

March 7, 2021

Richmond Conservation Commission
c/o Judy Rosovsky, Chair
via email

Re: Conservation Reserve Fund Application for Richmond Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan

Dear Commissioners,

Richmond's Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Taskforce has been preparing for the impending arrival of the non-native insect since 2019. These preparedness efforts proved timely: EAB was detected just north of Richmond's village during the fall of 2020. The EAB Taskforce is committed to proactively addressing the ongoing EAB invasion and has developed a comprehensive, multi-year response plan. The plan's overarching vision is *to maintain the beauty, character, and shady canopy cover of our town's historic village, major recreation corridors, and roads while ensuring public safety and the myriad ecological functions that healthy, diverse trees afford*. The plan seeks to do so in a swift, strategic manner to minimize the inevitable costs borne by Richmond, and we seek support from the Conservation Reserve Fund to carry out this plan.

The plan (enclosed) entails both treating and removing ash within the village and surrounding area (including the entrance to Andrews Community forest, a CRF-supported town acquisition) as well as replanting a diversity of species. Useable wood will be milled and put to use by local woodworkers; chipped wood will be applied as mulch to recent plantings in Volunteers Green. These activities will commence this spring and will largely be completed by the end of May. Active outreach efforts, including an informational postcard mailed to every Richmond resident, will continue over the coming years as the town implements this response plan.

Collectively, the EAB response plan meet multiple CRF criteria:

- *Contributes toward the protection of natural resource in and of importance to Richmond.*
- *Yields a clear, sustainable benefit to Richmond residents in the form of preserving scenic and environmental values (e.g., beauty, shade, habitat).*
- *Is directed at threatened resources.*
- *Preserves biodiversity.*
- *Attracts and leverages funds from other sources.*

The EAB Taskforce has already secured a \$15,000 grant from Vermont's Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program to put towards completing the first phase of the plan (treating or replacing ash trees within the village). The cost of this first phase will likely near or exceed \$30,000, per estimates of multiple ISA-certified tree service providers who have expressed their interest in carrying out this effort. Moreover, the UCF grant requires a match.

We thus request a CRF contribution to make that match, continuing the CRF's strong record of turning every dollar from Richmond taxpayers into nearly five times that. It is also important to note that the cost of responding to EAB (including over 1000 dead ash trees along Richmond's roads) will inevitably be borne by Richmond taxpayers over the coming decade. Proactively responding at this time will help minimize that cost, while capitalizing on external funding.

The EAB Task Force requests that the Richmond Conservation Commission grant us Conservation Reserve Funding, of an amount not to exceed \$20,000, to carry out the first phase of the EAB response plan.

We appreciate your consideration, and please let me know if you have any questions.



Caitlin Littlefield,
EAB Response Plan Coordinator
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EAB CRF Motion 030921

The Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC) enthusiastically recommends approval of the proposal from the Richmond Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Task Force, dated March 7, 2021, requesting up to \$20,000 in Conservation Reserve Funds to carry out the first phase of its EAB Response Plan, to cover the required match for the attached grant received from the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry (UCF) Program, together with anticipated costs based on estimates from multiple ISA-certified tree service providers. to sunset three years from date of approval.

In doing so RCC recognizes responsiveness to CRF priorities most particularly relating to protection of natural resources, scenic and environmental values, together with the leveraging it has permitted to obtain the UCF Program.

Richmond Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness and Response Plan

The Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC), town officials, and volunteers have been preparing for the impending arrival of emerald ash borer (EAB) since 2019 by, for example, inventorying ash trees along 20 miles of Richmond's road. These preparedness efforts proved timely: EAB was detected just north of Richmond's village during the fall of 2020. We, as members of the Richmond EAB Taskforce, are committed to proactively addressing the ongoing EAB invasion and set forth this preparedness and response plan.

Our vision is to maintain the beauty, character, and shady canopy cover of our town's historic village, major recreation corridors, and roads while ensuring public safety and the myriad ecological functions that healthy, diverse trees afford. We will pursue this vision in three phases, summarized here, with the timeline detailed in Tbl. 1:

Phase 1: Village Management and Resident Outreach

In **phase 1** of our plan, we will treat the most prominent ash within the village, around the iconic Round Church, along a riverside trail on municipal land, and at the entrance to our recently acquired town forest (Andrews Community Forest, ACF). Within the village, we will replace smaller or less healthy trees with a diversity of native species (Fig. 1). The EAB Taskforce will begin to solicit bids from ISA-certified tree service providers to complete this management in March 2021, with treatments, removals, and replacements to occur throughout spring 2021 (during the non-flight season of EAB). Tops and unusable wood will be chipped and applied as mulch in a riparian restoration project in Volunteers Green Park by EAB Taskforce volunteers. Local artisans and woodworkers will be identified to create chairs/benches for the Town Center and bowls to be raffled to the community. These efforts will be supported by volunteers and funded by a \$15,000 grant from the Vermont's Urban and Community Forestry Program and a requisite \$15,000 match (sought through the RCC's Conservation Reserve Fund).

