

RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

What is the Conservation Reserve Fund?

Richmond voters established the Fund in 2005 to help our Town to take better advantage of important conservation opportunities. The CRF supports property owners, non-profits and community volunteer groups working to conserve local natural, agricultural and historic resources. It enables the Town to consider and act quickly and decisively on worthy projects. Since its inception voters have supported the CRF with a penny on the tax rate (\$10 per \$100,000 of property valuation). The Fund is voted upon annually. Last year the vote was 1014-420 in favor of renewal.

How has the CRF been used?

The CRF has supported many important projects throughout town, including protecting sensitive wildlife habitats, maintaining and expanding recreational opportunities, and conserving working farms and historic sites and structures.

Why was the Fund created?

In a growing town like ours, conservation opportunities can arise at any time. They can just as rapidly disappear, too 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 CRF 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 projects has generated \$3.86 in funding from other sources – over \$2.2 million in all.

How are funding decisions made?

Proposals are made to the Conservation Commission, which assesses their compliance with the funding criteria and makes recommendations to the Selectboard. The Selectboard considers the Conservation Commission's recommendations and makes the final decisions. Both bodies deliberate in public sessions. For funding any land acquisitions by the Town exceeding \$20,000, direct voter approval is required.

What does the Fund cost taxpayers?

By adding one cent to the municipal tax rate, renewing the Fund would cost taxpayers \$10 for every \$100,000 of a property's assessment. In 2025 that will generate around \$79,000 for important, approved 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 Town-owned Andrews Community Forest, the Stage Road Community Forest and Overrockers Park. To qualify for public funds, landowners usually must guarantee public access to conserved land as warranted for hiking, hunting, fishing, skiing and other activities, with one exception being land used for agriculture or livestock grazing.

What kinds of new projects does the Conservation Commission foresee?

Several projects appear to be in the pipeline for CRF funding. These include restoring wetland areas and popular hiking/biking trails damaged by last summer's flooding, a new parking lot for river access off Cochran Rd., trees for the Town Center, and possible trail engineering and construction the Andrews Town Forest.

See the full list of CRF-funded projects listed below. More information on them:

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

Please vote on or before March 4

Mail-in ballots are available from the Town Clerk at lparent@richmondvt.gov or (802) 434-2221. Or vote in person on March 4 at the Town Center, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Conservation Reserve Fund Project List

	Project	Project Leader	Description	CRF \$	Add'l \$ Generated
2009	Bombardier Meadow	Rich. Land Trust	10-acre hayfield on Cochran Rd., with wooded banks on the Huntington and Winooski River	\$51,500	\$77,000
	Large Habitat Block Study	Rich. Cons. Commission	Mapped large blocks of uplands wildlife habitat and connectivity among them	\$2,400	-
2010	Town Center Portico Renovation	Town of Rich.	Roof and other structural repairs	\$35,265	\$65,035
	Richmond Hill Cemetery	Town of Rich.	10-foot deeded path to historic cemetery	\$2,500	-
2012	Andrews Farmland	Vt. Land Trust	187 acres of prime ag. soils along the Winooski River	\$10,000	\$197,500
2013	Science-to-Action Project	Rich. Planning and Conservation Commissions	Identify public conservation priorities, and inventory/confirm key habitat locations to improve planning & zoning processes	\$3,195	\$88,525
2014	Historic window restoration	Cong. Church	Protect 100-year-old stained glass windows	\$6,564	\$12,423
	Willis Hill	Rich. Land Trust	20-ac. wetland & sledding hill on Rt. 2 by 2 schools	\$64,000	\$122,500
2017	Gillett Pond Dam	Rich. Land Trust	Replace aging dam to save Pond	\$150,000	\$650,000
2018	Andrews Community Forest	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	Rich. Land Trust, Vermont River Conservancy	3.7 acres, dramatic 40-foot rocky gorge, popular swimming holes, site of early 20 th -cent. hydroelectric station	\$10,000	\$55,000
	Johnnie Brook Bridge	Rich. Trails Committee	Repair of a key link for hikers and bikers using the Cross Vt. Trail	\$1,000	\$400
	Lake Iroquois Plant Survey	Lake Iroquois Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,000	-
2019	Richmond Master Naturalist Program	UVM Extension	Train volunteers to monitor health of local habitats	\$4,000	-
	Volunteers Green Rip-Rap	Town of Rich.	Protect band shell, fields from bank erosion	\$20,000	\$117,200
	Andrews Forest Trails	Town of Rich.	Improve trail system, protect sensitive habitat	\$3,000	\$1,500
	Andrews Forest Mgt Plan	Town of Rich.	SE Group visioning, resident surveying, drafting	\$4,500	\$19,000
2020	Huntington Gorge River Steward	Rich. Land Trust, Vt. River Conservancy	Fund part-time steward to educate Gorge_ visitors on safety, stewardship and site history	\$1,500	\$5,000
	Volunteers Green Tree Planting	Town of Rich.	Mitigate beaver damage to riverbank trees	\$200	-
	Stage Rd. Town Forest	Rich. Land Trust	Conserve rich forest	\$3,500	-
	Johnnie Brook Bridge	Town of Rich.	Repair flood-damage on Cross Vt. Trail	\$8,400	-
2021	Emerald Ash Borer Control	Town of Rich.	Phase 1 of project to manage impending ash tree losses	\$20,000	\$15,000
	Andrews Forest Trails and Benches	Eagle Scouts	Build benches; expand trails below power lines	\$500	
	Volunteers Green Habitat Restoration	Town of Rich.		\$15,000	\$35,000
	Volunteers Green Tree Plantings	Town of Rich.	Widen treed buffer between river and fields	\$670	
	Community Garden	Town of Rich.	Establish garden on donated land	\$2,000	-
	Overrockers Permitting	Town of Rich.	Delineate wetlands for state permit	\$2,500	-
	Beeken Preserve Engineering Survey	Rich. Land Trust	Assess erosion threat to Cochran Rd.	\$2,500	-
	Lake Iroquois Plant Survey	L.I. Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,200	\$3,200
2022	Riverside Trail Work	Town of Rich.	Replace failing bridges on hiking/biking trail	\$9,500	-
	Emerald Ash Borer Control	Town of Rich.	Mill and process for firewood downed ash trees	\$5,000	-
	Bombardier Engineering Study	Rich. Land Trust	Improve off-road parking and river access	\$625	-
	Beeken Preserve Riverside Bench	Rich. Land Trust	Co-fund Gary Beckwith's bench installation project	\$300	\$250
	Andrews Forest Trail Review	Town of Rich.	Check in summer for rare plants along proposed trails	\$3,500	-
2023	Gillett Pond (incl. \$150K 2017 support)	Rich. Land Trust	Replace aging dam to save Pond	\$50,000	
	Amphibian Crossing Signs	Town of Rich.	Protect annual wetland migrations	\$150	-
	Trails and Wildlife Talk	Town of Rich.	Habitats & trails talk by Sue Morse	\$250	-
	Trails repair	Town of Rich.	Replace infrastructure on Rivershore Trail	\$1,684	-
	Conservation-Recreation Panel	Town of Rich.	Guest speakers	\$1,000	
2024	Volunteer Green Trees	Town of Rich.	Buffering river for flood resiliency, habitat, wildlife connectivity	\$1,310	
TOTALS				\$560,193	\$2,723,726

CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND TOWN-WIDE PROJECT MAP 2005-2024

