

# **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 more than 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. Last year's vote was 1304-392 in favor of renewal. The next vote comes on March 2, 2021.

## **How has the CRF been used?**

As the reverse side shows, the Fund has supported numerous important conservation projects ranging from our 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 \$4.81 in funding from other sources – over \$1.4 million in all.

## **How are funding decisions made?**

Proposals are made to the Conservation Commission. The Selectboard makes the final decisions after considering the Conservation Commission's recommendations. Both bodies deliberate in public sessions. Voters must approve using the Fund for any land acquisitions by the Town over \$20,000.

## **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. In our last fiscal year (2020/2021), that amounted to 1.35% of Richmond's tax rate, though it generated \$47,354 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 Andrews Community Forest and the Stage Road Community Forest, as they are Town-owned.) 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?**

Applications now in the "pipeline" or likely to be so include an emerald ash borer control project, trail improvements along the Winooski River, and saving Gillett Pond by helping fund a new dam. Other projects may be proposed at any time, as was the case with the Andrews Community Forest.

Richmond's Conservation Reserve Fund positions our town 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 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 or before March 2.** Polls open 7am-7pm at Camels Hump Middle School. Early voting ballots available from Town Clerk.

## SUPPORTED PROJECTS: RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

Project	Resources Conserved	Project Leader	Description	CRF \$\$	Additional \$\$ Generated
Bombardier Meadow (2009)	Farmland, scenic, recreation, habitat, water quality	Richmond Land Trust	10-acre hayfield on Cochran Rd., with wooded banks on the Huntington and Winooski River	\$51,500	\$77,000 (VHCB)
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 (VHCB) \$55,000 (private donors)
Andrews Community Forest (2018)	Habitat, water quality, forestry, recreation, education	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 (2018)	Recreation, scenic, historic	Richmond Land Trust, Vermont River Conservancy	3.7 acres, dramatic 40-foot rocky gorge, popular swimming holes, site of early 20 <sup>th</sup> -cent. hydroelectric station	\$10,000	\$55,000
Johnnie 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 citizen-scientist training 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 riverbank to protect against Town infrastructure	\$20,000	\$117,200
Andrews Forest Trails (2019)	Recreation, habitat	Town of Richmond	Improve trail system, protect sensitive habitat	\$3,000	\$1,500
Huntington Gorge River Steward (2020)	Recreation, scenic, historic	Richmond Land Trust, Vt. Rivers Conservancy	Fund part-time steward to educate visitors on safety, stewardship and site history	\$1,500	\$5,000
Volunteers Green Tree Planting (2020)	Recreation, water quality, historic	Town of Richmond	Tree plantings and protections to mitigate beaver damage	\$200	-
Stage Rd. Town Forest (2020)	Habitat, recreation		Conserve rich forest within the Chitt. County Uplands Conservation Project	\$4500	
Johnnie Brook Bridge (2020)	Recreation	Town of Richmond	Repair flood-damaged bridge on Cross Vt. Trail	\$8,400	-
<b>TOTAL CRF SPENT &amp; MATCHING FUNDS GENERATED</b>				<b>\$308,724</b>	<b>\$1,465,833</b>

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