Implementation of Phase 1 will be accompanied by public and landowner outreach efforts via multiple avenues. These include a webinar given by Chittenden County Forester Ethan Tapper regarding EAB at the ACF (September 2020), posts to Front Porch Forum, and updates at Selectboard meetings (public, but held remotely). Because we do not assume these virtual communications will reach all Richmond residents, we will also send an informational postcard to all postal patrons briefly explaining the town's response to EAB and management options for landowners (Fig. 2). As with other town communications sent via the mail, we will print postcards without individual addresses, pay bulk postage with the town's account, and provide the proper number of postcards by postal route to Richmond's Post Office, to be distributed to every mailbox by mail carriers.

Phase 2: On-going Removals on Richmond Roads

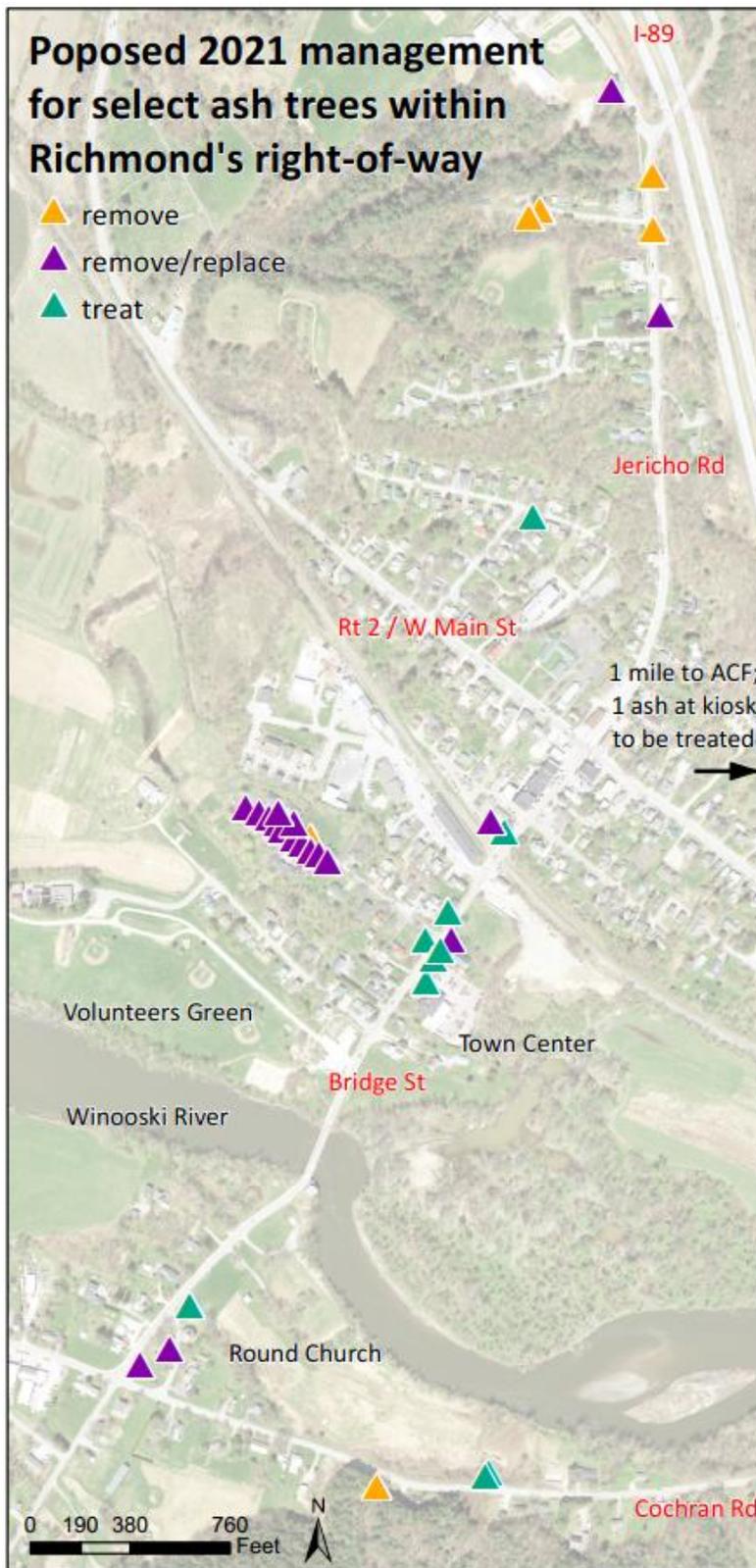
Phase 2 of our plan will unfold over the next five to ten years and will target all trees within the municipal right-of-way (ROW). An ash tree inventory conducted by volunteers during spring 2020 on over 20 miles of roads suggests there may be 1600-2000 ash trees along Richmond's 40 miles of roads. Tree density varies widely: some upland areas have 95-125 ash trees per road mile, while other stretches, particularly along fields and pastures have far fewer. Of the 874 trees inventoried, approximately 215 are 12-24" in diameter and 45 exceed 24" in diameter (Fig. 3).

