

This is a job posting unlike the usual. The thriving 31-year-old Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust is looking for an Executive Director. My name is Mary Frances Lyons, and I am a long-term board member of the Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust (LT).

On retirement, I followed several family members from the Midwest to the Pacific NW, relocating to Vashon-Maury Island, with 11 thousand residents in the heart of Puget Sound, just a 15-minute ferry ride from West Seattle, Tacoma, and Bremerton. I had spent summers there for perhaps 10 years, and grew to know the LT those years, reading the local paper and seeking out tours and presentations to learn more. We fell in love with the entire island, finally realizing that we would always count the days and nights we had left to spend there before heading home. Bowing to the wonderful inevitable, we relocated when we could, and I was recruited to join the board of the LT.

What I found was a group of people who love the natural world, and treasure Vashon-Maury Island and all it offers. The board is a group of dedicated island citizens, some still employed and some retired. They are huge supporters in every way, financially and in kind, being regular volunteers on work parties and in the various LT projects. Most recently, the board and staff have embraced an endeavor to address justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in whatever way is possible and necessary. This is driven by the recognition that the LT is there for all into perpetuity, and it is important to acknowledge the history (for us, with Native Americans and the Japanese) as well as redress injustice and inequity wherever and whenever possible.

The staff of six FTE's is a group of dedicated professionals motivated by a true passion for their work. They are seasoned at this point, and much of what they do they do organically. They absorb new programs regularly, with land acquisition(s) and other enterprise growth. They come to work cheerful, are welcoming to volunteers, and demonstrate persistence and good humor, often in challenging weather.

And the entire island community has demonstrated over and over their affirmation of the LT (instrumental in protecting over 10% of the island) and what it offers, from forest preservation to (salmon)stream and shoreline restoration to trail building (our goal is to have trails island-wide). And the most recent LT major project is Matsuda Farm (a historic Japanese heritage farm), which has deeply resonated with islanders in this time of national crisis. It was/is our chance to give back, and we have, with food donations broadly to the community at large. Over the years, our principal support has been and is through private donations, and this has steadily grown, even through pandemic times. Our thought is that in these challenging times islanders see the upside of the LT as even more important as they enjoy the outdoors on an island they love. Because the LT owns its own building and rents (modest fees) to (mostly nfp) other island organizations, our physical presence is a given. We get calls asking about anything and everything!

And the timing for the LT on Vashon-Maury Island is excellent, as there is new zeal for protecting green spaces and shoreline at the King County level, and it so happens that Vashon-Maury Island has significant disproportionate amounts of what is left of both in King County. Vashon-Maury Island plays a key role in the entire Puget Sound/Salish Sea ecosystem, and thus funding has been accessible strategically through the years.

It should also be mentioned that Vashon-Maury Island is a sophisticated art colony, so in addition to the exceptional lifestyle possibilities there are wonderful and broad creative artistic outlets, encompassing the visual as well as the performing arts, right up to our very own highly regarded Vashon Opera. Who knew?

Right now, the Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust is looking for an Executive Director, and it is important to convey all the challenges and benefits, and opportunities and advantages of this key role. To find out more, please visit the Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust web site, where the position description is posted. We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Mary Frances Lyons