

RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

What is the Conservation Reserve Fund?

Richmond voters established the Fund in 2005 so the Town could better participate in important conservation projects. It allows Richmond to quickly work with willing property owners, non-profits and community volunteer groups to protect important local natural, agricultural and historic resources.

For 15 years the Fund has been supported by a penny on the tax rate (\$10 per \$100,000 of property valuation per year). Voters must renew it annually. The last vote was 693-223 to renew. The next vote comes on March 3, 2020.

How has the CRF been used?

As the reverse side shows, the fund has supported important conservation projects ranging from our new Town Forest to the protection of working farms, recreational treasures and preservation of historic sites.

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 to conserve important, vulnerable resources. Richmond's fund enables the Conservation Commission, Selectboard and the public to carefully review and still act quickly on key conservation opportunities.

Having a fund also reduces the 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 significant additional funding. So far, every dollar Richmond taxpayers have invested in conservation has generated \$4.93 in funding from other sources – over \$1.4 million in all.

How are funding decisions made?

Proposals are made to the Conservation Commission, and the Selectboard makes the final decision after considering the Conservation Commission's recommendations. Deliberations of both bodies are held in public sessions. Any land acquisitions by the Town over \$20,000 must be approved by voters.

What does the fund cost taxpayers?

One cent on the tax rate per year, equal to \$10 for every \$100,000 of a property's assessment. Though amounting about 1.4% of the FY20 Richmond's tax rate, that penny generated \$46,465 in FY 2019/2020.

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 Andrews Community Forest and the Stage Road Community Forest, as they are owned by the Town.) Landowners usually must agree to let the public use conserved land for hiking, hunting, fishing, skiing and other activities (with the exception of land being used for agriculture or livestock grazing).

What kinds of new projects does the Conservation Commission foresee?

Applications now in the "pipeline" or likely to be so include conservation of the Stage Road Town Forest, Volunteers Green's riverbank stabilization, and a new dam needed to save Gillett Pond. Other projects may be proposed at any time, as was the case with the Andrews Community Forest. The Conservation Reserve Fund positions Richmond to consider and act on opportunities fairly, efficiently and in a timely manner. It also shows the Town's commitment to conservation, helping qualify Richmond for major funding from foundations, agencies and other large donors.

Complete project list on reverse. More information:

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

Please Vote on March 3. Polls open 7am-7pm at Camels Hump Middle School. Early voting ballots available from Town Clerk.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

Project	Resources Conserved	Project Leader	Description	Town Funding	Additional \$\$ Generated
Bombardier Meadow (2009)	Recreation, habitat, water quality, scenic, agriculture	Richmond Land Trust	10-acre hayfield on Cochran Rd., with wooded banks on the Huntington and Winooski River	\$51,500	\$77,000 (Vt. Housing and Conservation Board)
Large Habitat Block Study (2009)	Habitat	Richmond Conservation Commission	Mapped large blocks of uplands wildlife habitat and connectivity among them	\$2,400	-
Town Center Portico Renovation (2010)	Historic	Town of Richmond	Roof and other structural repairs	\$35,265	\$65,035
Richmond Hill Cemetery (2010)	Historic	Town of Richmond	10-foot deeded path needed for access to historic cemetery	\$2,500	-
Andrews Farmland (2012)	Agriculture, economic, scenic	Vt. Land Trust	187 acres of prime agricultural soils along the Winooski River	\$10,000	\$197,500
Science-to-Action Project (2013)	Habitat, water quality	Richmond Planning and Conservation Commissions	Identify public conservation priorities, and inventory/confirm key habitat locations to improve planning & zoning processes	\$3,195	\$88,525 (includes in-kind service donations)
Window restoration at Congregational Church (2014)	Historic	Richmond Congregational Church	Protected 100-year-old stained glass windows	\$6,564	\$12,423
Willis Hill (2014)	Recreation, education, water quality, habitat, scenic	Richmond Land Trust	20 acres on Rt. 2 at western entrance to village, backing up to elementary and middle schools	\$64,000	\$67,500 (Vt. Housing and Conservation Board) \$55,000 (private donors)
Andrews Community Forest (2018)	Habitat, recreation, pastures, timberland, watershed quality, education, scenic	Vermont Land Trust	428 acres of publicly accessible forest with rich wildlife habitat and educational resources, located within one of Vermont's most important forest blocks.	\$75,000	\$735,000
Huntington Gorge (2018)	Recreation, scenic, historic	Richmond Land Trust, Vermont River Conservancy	3.7 acres, including a dramatic 40-foot rocky gorge with popular swimming holes below, and the site of an early 20 th -century generating station	\$10,000	\$55,000
Johnny Brook Bridge (2018)	Recreation	Richmond Trails Committee	Repair of a key link for hikers and bikers using the Cross Vt. Trail	\$1,000	\$400
Lake Iroquois Plant Survey (2018)	Water quality, recreation, habitat	Lake Iroquois Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,000	-
Richmond Master Naturalist Program (2019)	Wildlife habitat, forest health, water quality	UVM Extension	Support for a group of citizen-scientists trained to inventory and monitor the health of important habitat and other resources	\$4,000	-
Volunteers Green Rip-Rap (2019)	Soil, recreation, historic	Town of Richmond	Armor-plate the Winooski River bank against erosion threatening Town recreational resources	\$20,000	\$117,200
TOTAL SPENT & ADDITIONAL FUNDS GENERATED				\$287,424	\$1,415,583

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