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Director of Science-Based Stewardship

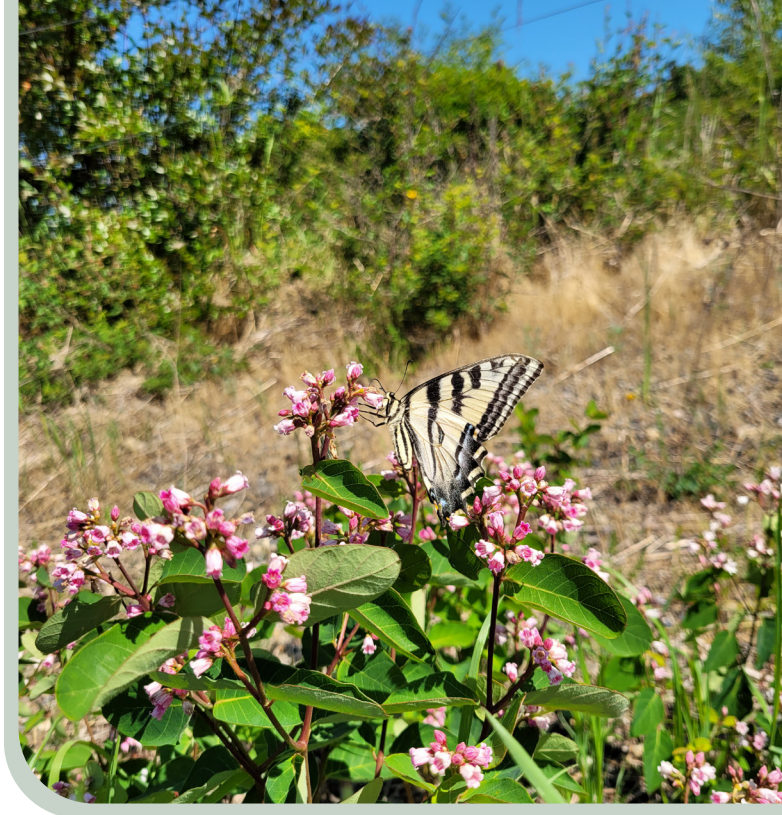
The Center for Natural Lands Management seeks a Director of Science-Based Stewardship to lead its stewardship staff in sustaining and enhancing science-based conservation impact across California, Washington, and Oregon.

Organization Overview

The Center for Natural Lands Management was founded in 1990 in California. The organization protects sensitive biological resources through professional, science-based stewardship of conservation lands in perpetuity. CNLM assures the perpetual protection of these lands by establishing property-specific stewardship endowments, a model that was unique at the time of its founding and, over time, has become a best practice for land conservation. With endowment-based funding, there is continuous financial support for stewardship, allowing the focus to be on conservation rather than fundraising and employee job security.

CNLM values science-based information in guiding the recovery and perpetual stewardship of ecosystems and their resident species. The organization protects endangered, threatened, and rare species, all of which are vulnerable to random events and cumulative impacts from ongoing pressures. It strives to manage these imperiled species to ensure even small populations have the best opportunity for long-term viability in the wild.

CNLM's portfolio encompasses approximately 80,000 acres across roughly 100 preserves spanning habitats as diverse as coastal sage scrub, palm oases, native prairies, wetlands, and oak woodlands. Each preserve carries its own depth and complexity, and each is supported by its own budget and dedicated stewardship endowment. CNLM protects over 70 endangered or threatened native species across its portfolio of preserves in California, Washington, and Oregon. In California, the organization protects almost 20% of the plant and animal species listed federally as threatened or endangered.



With a staff of 60 full-time employees, most of whom are directly conducting adaptive management of CNLM's preserves, it is critical to the organization's mission that stewardship staff are well selected, efficiently structured, and strongly supported so they can perform at their best on the ground, sustaining this complex web of conservation needs every day.

