



SOUTHERN DRIFTLESS GRASSLANDS PROGRAM MANAGER

The mission of the [Driftless Area Land Conservancy](#) (DALC) is to maintain and enhance the health, diversity and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's natural and agricultural landscape through permanent land protection and restoration, and to improve people's lives by connecting them to the land and to each other. We have permanently protected over 8,000 acres of forests, savannas, prairies, farms and cultural resources by working with private landowners and conservation partners, and we deliver programming and events that connect people to the natural world. We also coordinate three diverse partnerships of landowners and conservation agencies/organizations: the Lowery Creek Watershed Initiative, Southern Driftless Grasslands, and the Driftless Trail project.

The Southern Driftless Grasslands (SDG) Program Manager is an employee of DALC, but the position is funded by the SDG partnership (of which DALC is a contributing member), and is supervised by the SDG Steering Committee (on which DALC serves). DALC prides itself on having a supportive, collaborative, and flexible work environment and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.



[Southern Driftless Grasslands \(SDG\)](#) is a partnership of government agencies, non-profit organizations, and other stakeholders who actively support the conservation of grasslands in Southwest Wisconsin to benefit the region's wildlife, water, farms, and communities. This region provides the best opportunity for landscape-scale grassland ecosystem conservation in the Great Lakes states that can secure the survival of rapidly declining pollinators, grassland birds and other wildlife. This landscape harbors the highest concentration of unplowed prairie remnants and oak savanna in the Upper Midwest and a regionally significant populations of grassland birds, which as a group are facing an urgent conservation crisis.

Our region's rural economy includes multi-generational and innovative farms. The farming community, which is still grass-based in some areas, along with the concentration of prairie and oak savanna remnants, is a key to this grassland bird stronghold. Our work follows the science of the Bird Conservation Area (BCA) Model to sustain grassland birds, which includes protecting both native and working grasslands. Our strategies include building and nurturing trusted relationships with private landowners, rapidly accelerating land protection via both fee title and conservation easement acquisition with willing landowners, leading a "Prairie & Savanna Remnant Project" to identify and preserve banks of genetic diversity, and establishing a restoration program to triage management across public and private lands.

SDG is led by a Steering Committee with the Chair and Vice-Chair serving 2-year terms. The partnership currently conducts its work through the Steering Committee and three

subcommittees: Communications, Land Protection, and Private Lands. The partnership adopted [bylaws](#) in early 2024.

Over this past year, the partnership has engaged over 200 farmers, landowners, and rural residents through personal site visits and events like our annual farmer potluck. SDG partners are actively negotiating two land acquisitions and four conservation easements totaling 750 acres. We have 13 protection projects in early stages of discussion, totaling over 2600 acres.

Finally, this summer SDG was awarded a \$740,000 grant from the Conservation Partners Program of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). This funding will support a welcome infusion of outreach capacity and will establish Wisconsin's first prescribed burn association.

Position Summary

We are in a great position for growth and looking for a strong leader to help us continue building a solid foundation to expand our work. The ideal candidate will hold a diverse skill set, with a specialization and passion for leadership and program management. A week in the life of the Program Manager could include activities like: coordinating partners to plan for, apply, and administer large grants that sustain capacity for SDG staff, a kitchen table conversation with a farm family about how special their pasture with prairie remnant is, preparing invoices for reimbursable grants, speaking at a landowner potluck, writing a grant report, working with the Chair of the Steering Committee to plan the next meeting, and/or reviewing a plan of work for outreach events over the next year with SDG's outreach coordinator. In this position you will have the opportunity to be entrepreneurial and creative, helping to shape the future of the partnership.

Job Duties

Partnership Leadership and Management (75%)

Serve as leading authority, content expert, and advocate for SDG initiatives. Oversee SDG's strategic planning, budget, and work plan development.

- With the Steering Committee, ensure SDG successfully implements strategic and annual work planning through regular communication with the Steering Committee Chair, and Chairs of the sub-committees.
- Lead and supervise SDG's annual budget process.
- Serve as spokesperson for the partnership: participate in public events and community conversations, nurture relationships with partners and funders, and welcome new stakeholders not yet represented in the partnership.
- Research and identify potential grant sources, coordinate proposal development, track progress, and manage grant administration. Lead annual grant writing program with an eye toward large multi-year funding opportunities.
- Coordinate communication and outreach efforts to raise awareness and elevate the profile of SDG in the local and regional community.
- Hire and manage contractors, consultants, seasonal or limited term staff, fellows, or interns. Coordinate a growing staff team who are dedicated to the partnership, but work in other office locations and with other partner organizations.

