



# DRIFTLESS

## AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

### TRAILS SPECIALIST

Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) maintains and enhances the health, diversity and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's natural and agricultural landscape through permanent land protection and restoration, and improves people's lives by connecting them to the land and to each other.

*HELP US GROW!* DALC is a nationally-accredited land trust operating across seven counties. We are strategically growing our staff, preserves and community conservation work. We've protected over 10,000 acres with nearly 60 conservation easements and a network of public nature preserves on 9 sites (~1,000 acres) acres. At our preserves, we work to demonstrate best practices in ecological restoration, regenerative agriculture, and trail management. We strive to engage volunteers and our communities in these endeavors. Our [preserves](#) host about 10 miles of trail, with plans to add 10 more miles of trail at our Wild Oaks preserve.

We're also building a regional through-hike trail! In 2016, DALC envisioned a public hiking trail through the Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin. This area is 95% privately owned, providing comparatively little public access relative to other areas of the state. After several years of planning and public input, we broke ground and built the first mile of the [Driftless Trail](#) in 2020. Today the vision has expanded beyond just a trail; we are working to create a corridor of protected lands that protects ecological function and supports long-term biodiversity across one of the Midwest's most unique landscapes. We believe this corridor can support valuable habitat and promote climate resilience while connecting communities to the land. With nine miles of built trail, approximately 28 more planned miles, and many potential miles beyond those, we are now hiring a full time position dedicated to planning, building and managing trails.

DALC prides itself on nurturing a supportive, collaborative, and flexible work environment and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

#### ***Position Summary***

The Trails Specialist coordinates and implements the onsite planning, construction, and maintenance of the Driftless Trail network, as well as trails on DALC Preserves. This full-time role is hands-on and field-oriented during the trail construction season. Much of the spring through fall is spent on outdoor project work and volunteer leadership, occasionally requiring weekend and evening hours. Winter/off-season months focus on planning and administration.

The Trails Specialist will design sustainable trail routes, oversee trail construction (including use of mechanized equipment), coordinate maintenance of existing trails, and manage volunteer trail crews. They will also handle project administration such as budgeting, contractor oversight, basic mapping, and grant support and reporting. They will ensure trail projects are completed safely, on time, and within budget. This position is based in the Dodgeville/Spring Green area and requires regular travel to various trail sites in the region. *(Note: Early landowner outreach and trail easement negotiations and implementation are **not** responsibilities of this role.)*

### ***Key Responsibilities***

- **Trail Planning & Design:** Plan and design new trail using sustainable trail design principles. Scout and flag proposed routes, and coordinate with DALC colleagues (e.g. land protection, stewardship and GIS staff) to develop maps, plans and landowner contacts. Secure permits (such as for bridges and wetland boardwalks) as needed.
- **Trail Construction & Equipment Operation:** Oversee and implement construction of new trail segments and improvements, assuring landowner agreements and environmental regulations (e.g. easements and erosion control) are respected. Manage all aspects of trail construction projects, including project scheduling, contracting, contract oversight, and budgeting. Operate or supervise the in-house use of mechanized trail-building equipment, hand tools, and power tools to build trail features, while ensuring adherence to safety standards. Install wayfinding signage, trail markers, footbridges, boardwalks, fence stiles and trailhead signs on new or improved sections.
- **Trail Maintenance:** Develop and implement a maintenance plan to keep existing trails safe and enjoyable. Establish systems for routine trail inspections and prompt response to maintenance needs (e.g. downed trees, erosion issues). Ensure trail corridors are clear (mowing, trimming) and infrastructure (e.g. signage, drainage structures, fence stiles) is well-maintained. Coordinate with land stewardship colleagues to organize and maintain an inventory of tools, equipment, and supplies for trail work, and ensure they are in good working order. Coordinate with land stewardship staff on any habitat management or restoration work adjoining trails, as well as on the impact a trail may have on sensitive habitat so mitigation measures can be implemented.
- **Volunteer Leadership & Crew Management:** Recruit, train, and lead volunteers for trail building and maintenance projects. Schedule regular volunteer workdays and provide on-site supervision, instruction, and motivation. Foster a positive, fun, and safe working environment for volunteers, implementing proper safety protocols and ensuring all participants use appropriate protective gear. Cultivate a core group of skilled volunteer trail crew leaders through training opportunities and recognition. Track volunteer hours and accomplishments, and report on volunteer contributions to the trail program. During peak season, supervise any seasonal trail staff or partner crews (e.g. conservation corps), providing direction and quality control for their field work.
- **Project Administration & Reporting:** Serve as the project manager for trail initiatives, coordinating all moving parts, adapting to unforeseen issues and keeping the overall project on track. Monitor project budgets and expenses, and work with DALC leadership to develop and track annual trail program budgets. Assist in writing grant proposals and managing grants related to trail development; provide required grant reports and documentation. Maintain detailed records of trail work (e.g. maintenance logs, project outcomes, photos) and prepare reports on project progress for funders, partners, or DALC leadership. Oversee contracts and contractors for trail construction or maintenance, ensuring deliverables and quality standards are met.
- **Mapping & GIS:** Work with DALC's GIS staff or use GIS tools (ESRI ArcPro) to develop and update trail maps. Keep trail data organized and up to date (e.g. trail routes, trailhead

locations, features) and assist in making trail information available on public platforms (such as Trailforks, AllTrails, and the DALC website). Use GPS and mapping software to document new trails and improvements.