The mission of the Center for Natural Lands Management is:

- ✦ To conserve native species, their habitat, and functioning ecosystems in perpetuity.
- ✦ To own and/or manage lands in an ecologically beneficial manner consistent with local, state, and federal environmental laws and with science-based stewardship.
- ✦ To promote the conservation values of such lands through education.
- ✦ To promote and facilitate public uses of lands that preserve conservation values.
- ✦ To cooperate with public and private entities in their efforts to protect native species and their habitats for the public benefit.



Position Overview and Responsibilities

The Director of Science-Based Stewardship provides senior leadership for CNLM's science-based stewardship program, which forms the core of the organization's mission. This is a new title reflecting CNLM's organizational growth and commitment to further integrating science and scientific approaches to the stewardship of its expanding portfolio of preserves. CNLM's conservation staff of more than 30 stewardship professionals manages preserves, conducts applied research, develops protocols, monitors species, and writes management plans, complemented by the Conservation Program staff and a three-person Species Research and Recovery Program.

This dedicated team of stewardship professionals now seeks its next leader and supporter. The Director's charge is to set strategy, provide organizational leadership for a complex system, and determine how science-based stewardship is best integrated and implemented across the organization. This leader ensures that scientific principles are rigorously integrated into stewardship plans and practices, that monitoring programs are conducted within an experimental framework, and

that CNLM maintains and advances its reputation as a leader in conservation. The Director will oversee and support conservation operations by providing decision support for resolving issues arising at the wildlands–urban interface, such as encroachments and fuel management. Included in this Director's purview are stewardship operations in California and the Pacific Northwest and supportive program areas, including the conservation program, Species Research and Recovery Program, and the (Washington-based) native plant nursery.

The Director of Science-Based Stewardship also plays a pivotal internal role: helping to shape and build CNLM's organizational culture, supporting greater visibility for science within the organization, and contributing to a culture of professional growth, team excellence, and conservation impact. The Director reports to the Executive Director and oversees the structure, staffing, training, and performance of a skilled team conducting front-line conservation management and restoration activities. The Director will champion their work, fill capacity gaps, and strengthen the systems that enable them to succeed.

Responsibilities



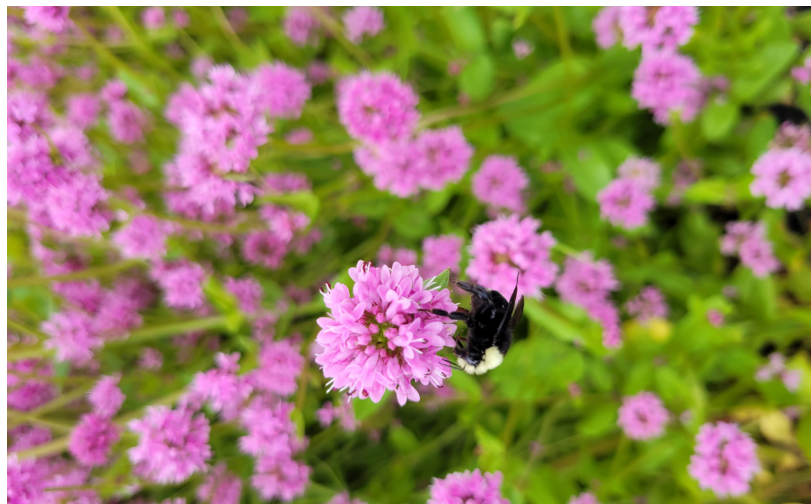
Conservation Science and Stewardship Leadership

- ✦ Provide leadership for CNLM's stewardship and conservation science program areas.
- ✦ Ensure the integration of scientific principles and paradigms into stewardship plans, management practices, and adaptive management frameworks.
- ✦ Develop, maintain, and ensure compliance with stewardship protocols across CNLM's preserve portfolio in California, Washington, and Oregon.
- ✦ Oversee and provide quality assurance and quality control for stewardship documents, including management plans, annual work plans, annual reports, grant proposals, and scientific manuscripts.
- ✦ Initiate or oversee applied research on CNLM preserves, whether conducted by staff or external entities, ensuring scientific integrity, alignment with CNLM's mission, and protection of conservation values.
- ✦ Provide quality assurance and control for preserve monitoring programs and the data they produce.
- ✦ Conduct due diligence on emerging technologies and support their appropriate incorporation into CNLM stewardship practices.
- ✦ Ensure that CNLM's portfolio of preserves continues to serve its intended purpose through legal, financial, and science-based methods.



