

Town of Richmond, Vermont

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**Conservation Reserve Fund Policy**

**Overview and Guidelines**

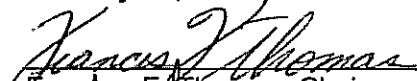
**Conservation Reserve Fund Application Process**

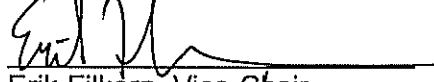
**Conservation Reserve Fund Application Form**

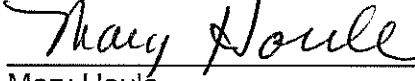
Effective Date

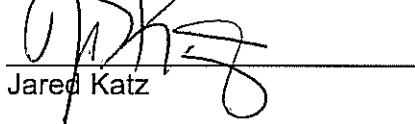
This policy shall become effective upon approval by both the Richmond Selectboard and Richmond Conservation Commission.

*Approved by vote of the  
Richmond Selectboard  
On July 18, 2005*

  
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Frances F. Thomas, Chair

  
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Erik Filkorn, Vice-Chair

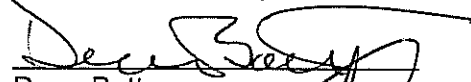
  
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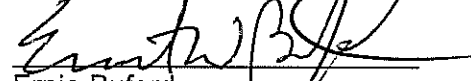
  
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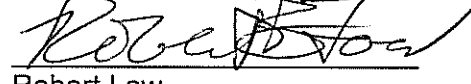
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K. Peter Parent

*Approved by  
Richmond Conservation Commission*

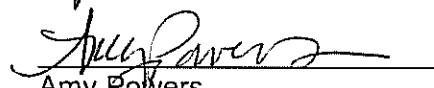
  
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Alison Lane Anand, Chair

  
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Dean Batt

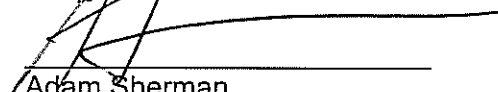
  
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Ernie Buford

  
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Robert Low

  
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Jennifer Poehlman

  
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Amy Powers

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Cindy Schaefer

  
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Adam Sherman

## **Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund Policy Overview and Guidelines**

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### **I. Authority and Background**

The Fund is a dedicated reserve fund established under 24 V.S.A. §2804, and shall be known as the Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund. It was created by a vote on Town Meeting Day, 2005, by Richmond voters approving a one-cent increase in the tax rate to support the fund each year for five years beginning with fiscal 2005/2006. The article establishing the Fund specifies that the "Selectboard will administer the fund after considering recommendations by the Conservation Commission. Any acquisition of a parcel of real estate by the Town, meaning acquisition of a whole parcel and not solely its development rights, requiring in excess of \$20,000.00 from the reserve fund will require approval of the voters."

### **II. Purposes of the Conservation Reserve Fund**

This Fund has been established to benefit both current residents and future generations as our town grows and the demands and pressures on important but limited resources grow. It was created "for the purpose of preserving water quality, providing outdoor recreational opportunities, protecting wildlife, and conserving important natural, agricultural and historic resources."

Examples of projects meeting those guidelines include but are not limited to those that would help:

- Protect key ground and surface waters from runoff and other contamination
- Establish and maintain hiking trails
- Promote working farms and forests by keeping land in private hands and preserving traditional land uses, such as family farming
- Permanently preserve public access to land valued for hiking, fishing, hunting, skiing, biking and other types of affordable outdoor recreation, as appropriate for each individual parcel and its setting
- Safeguard and maintain healthy populations of wildlife by planting sources of food and shelter, and protecting movement corridors
- Conserve historic sites and structures
- Provide settings where children can learn directly about the environment and local history
- Maintain Richmond's rural character, historical heritage, beautiful scenery, economic viability and quality of life

### **III. Criteria for the Use of this Fund**

The following criteria shall be used to qualify and rank projects for receiving allocations from the Fund by providing sound and consistent information for decision-making. No project is expected to meet all criteria, and no single criterion is intended to exclude a proposal for using the Fund from consideration.

#### **A. General Criteria**

1. Contributes toward the acquisition or permanent protection of natural, agricultural or historical resources in and of importance to Richmond.
2. Will yield a clear, sustainable benefit to Richmond residents in the form of permanently preserving or improving water quality, wildlife, recreational, historic, cultural, scenic or environmental values, including the preservation of significant natural, agricultural and historic resources.
3. Will help the Town of Richmond meet natural resources planning goals identified in the Richmond Town Plan or other representative community forum
4. Will protect, enhance and provide public access to a natural resource or recreation area.
5. Is directed at threatened resources.
6. Expands an existing, protected resource, including those that benefit not only Richmond but also neighboring communities and those beyond.
7. Attracts and leverages funds from other sources.

#### **B. Natural Resources Protection Criteria**

1. Preserves river, stream and wetland quality.
2. Significantly reduces point or non-point source pollution to ground or surface water by protecting an area from development.
3. Provides a naturally vegetated buffer zone around or between significant wetlands, streams or rivers, and human activities.
4. Preserves or restores biodiversity by providing areas for wildlife to live, feed and reproduce.
5. Provides a corridor linking wildlife habitats.
6. Maintains woodlands, meadows or pastures.
7. Supports low- or no-cost outdoor recreational activities, such as fishing, hiking, skiing, hunting, swimming, canoeing, etc.
8. Preserves outstanding scenic views or is scenic itself.
9. Preserves forest resources and a working landscape by means of a sustainable management plan.