- **Community Engagement (Internal Collaboration):** Coordinate with DALC colleagues in communications and outreach to share trail updates, promote volunteer opportunities, and ensure public information is current. (Note: Direct public outreach, presentations, and landowner negotiations are typically handled by other team members; the Trail Manager's focus is on-the-ground trail implementation and stewardship.)

### ***Qualifications***

- **Experience:** 3–5 years of experience in sustainable trail building, trail maintenance, and project leadership (leading crews or volunteers on outdoor projects). Demonstrated success in managing trail construction/maintenance projects from planning through completion is required.
- **Technical Skills:** Strong knowledge of sustainable trail design and construction techniques (including both hand-built and machine-built methods). Ability to safely operate and maintain trail tools and equipment, including chainsaws and mechanized equipment like mini-excavators. Basic proficiency with GPS and GIS mapping software for trail planning is desired.
- **Project Management:** Excellent organizational skills with experience in project planning, scheduling, and budgeting. Able to manage multiple projects simultaneously and adapt to changing conditions. Familiarity with grant writing or reporting is a plus.
- **Leadership & Communication:** Proven ability to lead and motivate volunteers or staff in an outdoor setting. Strong interpersonal and communication skills for training volunteers, coordinating with contractors, and collaborating with partner organizations. Must be able to work independently and as part of a team, maintaining professionalism and a positive attitude.
- **Certifications (Preferred):** Chainsaw safety certification (e.g. completion of at least one certified chainsaw course). Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or higher medical certification (Wilderness First Responder preferred). These certifications are highly desired to ensure safety and effective leadership in the field.
- **Other Requirements:** Valid driver's license and ability to travel throughout southwest Wisconsin for trail projects. High level of physical fitness and stamina; able to hike long distances over rough terrain, perform manual labor outdoors for full work days, and repeatedly lift up to ~50 lbs. Commitment to conservation and the mission of DALC.

### ***Work Environment & Physical Demands***

- This position operates in a hybrid work environment with significant field work during the trail building season and office or remote work in the off-season and during inclement weather. From approximately spring through fall, the Trail Manager can expect to spend 3-4 days per week in the field on active trail construction or maintenance projects, often leading volunteer crews and working with tools and machinery in a variety of weather conditions. In winter, the role shifts to more administrative and planning duties, which can be done from the DALC office or a home office in accordance with DALC's hybrid work policies. Regional travel to trail sites

and weekend or evening work (for volunteer events or urgent trail needs) will be required, but the schedule can be flexible with this position planning the specific days and times of events.

- This job has substantial physical demands, and the Trail Specialist must be able to work outdoors for extended periods, including in heat, cold, or rain. The terrain of the Driftless Area is hilly and rugged, requiring sure-footedness on uneven ground and the ability to hike several miles carrying tools. The role involves regular use of chainsaws, brush cutters, and power tools, as well as operation of certain heavy machinery (eg. skidsteers); the employee must follow all safety protocols to protect themselves and others. Lifting and carrying heavy materials (50+ lbs) is frequently necessary. Personal protective equipment will be provided, and the Trails Specialist is expected to model and enforce safe working practices at all times.

### ***Salary and Benefits***

This is a full time (40 hours/week), salaried position located at our current office at 206 S. Iowa Street in Dodgeville, Wisconsin or hybrid/remote from another location in DALC's service area of Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk, southwestern Dane, eastern Grant, and northwestern Green Counties. DALC will be moving our offices to the Wintergreen property just south of Spring Green later this year.

The salary range is \$50,000 – 60,000 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 and shared use of a DALC vehicle.

DALC believes that continual growth through experiential learning, peer-peer networks and relevant training makes for a happier and more effective team. Professional development opportunities include attendance at conferences, participation in region-wide peer networks organized by Gathering Waters, membership in professional societies, and myriad online trainings and seminars offered by the Land Trust Alliance. DALC staff also have access to local skills workshops such as chainsaw training, prescribed fire management, and trail building.

### ***To Apply***

To apply please email a cover letter and resume to Natasha Rank, Operations Manager at [info@driftlessconservancy.org](mailto:info@driftlessconservancy.org) . **NOTE: Please put the words "Trails Specialist" in the subject line of your email.**

Please direct questions about the position to: Stephanie Judge, Conservation Director at [stephanie@driftlessconservancy.org](mailto:stephanie@driftlessconservancy.org).

The hiring team will begin reviewing applications on a rolling basis beginning on April 6, 2026. The position will remain open until filled.