Programmatic leadership and outreach (25%)

Assist partners in promoting, coordinating, and delivering conservation programs, focusing on landowners in priority areas as determined by the steering committee. This work includes:

- Through relationships with SDG partners, staying current on broad grassland conservation issues and emerging opportunities to help private landowners protect and manage grasslands (e.g. carbon credit markets).
- Managing and maintaining SDG's database of landowners and landowner engagement, including curating the database to manage the flow from landowner contact to final conservation outcome.
- Managing and maintaining SDG's database of projects, program participation, and impacts.
- As needed, serve as initial landowner contact, connecting them to the partners that can help identify programs for financial and technical assistance.
- Provide advice or forward information about basic land management questions to landowners (e.g. invasive species control, grass-based agriculture, Farm Bill programs).
- Support SDG partners to coordinate promotion of conservation tools and programs, including Farm Bill programs, US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, WI Department of Natural Resources Stamp Funds, etc.
- Assist partner outreach staff by providing technical content for communications, developing outreach strategies, planning special events, and/or giving public presentations.

Skills and Experience

Key experiences and competencies include:

- Bachelor's Degree or equivalent professional experience in Natural Resources or other conservation-related field, and 5+ years of experience leading a conservation related initiative or team.
- Passion for grasslands conservation and a basic knowledge of natural resources, grassland landscapes, and rural communities.
- Strong written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills, including presenting scientific and technical information to lay audiences.
- Experience writing, developing, managing, and reporting for grants, especially government grants.
- Demonstrated ability to develop and implement budgets.
- Project management skills including experience prioritizing multiple tasks and projects, leading a team of individuals who are not direct reports, and tracking progress.
- Ability to stay organized and follow through independently.
- Ability to actively listen to landowners, community members, farmers, and partners to understand needs and opportunities in promoting grassland management and protection.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office.
- Must possess a valid Driver's license and be able to work outdoors, including walking on steep terrain and in poor weather such as rain or heat.

Desired experiences and competencies include:

- Proficiency with ArcGIS Pro to create maps and manage spatial data.
- Familiarity with CRM database systems. SDG uses [Little Green Light](#).
- Familiarity with USDA conservation programs administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency.
- Knowledge of the ecology and management of prairies and oak savanna in the upper Midwest.
- Knowledge of typical agricultural concepts and practices employed in Southwest Wisconsin, especially regarding soil health and grazing systems.

Salary and Benefits

This is a full time (40 hours/week), salaried position located at DALC's office at 206 S. Iowa Street in Dodgeville, Wisconsin or hybrid/remote from another approved location within the SDG project area.

The salary range is \$60-75,000 annually depending on qualifications and experience. Benefits include a generous leave policy, including up to 3 weeks paid vacation in the first year; medical benefits, and retirement. This position will require travel throughout Southwest Wisconsin with mileage reimbursed.

DALC believes that continual growth through experiential learning, peer-peer networks and relevant training makes for a happier and more effective team. Staff prepare professional development goals annually with their supervisors. Professional development opportunities include attendance at conferences, participation in region-wide peer networks organized by Gathering Waters (the coalition for Wisconsin land trusts – DALC is a member), membership in professional societies, and myriad online trainings and seminars offered by the Land Trust Alliance (DALC is accredited). DALC staff also have access to local skills workshops such as chainsaw training, prescribed fire management, and trail building.

To Apply

Inquiries about the position should be directed to Jennifer Filipiak, DALC's Executive Director and current Chair of the SDG Steering Committee, at jennifer@driftlessconservancy.org or (608) 642-8737. Final application materials - a cover letter and resume – should be emailed to SDG Partner Mayme Keagy at mayme.keagy@iowacounty.org .

Please put the words "SDG Program Manager" in the subject line of your email. The position will remain open until filled; however we begin reviewing the first round of applications on September 9, 2024.