed Rail Authority. With this significant funding source in place, CVFT is actively expanding its presence in these two counties. The organization is growing the means to shift from opportunistic activity to a more proactive, strategic view of their work. Taking advantage of growing interest in local food production and farm-to-fork trends allow CVFT to build broader support for this work. Recognizing the traditionally conservative nature of the Valley and working to provide options for generational transfer of productive farm land is key to the work.

The Board is interested in building visibility and expanding fundraising in order to put more resources on the ground throughout the Valley to seek out opportunities to engage with local communities to ease the threat of farmland lost to production. They have launched a number of fundraising, communication and education initiatives, including a high profile partnership with Raley's Family of Fine Foods, in order to increase their name recognition and build awareness of their mission.

### **Executive Director**

#### **ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **Leadership and Strategy**

- Be a visible leader; represent CVFT actively, broadly and with integrity, building upon its reputation as a trusted partner;
- Articulate a vision that invites support for CVFT's work; speak with passion and work pragmatically to ensure growing enthusiasm for farm land conservation;
- Be an effective advocate for agricultural land conservation, work together with local, regional, state and federal partners to pursue resources, policies, programs and strategies that will ensure the Valley continues to feed the world with its agricultural productivity;
- Develop a strong level of understanding and trust with landowners, providing a platform and connecting resources in support of the decision to ensure land remains in production in perpetuity;
- Work directly with counties and municipalities in developing and facilitating ongoing farmland mitigation programs;
- Work closely with the Board to ensure strong Board governance and capacity, establish clear lines of communication and organizational transparency; provide well-defined opportunities for committee and staff engagement; assist the Board in the recruitment, selection and evaluation of board members and actively inform and engage the Board in issues of importance to the operations and strategy of the organization;
- Participate in meetings of the Board of Directors and standing committees, assist Board and committees by preparing reports, conducting research and providing assistance when requested.

## **Fundraising and Communications**

- Be the external face of CVFT; effectively represent the organization in order to increase its impact, visibility and support for its operations;
- Marshall the resources of the whole organization to raise the funds required to maintain sound operations and facilitate the current land conservation and stewardship goals while building a financial and operational foundation that will ensure long term sustainability for the organization and the stewardship of its easements;
- Actively participate in fundraising including growing individual support, developing foundation relationships and critical contacts in local, regional, state and federal government and agencies;
- Together with the consultants, staff, Board and Advisors build greater support from new donors while continuing to cultivate existing relationships and ensuring continued commitment to CVFT's work;
- Coordinate with Board, staff, and responsible committee(s) to plan, organize, and complete annual fundraising activities;
- Coordinate with Board and staff to develop and maintain membership program;
- Coordinate and engage the Board and staff in donor cultivation activities including solicitation and stewardship of major donors;
- Prepare, review, and edit grant applications for public or private funds;
- Coordinate the preparation of all newsletters, press releases and other hard copy and or digital communications.

## **Land Protection**

- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with organizations involved in land preservation;
- Work directly with counties and municipalities in developing and facilitating ongoing farmland mitigation programs;
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with landowners; work directly with landowners to discuss farmland conservation and agricultural conservation easement programs and negotiate mutually agreeable conservation projects;
- Coordinate with Transactions, Stewardship and Monitoring Committee all aspects of land protection and monitoring of agricultural conservation easements;
- Facilitate and/or prepare, review, and edit all documents necessary to consummate an easement project; ensure their accuracy and completeness;
- Coordinate, manage and monitor outside consultants engaged in easement development and monitoring activities;
- Oversee easement transactions, monitoring and enforcement and ensure compliance with the highest standards of land trust practice.

## **Internal Leadership and Operational Management**

- Oversee CVFT's operations and programs ensuring progress toward overarching goals;
- Recruit, nurture, challenge and manage a motivated professional staff; delegate specific responsibilities with appropriate authority and establish accountability; foster open, positive communications;
- Prepare and maintain the governing policies and documents, including documentation required for hiring and managing staff and outside consultants;

- Develop with the Budget, Finance and Risk Management Committee an annual operating budget for presentation to the Board and ensure that the finances are managed appropriately to the approved budget;
- Monitor and control CVFT's fiscal operations and prepare reports for the Budget, Finance and Risk Management Committee and Board as needed;
- Work with Budget, Finance and Risk Management Committee on strategy for investment management of all funds held (e.g., restricted and unrestricted);
- Prepare annual reports for municipalities where CVFT has contractual agreements to administer funds generated via collection of mitigation fees by such municipalities;
- Coordinate with outside independent Auditor & Audit committee in completing the annual financial audit;
- Maintain and expand CVFT's volunteer base, coordinate with the Board and staff volunteer activities including any necessary volunteer training.

## **POSITION REQUIREMENTS**

### **Experience**

#### ***A successful Executive Director candidate will likely have:***

- Passion for agricultural land and the farming lifestyle, ideally experienced in agriculture or associated industries;
- Experience as the face of an organization; well-developed interpersonal skills; superb oral and written communication skills, able to present ideas clearly and persuasively;
- Experience effectively leading an organization of similar size; ideally with experience in a nonprofit organization;
- Evidence of developing and implementing an effective strategy;
- Demonstrated leadership and management skills, can build a team which bridges staff and volunteers for a united effort to achieve established goals;
- A history of strong collaboration; someone who is trustworthy and seeks strategic, effective relationships;
- Ability to work well under deadlines; exercises good judgment and is able to hear and value alternate opinions and make informed decisions;
- Experience in and or ability to learn the nuances of real estate transactions and agricultural land conservation including easement transactions, funding and monitoring requirements;
- Strong financial and organizational management skills; a track record of managing on time and on budget;
- Hands-on, competent in business software and technology ideally with knowledge of QuickBooks, Excel, Power Point, Publisher, Outlook and other software required to support efficiency and communication both internally and externally;
- Maintain a high level of confidentiality;
- Able to travel throughout the Valley and attend meetings outside of regular business hours; must be a licensed driver with a clean driving record;
- College degree required.

### **Attributes**

- Someone who is credible and humble in their work and derives strength from his or her commitment to shared values and the love of agricultural land and the communities dependent upon it;

- Politically astute and able to professionally and respectfully communicate and work with a diverse group of farmers, developers, governmental officials and others critical to the work;
- A team builder with both vision and strong management skills; one who can motivate and direct diverse partners while establishing accountability and shared success;
- Emotionally mature with a good sense of humor, someone who is at ease, confident and competent and truly enjoys working with people;
- Ability to establish and maintain personally challenging achievement goals and exert effort toward mastering tasks;
- Someone who highlights and supports the successes of others, can easily share the spotlight and builds effective and lasting relationships;
- Solutions-oriented with attention to detail; pragmatic with an eye to the future;
- A good listener and strategist; comfortable receiving input from many sources and create sound decisions and thoughtful plans;
- Able to accept criticism and deal calmly and effectively with high stress situations;
- A hard worker; a 'doer' with a willingness to work hands-on with a high energy level;
- Resourceful—able to set priorities and act opportunistically;
- Exercises high ethical standards with honesty, directness and a good-natured approachability.

For additional details or to submit your experience for review, please contact;

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