

The RCC recommends approval of the application from the Andrews Forest Committee to cover cost of improvements to the Forest access road and trail, in an amount not to exceed \$3,700, as described in its application dated n12/1/20, funding to sunset three years from date of final approval. In doing so, RCC recognizes that the application responds to a number of CRF criteria as described in the application. RCC also recognizes a cost-share in that the town is donating the required culverts.

Conservation Reserve Fund Application

12/1/20

Applicant:

Andrews Community Forest Committee

Applicant Contact:

Ethan Tapper, Chittenden County Forester

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Purposes of the Project:

The goal of this project is to improve a section of existing access road/trail on the Andrews Community Forest to support sustainable recreation access and ecological forest management.. This will consist of ditching, adding material and adding cross-drainage to the trail.

Total Amount Requested:

\$3,700.00

Context:

A demonstration forest management project is underway at the Andrews Community Forest. As part of that project, a section of historic VAST trail and “farm” road is being used to transport timber from the woods to the “log landing.” It is becoming increasingly apparent that this trail is unstable and needs improvements for its utility for forestry access.

At the same time, the ACF is in the process of engaging in a project to design and install a trail system that provides for responsible recreational usage and access to the property while respecting ecological values and resources. This trail is an important access to the eastern portion of the ACF that will primarily be a recreational access following the completion of forest management in 2021.

One of the recommendations made by a variety of sources for increasing the *resilience* of our forests to climate change consists of improving forest access infrastructure, with the idea that winters are likely to become milder (no longer reliably affording us frozen ground conditions critical to forest management) and that precipitation events are likely to increase in severity and frequency. This is both a threat the culture and the character of our working landscape and our rural economy, and to natural resources like soil health and water quality. We may need to invest in the infrastructure as a means of allowing us to manage and protect these resources responsibly under adverse or inconsistent conditions.

In the case of this specific project, our short-term fear is that, in the event of a mild winter, this section of trail will remain wet and unfrozen, impeding our ability to complete the forest management work prescribed in the Andrews Community Forest’s Forest Management Plan. In the long-term, our fear is that this section of trail will impede general/recreational access to the ACF while causing water quality and erosion concerns.

This project, in addition to fixing a problem, also presents us with an opportunity -- to showcase this type of trail improvement, which will likely become increasingly common on working lands in the future. The Chittenden County Forester will lead an outreach effort (as part of his broader effort to showcase the

forest management project at the ACF) to showcase and celebrate this work, and use it to create resources helpful to other forestland owners and managers. The forest management project at the ACF has already taken great efforts to engage the public, with many virtual events, videos, blog and Front Porch Forum posts, articles, press releases, interpretive signage and a self-guided virtual tour.

This project aligns with the purposes of the Conservation Reserve Fund in the Conservation Reserve Fund Policy dated July 18, 2005 in the following ways:

- *Protect ground and surface waters from runoff and contaminations.*
 - o This project will improve drainage on the trails, buffering them from the potential erosion and siltation concerns that could arise as a result of the increased frequency of very heavy precipitation events in the future.
- *Establish and maintain hiking trails;*
 - o The section of trail in question provides easy access to the eastern portion of the ACF, and will be used primarily as a recreational trail following the completion of the forest management project in 2021. Stability and drainage will benefit long-term recreational usage, in addition to forest management.
- *Promote working forests and preserving traditional land uses.*
 - o The demonstration forest management project at the ACF highlights the importance of responsible forest management, making the ACF's forests more complex and diverse while celebrating local, renewable resources that benefit residents of Richmond and surrounding communities. This specific part of the project will be an asset to this end by both improving the durability of forest management access to the ACF and using this project to provide a model for other forestland owners to follow.
- *Maintain Richmond's rural character, historical heritage, beautiful scenery, economic viability and quality of life;*
 - o This project protects the health of the ACF and its utility as a recreational, scenic and economic resource to the Richmond community and its contribution as part of one of the largest intact forest blocks in Vermont. It does so at an even larger scale by demonstrating these things in an open, inclusive and transparent way, preserving these qualities region-wide.

Criteria for Use of this Fund.

- **A. General Criteria**
 2. *Will yield a clear, sustainable benefit to Richmond residents in the form of permanently preserving or improving water quality, recreational, cultural and environmental resources.*
 - This project will lower the risk of erosion from the section of trail in questions, which would negatively impact water quality;
 - This project will protect both environmental and recreational resources by improving the quality of access to the ACF for both recreation and forestry;
 - This project will benefit the culture of Richmond by protecting the working landscape.
 3. *Will protect, enhance and provide public access to a natural resource or recreation area.*
 - This project will enhance recreational and forestry access to the ACF.
- **B. Natural Resources Protection Criteria:**
 1. *Preserves river, stream or wetland quality;*

- a. As stated above, this will protect streams and wetlands from pollution and siltation as a result of erosion;

7. *Supports low or no-cost recreational activities.*

- b. As stated above, this will improve long-term recreational access to the ACF for all types of use.

9. *Preserves forest resources and a working landscape;*

- c. As stated above, this will protect the ACF as a working forest, and improve the functionality of the working landscape in the region in its use as a demonstration forest.

Other uses of the fund:

- *A. Restoring a damaged natural resource on conserved or Town-owned land;*
 - o The trails at the Andrews Community Forest are generally in need of stabilization and better drainage, resulting in erosion and possible pollution of the ACF’s waterways. This project will aim to repair the “damaged” access infrastructure in this portion of the ACF.
- *D. Recreation trail development and maintenance on conserved lands and Town-owned lands*
 - o As stated above, this project will have positive impacts on trail stability for both forestry and long-term recreational use.

Itemized Budget:

Excavator rental: 2 days @ \$300/day = \$600
Excavator mobilization: \$200
Gravel: 7 loads @ \$400/load = \$2,800
Geotextile fabric: 100’ @ \$1/foot = \$100

Total: \$3,700.00

Project Breakdown:

- Establish ditches uphill sides of road (~ 1,500’);
- Improve and add waterbars to length of trail;
- Install 100’ of geotextile fabric and add gravel to cover;
- Install longer convert at VAST trail junction with farm road and cover with material;
- Install temporary culvert crossing in stream crossing;
- Add gravel to soft sections of trail.