

RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

What is the Conservation Reserve Fund?

Richmond voters established the Fund and its usage policy in 2005 to enable the Town to better participate in important conservation projects. It supports property owners, non-profits and community volunteer groups in developing and implementing projects to protect important local natural, agricultural and historic resources. It also enables the Town to act quickly on conservation opportunities through an open public process. Since its inception voters have supported the CRF with a penny on the tax rate (\$10 per \$100,000 of property valuation). The Fund is voted upon annually. In 2022 the vote was 844-247 in favor of renewal.

How has the CRF been used?

As shown on the reverse, the Fund has supported numerous important conservation projects ranging from Town forests to protecting recreational treasures, working farms and historic preservation.

Why was the Fund created?

In a growing town like ours, conservation opportunities can arise at any time – and just as rapidly disappear, often forever. This can make it hard to plan for or quickly find the significant amounts of money needed today to conserve important and vulnerable resources. Richmond's Fund continues to enable the Conservation Commission, Selectboard and the public to carefully review and still quickly act on key conservation opportunities.

The Fund has also greatly reduced our Town's costs of conservation. Many state, federal and private conservation funders require communities to share in project costs to show that voters support conservation. Voter-financed funds such as ours provide the needed proof, qualifying projects for very significant additional funding. So far, every dollar Richmond taxpayers have invested in conservation has generated \$3.58 in project funding from other sources – over \$1.85 million in all.

How are funding decisions made?

Proposals are made to the Conservation Commission, which assesses their compliance with the funding criteria. The Selectboard makes the final decisions after considering the Conservation Commission's recommendations. Both bodies deliberate in public sessions. For funding any land acquisitions by the Town exceeding \$20,000, direct voter approval is required.

What does the Fund cost taxpayers?

By adding one cent to the **municipal tax rate (1.3%)**, renewing the Fund would cost taxpayers \$10 for every \$100,000 of a property's assessment. That would generate an estimated **\$48,128** for important conservation projects across town.

Does conserving land raise or lower property taxes overall?

An expert on Vermont tax policy, Deborah Brighton, has researched this and shown how conserving land helps keep property taxes in check. She says, "Open space tends to require few public services. More people tend to require more public services, resulting in higher taxes."

Furthermore, nearly all conserved land in Richmond, being privately held, continues generating tax revenues. (The exceptions are the Town-owned Andrews Community Forest, the Stage Road Community Forest and Overrockers Park. To qualify for public funds, landowners usually must guarantee public access to conserved land as warranted for hiking, hunting, fishing, skiing and other activities (one exception being land used for agriculture or livestock grazing).

What kinds of new projects does the Conservation Commission foresee?

The Conservation Commission is planning a speaker series covering a variety of conservation and recreation topics, and occasional stipends may be required. Other requests may be presented for review at any time.

The Conservation Reserve Fund positions Richmond to consider and act on opportunities fairly, efficiently and in a timely way. It's also living, dollars-and-cents proof that our community embraces conservation, helping attract and qualify Richmond for major funding from foundations, government agencies and other potentially large donors.

See the full list of CRF-funded projects the next page. More information on them:

<http://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/>

Please vote on or before March 7

Mail-in ballots are available from the Town Clerk at lp@richmondvt.gov or (802) 434-2221. Or vote in person on March 7 at the Town Center, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

