

Application to the Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund

Phragmites australis Manual Removal Project

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Date: May 2026

Project Description

This application requests funding for materials to support a manual removal effort targeting *Phragmites australis* — an aggressive invasive reed — at two sites on the edge of a delicate cattail marsh along Route 2 between the VYCC and Jonesville: the LaBounty property and the lily pond on the Pratt property. Although submitted by a Richmond Conservation Commission member, this project provides no preferential benefit to any Commission member over the general public.

I will lead a team of 10-12 volunteers over four removal days — two in July, and two mid/late August, depending on the growth of seedheads. The technique we will use is spading: volunteers will use garden spades to sever the photosynthetic above-ground portion of phragmites stems from the rhizome, taking care not to disturb the rhizome itself, as disturbance can stimulate further growth. This approach is preferable to other manual methods such as cutting or pulling: cutting alone leaves the plant able to resprout, while pulling or digging out rhizomes risks fragmenting them and spreading the colony. By carefully bisecting the plant at or just below the soil surface without disturbing the root system, spading starves the rhizome of energy over time, gradually weakening and killing the colony. Files will be used to keep spade blades sharp throughout the season. Removed plant matter will be bagged and transported by flatbed truck to the CSWD Organics Recycling Facility on Redmond Road in Williston for responsible disposal.

Project Significance

The marsh habitat targeted by this project is home to a rich community of native plants and animals, including:

- Wildlife: turtles, minks, frogs, hawks, red-winged blackbirds, and more
- Native plants: water lilies, cattails, native grasses, and more

Phragmites australis poses a severe threat to this ecosystem. It outcompetes native vegetation, creating a dense monoculture that crowds out the diverse plant life these animals depend on for food and shelter. Its thick growth also physically blocks amphibians from accessing the ponds where they live and reproduce. Once established at scale, phragmites is extremely difficult and costly to eradicate.

Crucially, this particular patch is just at the edge of being small enough to attempt a full manual removal rather than resorting to herbicide. This is a narrow and time-sensitive window. A successful manual removal would provide a template for small-stand phragmites management. This project directly addresses multiple Conservation Reserve Fund criteria:

- Contributes to the protection of natural resources in and of importance to Richmond
- Is directed at a threatened and ecologically sensitive resource
- Preserves native biodiversity and supports wildlife habitat
- Engages Richmond residents as active conservation volunteers
- Avoids chemical treatment, protecting wetland water quality

Project Schedule

Removal Day	Date
Day 1	July 2026
Day 2	July 2026
Day 3	August 2026
Day 4	August 2026

Itemized Budget

Item	Qty	Unit Cost	Total
Garden Spades (20-in D-Handle, Project Source / Lowe's)	9	\$20.00	\$180.00
Gas — 20 round trips, ~22 mi/trip, flatbed truck @ ~30 mpg, ~\$4/gal	~14.7 gal	\$4.00	\$59.00
Solid Wall Trailer 5x8 (Home Depot)	4 days	\$60.00	\$240.00
Total Requested			\$479.00

Note: Gas estimate based on 20 round trips of approximately 11 miles each (removal site to CSWD Organics Recycling Facility, Williston), at an assumed fuel efficiency of 30 mpg and current price of approximately \$4.00/gallon. A flatbed truck will be borrowed for hauling purposes.

Long-Term Plans and Sustainability

Because phragmites spreads aggressively through rhizomes and seed dispersal, successful eradication requires consistent monitoring and follow-up removal in subsequent seasons. If this first season of manual removal goes well, I anticipate submitting future materials requests to the Conservation Reserve Fund to support continued work at these sites until the colony is

eliminated. This project will also serve as a pilot for future phragmites management projects in town. All durable tools purchased through this grant — spades, utility files, and gloves — will become the property of the Town of Richmond and will be retained for reuse in future seasons, reducing future costs. Ongoing volunteer engagement will help build a community of informed, active stewards of Richmond's natural areas.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I would be happy to provide any additional information.

Respectfully submitted,
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