



**MAINSRING**  
CONSERVATION TRUST

Stewards of the Southern Blue Ridge

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# JOB ANNOUNCEMENT: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mainspring Conservation Trust seeks a dedicated Executive Director who believes in the value of land conservation, restoration of waterways, preservation of cultural heritage and strong connections with the community to lead one of the Southeast's most respected land trusts. This is a unique opportunity to guide a talented team and deepen conservation impact across the ecologically rich Southern Blue Ridge.



# WHO WE ARE

Mainspring Conservation Trust is a nationally-accredited, leading nonprofit land trust based in Franklin, North Carolina. Mainspring works in the heart of the Southern Blue Ridge, an area renowned for its ecological richness, cultural depth, and community resilience. Our service area currently encompasses the far westernmost counties in North Carolina and part of northeast Georgia—nearly two million acres of some of the most biodiverse temperate forests in the world—including the Little Tennessee and Hiwassee river basins.

Founded in 1997 by a visionary group concerned with unchecked development in the valleys of Western North Carolina, Mainspring (originally the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee) has grown from a grassroots effort into a regionally respected and nationally accredited conservation leader. In 2016, we rebranded to Mainspring Conservation Trust to reflect our expanding service area and multifaceted mission.

Today, Mainspring protects more than land—we conserve the waters, forests, farms, and cultural heritage of this extraordinary region. Our work is rooted in community and built for permanence. We don't just hold easements or buy land. We restore streambanks, protect cultural landmarks, monitor water quality, and collaborate with educators to provide hands-on learning opportunities for local students. We also preserve historic landscapes in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies, tribal governments, and other conservation organizations.

Whether working to conserve local farmlands, building trails on public access preserves, or guiding complex land deals, Mainspring combines science, strategy, and heart to create lasting conservation outcomes. The people we serve—landowners, farmers, students, donors, tribal leaders, outdoor lovers—are part of the solution. And they know that protecting this place means protecting what's essential: clean water, productive farm soils, wildlife corridors, and a deep sense of belonging.

Mainspring employs a dedicated staff of 12 professionals and is guided by a 17-member volunteer board. With an annual operating budget exceeding \$1.7 million, we're proud to offer deep impact, smart growth, and meaningful partnerships across the region.

Home to the Nantahala and Cherokee National Forests, Western Carolina University, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, sections of the Appalachian Trail, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Southern Blue Ridge is one of the most ecologically significant and culturally resonant landscapes in the United States. For those seeking full-spectrum conservation leadership—and full-spectrum quality of life—there is nowhere better.



# WHAT WE DO

Mainspring Conservation Trust focuses on protecting ecologically and culturally significant places while building a strong conservation ethic through education and community outreach. Our work spans:



**Land Conservation** - We conserve lands of high ecological and cultural value—from pristine wilderness areas to productive working farmlands—using proven conservation tools and collaborating with a wide range of dedicated partners.



**Stewardship** - We ensure the long-term health of conserved lands with a focus on best practices and community involvement.



**Education & Outreach** - From hands-on water quality monitoring for adults to school partnerships that deliver age-appropriate, curriculum-aligned learning, along with outreach events and volunteer opportunities, we connect people of all ages to the land.



**Cultural Heritage** - We honor the deep roots of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and others through land projects and partnerships.



**Aquatic Restoration** - Through science-based projects, we restore stream banks, remove barriers to fish passage, and improve aquatic habitat.





# WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR

You are a strategic, relational leader ready to carry forward the mission of a trusted land trust while honoring the unique cultural and ecological landscape of Southern Appalachia. You know how to build trust across diverse communities, especially in rural areas, and you bring a fundraising mindset that sees relationships—not transactions—as the heart of financial sustainability.

As Mainspring's next Executive Director, you'll inherit a committed team, a solid reputation, and an ambitious vision. You'll also take on some of the most pressing challenges: deepening external understanding of our work, retaining and supporting high-performing staff, and navigating projects with cultural and political sensitivity.