#### **C. Agricultural Resources Protection Criteria**

1. Includes prime agricultural soils that are most ideal for development and therefore most in need of protection.
2. Contiguous with a working farm and contributing to the protection of a significant area of open agricultural land for family farming or forestry.
3. Has the potential to bring inactive farmland back into economically and ecologically sustainable production, or to bring unmanaged forestland under similarly sustainable management.

4. Includes a land protection agreement as part of a plan to revitalize or diversify an existing farming operation, or to transfer a farming operation to a beginning farmer.
5. Farm buildings and equipment are suitable for their purpose and are in usable condition.
6. Uses local farm support services, including local businesses and employees.

**D. Historical Resources Protection Criteria**

1. Defines and maintains special landscape or setting.
2. Preserves, enhances and/or rehabilitates historical structures, features and character.
3. Excellent example of period craftsmanship with extensive exterior detail.
4. Very early example of its type, or a rare type that has undergone little change.
5. Represented an important central function in Richmond's past, or is associated with an important person, movement, industry or function.

**IV. Other Uses for the Fund**

Other uses include but are not limited to:

- A.** Pending conservation projects to:
  1. Leverage matching funds from other sources.
  2. Pay for costs not covered by grant applications, i.e. legal and consultant fees, survey and evaluation costs, and other expenses associated with the process of conservation.
  3. Fund deposits for Purchase & Sales Agreements.
- B.** Finance loans when a federal, State or private foundation grant for a specific conservation project has been officially approved, but the funds have not yet been received by the Town of Richmond for this project.
- C.** Restoring a damaged natural resource on conserved or Town-owned land.
- D.** Recreation trail development and maintenance on conserved lands and Town-owned lands or right-of-ways, when in compliance with the management plans for those lands.

**V. Structure and Decision-making**

Prior to undertaking any of the activities listed in Article III, the Richmond Conservation Commission shall make a recommendation to the Richmond Selectboard, setting out its reasons. This will require providing the public with opportunities to comment on the proposed project as well as consulting with experts who have specialized knowledge relating to the project. Action must be approved by a majority of Selectboard members. Any acquisition of real estate by the Town, meaning acquisition of a whole parcel and not solely its development rights, requiring in excess of \$20,000.00 from the reserve fund will require approval of the voters.

## **VI. Funding**

The Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund may, through the Richmond Conservation Commission, apply for and accept:

- A. Funds allocated by a vote at Town Meeting or a special town-wide meeting.
- B. Funds from voluntary contributions, fund-raising activities or grants from public or private sources.
- C. Gifts of cash and securities or pledges designated to benefit certain projects or certain parcels to be conserved.
- D. Gifts of cash and securities or pledges to support criteria listed in Article III of this document.
- E. Gifts of land, structures or preservation agreements when such gifts fall within the criteria listed in Article III of this document.
- F. Interest as it accumulates on deposited funds.

## **VII. Amendments of this Document**

Amendments to this document may be made following a majority vote of the Richmond Conservation Commission and a majority vote of the Richmond Selectboard.

## **Conservation Reserve Fund Application Process**

1. Requests for allocations from the Conservation Reserve Fund must be presented in writing to the chair of the Richmond Conservation Commission via the application form. The Town may set application deadline dates.
2. Proposed projects must address and support the intended purpose of the Fund toward supporting the acquisition or permanent protection of natural or historical resources in Richmond. Refer to the criteria listed in the document "Conservation Reserve Fund – Overview and Guidelines."
3. Conservation Commission members will review applications and make recommendations to the Selectboard regarding the appropriateness and feasibility of proposed conservation projects.
4. Based on recommendations from the Conservation Commission, the Selectboard will determine whether to proceed with consideration of proposed conservation projects.
5. A duly warned public meeting by the Selectboard will be held to solicit community input regarding the conservation projects selected.
6. No acquisition of a parcel of real estate by the Town (meaning acquisition of a whole parcel and not solely its development rights ) requiring more than \$20,000 from the Reserve Fund shall be made without approval of the voters. The Selectboard will make the final determination for all other expenditures from the Fund.

## Conservation Reserve Fund Application Form

*Please describe the attributes of your proposal and its advantages to Richmond by following the outline detailed below. Please limit each answer to one-half page.*

### **Property/Project description**

Describe the property or project work. Attach relevant site plans, photographs, deed restrictions, comments from neighbors, planning/zoning approvals, etc.

### **Project significance and the extent to which it address the purposes of the Fund and the criteria for its use**

Every proposal should address the degree to which it meets the "General" criteria as listed in the document "Conservation Reserve Fund – Overview and Guidelines." Proposals should also address all relevant criteria from the same document under the categories of Natural Resources, Agricultural Resources and Historic Resources. No single criterion is intended to exclude a proposal from consideration.

### **Project schedule**

Give a timetable for closing dates and/or completion of project work. Attach relevant documents such as draft preservation agreements, cost estimates, appraisals, and a purchase and sale agreement if one exists.

### **Project partners**

What matching contributions are included in the project? What is the value of any local in-kind services or other resources involved? What restrictions will any partners place on use or management of the property?

### **Financial information**

Please include an itemized budget. Is the allocation requested in one lump sum or over a period of years? How will accounting and fiscal records be maintained in accord with generally established accounting procedures, or other accounting procedures that may be established by the Town of Richmond and other project partners? Also include certification that within four months of completion of the project you will submit complete documentation of the costs covered by the Fund.

### **Long-term plans**

What long-term plans and funding are in place for the ownership, stewardship and management of this resource to protect its conservation values?