In the fall 2021, Richmond will solicit bids from ISA-certified tree service providers for removal of the estimated 1600-2000 trees along the ROW. (Ongoing removals by electrical utilities, described below, may substantially reduce the number of trees that require removal.) Richmond aspires to enter into a contract with a tree service provider for removals to commence in late 2022 and proceed over subsequent years as needed. We will request funds for these removals in the FY23 municipal budget (to be voted on in March 2022 with a fiscal year start date of July 1, 2022) and consider inclusion in subsequent years' budgets as needed.

The number of trees Richmond may have to remove may be substantially reduced by the preemptive work of electrical utilities in powerline corridors. For example, Green Mountain Power (GMP) has been identifying trees that threaten powerlines and removing them since January 2021. That month, the GMP forester in charge of the utility's EAB response (Alan Serano) walked the village with EAB Task Force coordinator Caitlin Littlefield to ensure that GMP would not remove any trees slated for treatment, per this plan. For the few trees on Town property that GMP felled in January and February 2021, Richmond residents were able to enter a lottery to remove and use the wood (e.g., for firewood). This lottery was coordinated by town staff.

Phase 3: Andrews Community Forest EAB Management

Phase 3 of Richmond's response to EAB will unfold concurrently, on ACF. Active forest management is underway already. The forester overseeing that job (Chittenden County Forester Ethan Tapper) will continue to adjust removal targets to capture some ash value while maintaining ash representation throughout the forest (though it is a modest component already). The latter will maintain habitat, ensure genetic diversity (e.g., in case of inherent resistance to EAB), and enable ash tree recruitment post-outbreak. Public education efforts may include girdled/peeled trees, signage, and continued webinars and social media updates. Harvest adjustments and education efforts will be made in consultation with the ACF committee and in conformance with the Selectboard-approved ACF Management Plan.



Large, healthy tree on Baker St to be treated.



A dozen small ash planted at the same time that Church St neighborhood was developed will be replaced.



Healthy ash outside Town Center will be treated

Fig. 1. Proposed 2021 management for ash trees within Richmond's village and surrounding areas.

TREE-KILLING BEETLE IN RICHMOND

POSTAGE
PAID



The emerald ash borer (EAB) is a non-native, ½-inch long metallic green beetle that kills ash trees. EAB was detected in Richmond in 2020 and will pose a constant threat to ash trees here for many years to come. Trees in the woods, in yards, and along roads will all be affected. There are multiple management options for each ash tree, depending on its health and location.

What's Richmond doing? With support from VT's Urban and Community Forestry Program, the town developed a strategic plan to manage the ash trees within and near the village. Some unhealthy ash trees will be replaced with a mix of other species in spring 2021. Other ash trees that are important to preserve—for example, for shading or beauty—will be treated with a naturally-derived insecticide. Beyond the village, ash trees along Richmond's roads within the public right-of-way will be removed in coming years. Utilities like GMP have already been removing trees that threaten powerlines.

Own property? You have several options for managing your ash trees. If your trees are healthy, there are effective insecticide treatment options. A certified arborist can help you determine if that's a good strategy. Otherwise, you may consider removing unhealthy ash trees and replanting different species.

Manage forests? If you own or manage forestland, you might harvest more ash than you would otherwise. But consider leaving some ash in your woods unless it's a safety hazard (e.g., along a trail). Dead trees provide important habitat, and a small percentage of trees may have genetic resistance to EAB. By leaving some ash in your woods, you increase the likelihood of resistant trees passing on their genes and supporting the species' eventual recovery.

Whatever you do, be sure that no ash wood leaves the area so we can slow the spread of EAB.

Find more info on EAB at www.vtinvasives.org/eab

Find a certified arborist at www.TreesAreGood.org/findanarborist

Figure 2. Front and back of draft postcard to be delivered to all postal patrons in Richmond spring 2021.