	Project	Project Leader	Description	CRF \$	Add'l \$ Generated
2009	Bombardier Meadow	Rich. Land Trust	10-acre hayfield on Cochran Rd., with wooded banks on the Huntington and Winooski River	\$51,500	\$77,000
	Large Habitat Block Study	Rich. Cons. Commission	Mapped large blocks of uplands wildlife habitat and connectivity among them	\$2,400	-
201	Town Center Portico Renovation	Town of Rich.	Roof and other structural repairs	\$35,265	\$65,035
	Richmond Hill Cemetery	Town of Rich.	10-foot deeded path to historic cemetery	\$2,500	-
2012	Andrews Farmland	Vt. Land Trust	187 acres of prime agricultural soils along the Winooski River	\$10,000	\$197,500
2013	Science-to-Action Project	Rich. Planning and Conservation Commissions	Identify public conservation priorities, and inventory/confirm key habitat locations to improve planning & zoning processes	\$3,195	\$88,525
2014	Window restoration at Congregational Church	Rich. Cong. Church	Protect 100-year-old stained glass windows	\$6,564	\$12,423
	Willis Hill	Rich. Land Trust	20 acres on Rt. 2 at west of village, backing up to elementary and middle schools	\$64,000	\$122,500
2018	Andrews Community Forest	Vermont Land Trust	428 acres of rich wildlife habitat and educational resources, within one of Vermont's key forest blocks.	\$75,000	\$735,000
	Huntington Gorge	Rich. Land Trust, Vermont River Conserv'y	3.7 acres, dramatic 40-foot rocky gorge, popular swimming holes, site of early 20 th -cent. hydroelectric station	\$10,000	\$55,000
	Johnnie Brook Bridge	Rich. Trails Committee	Repair of a key link for hikers and bikers using the Cross Vt. Trail	\$1,000	\$400
	Lake Iroquois Plant Survey	Lake Iroquois Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,000	-
2019	Richmond Master Naturalist Program	UVM Extension	Support citizen-scientist training to inventory and monitor health of important habitat and other resources	\$4,000	-
	Volunteers Green Rip-Rap	Town of Rich.	Protect band shell, fields from bank erosion	\$20,000	\$117,200
	Andrews Forest Trails	Town of Rich.	Improve trail system, protect sensitive habitat	\$3,000	\$1,500
2020	Huntington Gorge River Steward	Rich. Land Trust, Vt. River Conservancy	Fund part-time steward to educate Gorge_ visitors on safety, stewardship and site history	\$1,500	\$5,000
	Volunteers Green Tree Planting	Town of Rich.	Mitigate beaver damage to riverbank trees	\$200	-
	Stage Rd. Town Forest	Rich. Land Trust	Conserve rich forest within the Chitt. County Uplands Conservation Project	\$3,500	-
	Johnnie Brook Bridge	Town of Rich.	Repair flood-damage on Cross Vt. Trail	\$8,400	-
2021	Emerald Ash Borer Control	Town of Rich.	Phase 1 of project to manage impending ash tree losses	\$20,000	\$15,000
	Andrews Forest Trails and Benches	Eagle Scouts	Build benches using timber logged on-site; expand trails below power lines	\$500	
	Volunteers Green Habitat Restoration	Town of Rich.		\$15,000	\$35,000
	Volunteers Green Tree Plantings	Town of Rich.	Widen treed buffer between river and fields	-	\$500
	Community Garden	Town of Rich.	Establish garden on donated land	\$2,000	
	Overrockers Permitting	Town of Rich.	Delineate wetlands for state permit	\$2,500	
	Beeken Preserve Engineering Survey	Rich. Land Trust	Assess erosion threat to Cochran Rd. and costs for improving parking facilities	\$2,500	
	Lake Iroquois Plant Survey	L.I. Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,200	\$3,200
2022	Riverside Trail Work	Town of Rich.	Replace failing bridges on hiking/biking trail	\$9,500	
	Emerald Ash Borer Control	Town of Rich.	Mill and process for firewood downed ash trees	\$5,000	
	Bombardier Engineering Study	Rich. Land Trust	Improve off-road parking and river access	\$625	
	Beeken Preserve Riverside Bench	Rich. Land Trust	Co-fund Gary Beckwith's bench installation project	\$300	\$250
	Andrews Forest Trail Review	Town of Rich.	Check in summer for rare plants along proposed trails	\$3590	
	Gillett Pond	Rich. Land Trust	Replace aging dam	\$150,000	\$325,000
			TOTAL	\$517,739	\$1,856,033

CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND PROJECT MAP