You're not just experienced—you're grounded. You've worked in or with rural communities and understand how to lead with humility. You're comfortable around donors and elected officials, and equally comfortable hiking a stream bank with a landowner. You lead with curiosity, communicate clearly, and balance big-picture vision with day-to-day pragmatism.

You're excited to lead a team of passionate professionals, collaborate closely with an active board of directors, and engage with conservation partners across sectors—from tribal governments and federal, state and local agencies to private landowners and local schools. You'll work alongside a seasoned Deputy Director and staff in education, aquatics, communications, finance, land conservation and stewardship.

Most importantly, you listen deeply. You lead by example. And you believe that conservation is ultimately about people—how we care for the places we love and how we share them with future generations.





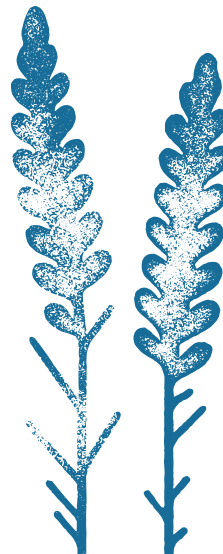
# YOU WILL:

## LEADERSHIP

- Provide visionary and operational leadership consistent with Mainspring's mission, values, and strategic direction.
- Collaborate with the board and staff to implement and regularly update the strategic plan.
- Foster a positive, inclusive, and accountable workplace culture.
- Represent Mainspring in regional and national conservation networks.
- Ensure Mainspring maintains compliance with Land Trust Alliance accreditation standards.
- Oversee recruitment, hiring, and personnel management in line with approved policies and legal requirements.

## LAND CONSERVATION, STEWARDSHIP, AND PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

- Work closely with land, stewardship, and aquatics staff to drive strategic initiatives, promote accountability, and support cross-program collaboration.
- Ensure that conservation projects align with organizational goals and meet legal and ecological standards.



# YOU WILL:

## FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

- Work closely with the finance director to prepare and manage the annual budget; work with the board to maintain financial health and reserves.
- Maintain internal financial controls and ensure compliance with all legal and accreditation requirements.
- Ensure sound financial management practices, including effective internal controls to protect assets.
- Support the Deputy Director in managing day-to-day operations.

## BOARD RELATIONS

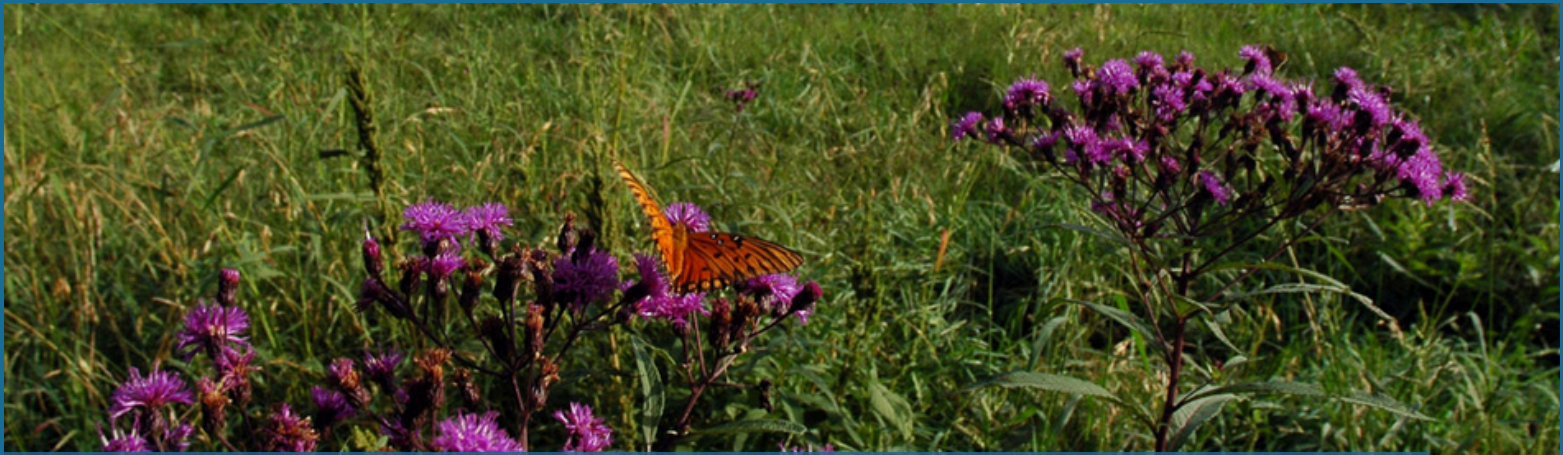
- Keep the board informed of organizational health, opportunities, and challenges.
- Provide timely, accurate reports to support informed governance.
- Support board recruitment and orientation; foster a culture of philanthropy among board members.
- Collaborate with the board to advance the organization's strategic goals.

