

Center for Natural Lands Management



POSITION DESCRIPTION

General Counsel

Reports to: Co-Executive Directors
Location: California; Requires home office
Type: Permanent Full-time (1.0 FTE); Exempt (Salaried)
Salary: DOE; with benefits including 11 paid holidays annually; vacation and sick leave; employer contribution to health insurance and retirement plans
Prepared date: September 20, 2021
Application deadline: Open until filled, but for fullest consideration please apply no later than November 8, 2021

Position Summary and General Duties

This is a rare and exciting opportunity to use your legal skills to make a direct impact on perpetual conservation in the western US. As part of the CNLM senior staff, the General Counsel (GC) will be joining a team of over 50 passionate individuals working in California, Washington, and Oregon to protect and manage rare and endangered species *in situ* for perpetuity. Reporting to the Co-Executive Directors and liaising with the Board of Directors as needed, the General Counsel (GC) is a senior management position with (currently) one direct report (Manager of Land Acquisitions). The General Counsel is responsible for provision of legal guidance and services on a broad range of topics and legal processes across all functions of our organization. The GC works in a cross-disciplinary manner with the Co-Executive Directors, Board of Directors, Director of Administration, and stewardship staff on legal matters concerning our organization. Reviewing and revising templates for acquisition and property defense processes, providing guidance on regulatory agency authority and requirements, and helping to defend the conservation values under our perpetual care are broad characterizations of the core of this role. Given CNLM's roles in owning and managing conservation lands and holding conservation easements, the GC's duties are frequently related to property acquisitions and defense. As state- and federal-listed species are resident on most of CNLM's preserves, state and federal endangered species acts are foundations for our stewardship and protection activities, and regulatory agency interactions (including US Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the US Army Corps of Engineers) dominate our external communications.

About CNLM

Founded in 1990, the Center for Natural Lands Management has promoted and practiced two principles: first, protecting and managing conservation properties through perpetual legal instruments and second, focusing on conservation lands that support and provide refuge for rare, endangered, and vulnerable species. To fulfill its conservation mission, CNLM not only maintains its current real estate portfolio, but acquires new preserves regularly. Many of those acquisition opportunities are through mitigation processes; however, other sources of funding—including grants, property transfers, and novel

collaborations—have contributed to the current preserve portfolio. CNLM staff developed the iconic “PAR” software and made it available (now through subscription to the app) to the conservation community to assist with determination of perpetual stewardship costs. Financial support for CNLM’s conservation activities is primarily acquired from earnings on investments (endowments) that are professionally managed.

To manage its over 90 preserves (primarily in California, but with several in the states of Washington and Oregon), CNLM hires talented and committed staff who perform all aspects of preserve planning, budgeting, monitoring, management, reporting, and defense. Given the dispersed nature of its preserves throughout California, and in Washington and Oregon, almost all CNLM staff work from home offices—accessing and posting information in a cloud-based system and maintaining core culture through virtual and in-person (when possible) meetings. CNLM currently maintains a small administrative office in Temecula, California. In addition to its fee title properties, CNLM monitors and defends conservation easements it has been granted over many properties and works collaboratively with natural resource regulatory agencies to protect and maintain conservation values.

CNLM offers competitive salary, paid vacation and sick time, and other financial benefits. Most importantly, we offer the opportunity to work with a team of talented and committed conservation professionals and to achieve a legacy of substantial conservation impact.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

- Participate in land acquisition decisions: Review and revise established templates pertaining to land transfer, management and funding, escrow instructions; Advise on risks; Review appraisals, preliminary title reports, surveys, and environmental site assessment reports; Prepare or review related documents including consulting services agreements, board resolutions, etc.
- Discuss with and advise staff on (wildlife, water) regulatory agency policies, decisions, and authority as they pertain to the acquisitions, management, and defense of CNLM preserves
- Assure compliance of CNLM documents and activities with federal, state, and local laws
- Advise the Board of Directors on legal matters as appropriate and provide certain types of training to Board Directors (re: duties, conflicts of interest, Board governance)
- Provide support for defending CNLM fee title properties, conservation easements, and management contracts
- Review, revise, and develop as needed CNLM foundation documents including organization policies, bylaws, and resolutions
- Generally, support quality control and business risk management measures for the organization
- Provide documentation on legal matters as needed and ensure appropriate filing and file management to support CNLM’s institutional memory
- Participate as an active member of staff teams including Project Review, Health and Safety (currently COVID-19 focused), and Prescribed Fire Management
- Conduct legal research on matters of concern for CNLM
- Advise Co-Executive Directors on current or proposed laws or legislation that may affect CNLM’s

execution of its mission and ideas on enhancing our conservation efficacy

- Maintain good standing as a lawyer licensed to practice law in California
- Represent CNLM as appropriate at meetings and other events with agencies, permittees, landowners, grantors, conservation community, and members of the public
- Fulfill other duties as assigned

Qualifications and Requirements

- A law degree and license to practice law, preferably in the State of California
- Interest in and commitment to conservation of natural resources
- At least five years of successful experience in practicing law, preferably in the context of natural resource conservation, acquisitions and property law, or similar fields
- Conversant with environmental laws that inform mitigation and conservation in the United States and in California in particular
- Knowledge of real estate transactions including escrow closings, title insurance, surveys, deeds, leases, and title reports
- Familiarity with environmental permitting is strongly preferred (e.g., endangered species, protected wetlands, etc.)
- Some understanding of nonprofit/ charitable trust law
- Excellent and effective writing and document preparation skills
- Experience in working as part of a team on projects that are frequently complex, require schedule management and cost management, and that may pivot due to extrinsic or intrinsic factors
- Demonstrated ability to engage professionally and responsibly with multiple parties to achieve project completion and maintain the organization's excellent reputation (e.g., regulatory agencies, permittees, title companies, conservation bankers, various other government entities, etc.)
- Ability to represent CNLM professionally and effectively at public meetings and events
- Respect for CNLM's mission and practices and commitment to supporting the staff and Board of Directors in the conduct of this mission
- Proven self-starter, able to work efficiently and effectively with minimal supervision, and able to appropriately use initiative to meet objectives
- Proficiency with Windows operating systems and PC applications such as Microsoft Office Suite
- Ability to operate from a home office (i.e., within a virtual office structure)
- Must have and maintain a valid driver's license and safe driving record
- Ability to travel in relation to meetings and CNLM events

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature of the work being performed by people assigned to this work. This is not an exhaustive list of all duties and responsibilities. CNLM management reserves the right to amend and change responsibilities to meet business and organizational needs as necessary.

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 the CNLM and the employee and is subject to change by CNLM as the needs of the CNLM and requirements of the job change.

TO APPLY:

Qualified applicants must provide a letter of interest, a detailed resumé or CV, and contact information (but no letters of support, please) for three individuals who could supply references for the applicant, if and when appropriate.

All applications will be acknowledged.

Electronic submissions strongly preferred.

Email or mail these materials to:

counsel@cnlm.org

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