Staff and Program Management

- ✦ Hire, supervise, and support staff within CNLM's conservation science and stewardship program areas.
- ✦ Manage and grow the team to ensure staff capacity aligns with CNLM's preserve portfolio and organizational goals.
- ✦ Ensure the acquisition and maintenance of all permits or licenses required to conduct activities within the conservation science and stewardship programs.
- ✦ Provide guidance on addressing issues or threats across CNLM's portfolio of preserves.
- ✦ Provide day-to-day management support to preserve managers, filling gaps in capacity and pitching in where needed.
- ✦ Integrate the Species Research and Recovery Program with preserve management and monitoring so the full stewardship team operates collaboratively.
- ✦ Support preserve managers on issues of public interface—including working with fire chiefs and fire departments—providing talking points and capacity to ensure a consistent, professional, and appropriate organizational voice.



Organizational and Strategic Contribution

- ✦ Oversee and guide the implementation of CNLM's science-based stewardship strategy, budget, and operations.
- ✦ Engage the Executive Director in strategic discussions and decisions regarding preserve standards, practices, and conditions, as well as any conservation issues requiring attention.
- ✦ Provide input on the conservation value of potential acquisitions and new projects.
- ✦ Work with the Executive Director (initially) to maintain standards for cost calculation for perpetual stewardship, including oversight of the Property Analysis Record app and process.
- ✦ Together with other senior staff, evaluate new preserves and project commitments to ensure they reflect appropriate conservation value and scientific foundation.
- ✦ Develop initiatives and funding sources supporting applied research key to CNLM's mission and preserve stewardship.
- ✦ Identify and develop relationships with governmental and other entities that would enhance CNLM's conservation mission.
- ✦ Participate in scientific and stewardship forums through committee and editorial board service, conference participation, and authorship of publications.
- ✦ Protect and enhance CNLM's reputation as a leader in science-based stewardship.
- ✦ Contribute to a visible, robust culture of science within CNLM and help build the relationship between scientific practice and conservation on the ground.
- ✦ Perform other duties as required.



Desired Experience and Competencies

The Center for Natural Lands Management seeks a scientifically grounded, people-centered leader who brings rigor, vision, and operational excellence to the practice of conservation stewardship.

The ideal candidate holds deep expertise in applied conservation science and substantial experience in land-based conservation operations. They understand how scientific principles translate into real-world management of imperiled species and sensitive habitats. They have experience-based confidence in navigating the practical issues of stewardship, including public concerns, issues with neighbors, and regulatory requirements. They are a collaborative manager with demonstrated success leading and growing diverse teams who can navigate the intersection of ecological complexity, regulatory requirements, and organizational culture, and who is genuinely committed to building a workplace where science is visible and integrated, valued, and central to everything CNLM does.

Leadership and Management

- ✦ At least five years of experience managing land-based natural resource conservation programs.
- ✦ Familiarity with endangered species management and monitoring, including wildlife agency regulations (California and Washington).
- ✦ Collaborative management style with strong supervisory experience and a track record of building and supporting high-performing teams.
- ✦ Propensity to measure professional success through the success of a team or organization.
- ✦ Ability to work effectively across multiple projects simultaneously, with speed and accuracy, and at varying levels of depth.
- ✦ Experience drafting grant proposals, managing budgets, and supervising staff at multiple levels.
- ✦ Ability to parse conservation issues into their environmental, political, and financial components.
- ✦ Willingness to pitch in and fill gaps where needed, including day-to-day management support of preserve managers.