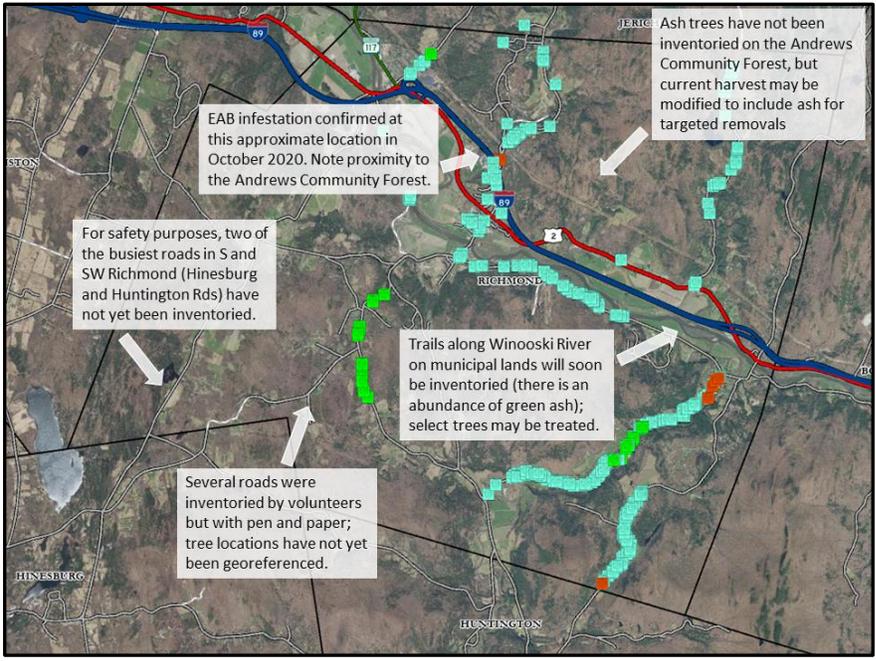


Figure 3. Map from Vermont’s Agency of Natural Resources GIS portal shows locations of inventoried ash trees in Richmond. Red markers are trees identified as leaning into the road. Management for teal trees is yet to be determined, except for those in the village center. (That is the case for green trees, as well, which were labeled mistakenly).

Phase	Objective	Task	Point person	Date
1 - Village, outreach	Remove, replace	Solicit bids from ISA-certified tree service professionals.	Littlefield	1-Mar-21
1 - Village, outreach	Remove, replace	Enter into contract with selected tree service provider	Littlefield, Arneson	1-Apr-21
1 - Village, outreach	Remove, replace	Identify local artisans/woodworkers to produce chairs/benches (for Town Center) or bowls (for raffle) with usable wood	Littlefield, RCC	1-Apr-21
1 - Village, outreach	Remove, replace	Tree service provider commences removals and replacements	Littlefield, Leonetti, Hamerslough	1-May-21
1 - Village, outreach	Remove, replace	Tops and unusable wood is applied as mulch to riparian restoration area in Volunteers Green	Kart, Hamerslough	1-May-21
1 - Village, outreach	Remove, replace	Monitoring and watering of planted trees	Littlefield, Leonetti, Hamerslough	ongoing, after May 2021
1 - Village, outreach	Treatments	Tree service provider commences treatments	Littlefield, Rosovsky	15-Jan-21
1 - Village, outreach	Outreach	Prepare and send informational postcard to all Richmond households	Littlefield, RCC	1-Apr-21
1 - Village, outreach	Funding	Submit invoice to UCF for allowable 1/3 grant (upon signing of grant agreement)	Littlefield, Arneson	1-Mar-21
1 - Village, outreach	Funding	Submit invoice to UCF for allowable 1/3 grant (at project mid-point)	Littlefield, Arneson	1-Jul-21
1 - Village, outreach	Funding	Prepare comprehensive CRF application for \$15k match	Littlefield	1-Jul-21
1 - Village, outreach	Funding	Submit invoice for balance of UCF grant with verification of payment of all expenses	Littlefield, Arneson	15-Jan-22
1 - Village, outreach	Funding	Request funds from CRF to continue treating trees	Littlefield	ongoing, after 2021
2 - ROW	Removals	Solicit bids for removal of all trees within ROW	Gosselin	1-Nov-21
2 - ROW	Funding	Establish annual line item in town budget based on bids	Arneson	15-Jan-22
2 - ROW	Removals	Tree service provider removes 15-20% each yr over 5-7 yrs during non-flight season (October - May)	Gosselin, Arneson	ongoing, after Jan 2022
3 - ACF	Manage ash	Ongoing and future harvests to be modified: more ash may be removed but many retained for wildlife habitat and any inherent EAB resistance	Tapper	ongoing