## FUNDRAISING, COMMUNICATIONS, AND MARKETING

- Oversee fundraising efforts, including cultivation of relationships with donors at all levels of giving.
- Develop a diversified fundraising strategy encompassing major, planned, and foundation giving.
- Manage a personal portfolio of top donors and prospects.
- Serve as the organization's lead spokesperson and advocate.
- Support communications strategies that increase public awareness and understanding of Mainspring's mission.
- Encourage alignment between program delivery and communications strategy to amplify impact.
- Develop and maintain a deep understanding of Mainspring's history, accomplishments, leadership, and role in the conservation field.







# SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE

## EXPERIENCE

- 5+ years of senior management experience
- Fiscal accountability; Experience managing budgets with multiple funding sources
- Experience working in environmental/conservation organizations
- Experience with and/or knowledge of conservation easements
- Experience supervising 3+ direct reports
- Track record of promoting a collaborative work environment where staff are heard and where staff are motivated and inspired to perform at their highest levels

## SKILLS

- Comfortable and willing to make gift solicitations
- Understanding and appreciation of conservation values, habitat restoration, and stewardship
- Familiarity with natural resource protection, including the principles of ecology and conservation biology
- Ability to be a big picture thinker in terms of diversifying funding streams
- Outstanding communicator with excellent speaking, writing, and listening skills
- Ability to build and sustain an organizational culture of accountability
- Strong organizational skills and a business orientation that leverages and optimizes resources
- Ability to develop strategic partnerships and to develop and maintain relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders; Ability to work with community leaders individually or in groups to achieve objectives



# SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE

## PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Commitment to principles of cultural humility in working with diverse communities
- Collaborative, ability to build consensus
- Problem solver who is comfortable making tough decisions and communicating them with transparency
- Exhibits a positive attitude and a high degree of compassion and patience for working with others

## EDUCATION

- Bachelor's Degree

## HIGHLY PREFERRED

- Experience in nonprofit organizations
- Experience managing organizations or departments with multiple programs and/or locations
- Strong experience developing and executing strategy and vision for an organization
- Direct experience working with and/or reporting to a board of directors
- Familiarity and understanding of Mainspring's environmental issues
- Record of success in developing and maintaining productive, collaborative relations with funders
- Experience building relationships with donors

## PREFERRED

- Executive Director experience
- Familiarity with historical and cultural preservation







## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

- **Salary Range of \$100,000-\$125,000.**
- Comprehensive benefits package including health coverage, retirement contributions, and paid time off.
- Relocation support is negotiable.
- Flexible hybrid work environment.
- Supportive, passionate team and a strong culture of collaboration and trust.
- Opportunity to lead a highly respected land trust in one of the most ecologically rich regions of the country.

## TO APPLY

Interested candidates should send a resume and cover letter to [stacey@consultmetamorphic.com](mailto:stacey@consultmetamorphic.com). Please include “Mainspring Executive Director” in the subject line.