Scientific and Technical Expertise

- ✦ Advanced degree in a natural science discipline or natural resources management, or equivalent hands-on science-based stewardship experience.
- ✦ Strong written communication skills and a demonstrated ability to organize complex information at a high level.
- ✦ Authorship of management plans, stewardship operations manuals, or protocols for monitoring programs, placing that information in its broader conservation context and, where appropriate, drawing on the scientific literature to inform the work; a record of peer-reviewed publication is valued but not required.
- ✦ Deep familiarity with conservation management, endangered species, sensitive habitats, and regulatory frameworks, ideally in California and/or the Pacific Northwest.
- ✦ Experience translating scientific principles into on-the-ground stewardship practices and public-facing materials.
- ✦ Familiarity with emerging relevant technologies and their application to conservation monitoring and management.

Communication and Collaboration

- ✦ Excellent written, verbal, and visual communication skills, with the ability to serve as a spokesperson for CNLM on science and conservation matters.
- ✦ Ability to communicate complex scientific issues clearly to lay and regulatory audiences.
- ✦ Ability to prepare professional documents across scientific, real estate, financial, and stewardship domains.
- ✦ Self-confidence in professional stature and ability to translate scientific principles into practice while engaging agency staff and other scientists as peers.
- ✦ Professional standing in the scientific community through accomplishment and membership in professional associations, boards, or committees.
- ✦ Familiarity with nonprofit working conditions and CNLM's niche within the conservation community.
- ✦ Strong work ethic, high critical thinking capacity, and a commitment to continuous improvement.



Compensation

This is a full-time, exempt, benefit-eligible position. The compensation is \$125,000–\$135,000, commensurate with experience, plus approximately \$6,000/year for home office/phone stipends, with the potential for inflationary and merit-based adjustments over time.

The Center for Natural Lands Management provides a generous portion of the employee's health, dental, and vision plans; makes an employer contribution to a retirement plan; and offers eleven paid holidays and (initially) three weeks of vacation per year. Vacation is accrued progressively, with accrual at the rate of four weeks annually after two years and five weeks after five years of employment with CNLM.

Location

This position is based in California, where the majority of CNLM's preserves and staff are located. CNLM maintains a small physical office in Temecula, CA, but operates within a virtual office structure. The Director of Science-Based Stewardship is expected to maintain a home office and must be available and willing to travel regularly to meet with staff in California and Washington, visit preserves, and attend meetings or events, including occasional evening and weekend engagements.

The Director of Science-Based Stewardship must have the ability to work effectively under pressure while meeting deadlines. Travel is required, largely but not exclusively within states where CNLM has real estate interests. Walking over uneven, steep, or vegetation-encumbered terrain to visit preserves or project locations is an anticipated condition. Must be able to navigate independently to various locations for meetings. Must be able to work efficiently and effectively within a virtual office environment and maintain working relationships with staff and others.

To Apply

Please visit potrerogroup.com/cnlm and select "Apply Here." Applications should include a resume and a cover letter describing your qualifications that match the position criteria and what you will bring to the role. Interested candidates should apply by **August 7** for priority consideration.

Start Date

Fall 2026



Additional Information

More information on Center for Natural Lands Management can be found at cnlm.org

For additional information regarding this opportunity, please contact:

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Center for Natural Lands Management is an Equal Opportunity Employer

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CNLM is an Equal Opportunity employer. Personnel are chosen on the basis of ability without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation, in accordance with federal and state law.

This position description does not constitute an employment agreement between CNLM and the employee and is subject to change by CNLM as the needs of CNLM and the requirements of the job change.



Potrero Group is honored to coordinate this search on behalf of the Center for Natural Lands Management. We support innovative leaders and organizations making a difference in the world with strategic planning, facilitation, organizational development, and board and executive search services. We are committed to equitable and inclusive practices in all of our work.

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