

Conservation Reserve Fund Application

VYCC Conservation Easement



Submitted by: Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Date: April 24, 2026

Project Summary

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) is seeking a grant of \$3,000 from the Conservation Reserve Fund to support the conservation of a 4.5 acre agricultural field adjacent to Route 2 between the West Monitor Barn and the East Monitor Barn. (See attached map.) The property is located adjacent to existing conserved land and is in a scenic and agricultural corridor that has been the subject of conservation efforts for more than 25 years. VYCC will donate a Conservation Easement covering the parcel to the Richmond Land Trust. The grant from the Conservation Reserve Fund would be used as VYCC's contribution toward the stewardship of the conserved land.

Parcel Description

The parcel is a flat to gently sloping agricultural field on the north side of Rt. 2 between the East and West Monitor Barns. (See attached map.) The land is owned by VYCC and is used for both food security and agricultural training purposes, both of which are central to VYCC's Food and Farm Program. Fourteen solar tracking panels are located along the northern boundary of the property, providing electricity to support VYCC's programs.

The majority of the 4.5 acres is mapped by the State of Vermont as Primary Agricultural Soils, consisting predominantly of Munson and Raynham silt loams. The land has been used for agricultural purposes since the early to mid 1800's. The two monitor barns were built in 1901 and 1903 by the Whitcomb family to support one of the largest dairy farms in the Winooski River Valley at that time. Fittingly, the Farm at VYCC now operates the state's largest prescription vegetable program with more than 450 families receiving weekly shares of fresh, local, organic produce each year.

In 1998 the Richmond Land Trust initiated a project to restore the two monitor barns and to conserve the scenic and historic agricultural landscape between Jonesville and Richmond Village. To date more than 800 acres of this landscape has been permanently conserved through the efforts of Richmond Land Trust and Vermont Land Trust. (More than 1,000 acres of additional land in the area has also been conserved by private and public entities.) VYCC has been part of this effort since 2004 when it acquired the restored West Monitor Barn and surrounding acreage for its headquarters. Since then it has established an innovative Food and Farm Program that provides paid service experiences to approximately 75 youth and young adults each year. Graduates of this agricultural training program now work throughout Vermont's farming sector, supporting a key piece of Vermont's economy. The restoration of the East Monitor Barn will enhance VYCC's impact as it will host a four-season wash pack facility as well as a year-round classroom. VYCC hopes the restoration and fit up of the East Monitor Barn will be completed in 2027.

In summary, the 4.5 acres to be conserved by VYCC and RLT is at the heart of the agricultural landscape that has been the focus of the conservation efforts described above. Permanently conserving this parcel will ensure that it continues to contribute to farming operations that have been part of the fabric of the Richmond community for the last two centuries. A \$3,000 grant from the Conservation Reserve Fund would be used as VYCC's contribution toward the stewardship of the conserved land in perpetuity.

VYCC will continue to own and manage the conserved parcel.

Project Significance – General Criteria

The project meets the following General Criteria of the Conservation Reserve Fund:

1. *Contributes toward the acquisition or permanent protection of natural, agricultural or historical resources in and of importance to Richmond.*
2. *Will yield a clear, sustainable benefit to Richmond residents in the form of permanently preserving or improving water quality, wildlife, recreational, historic, cultural, scenic, or environmental values, including the preservation of significant natural, agricultural and historic resources.*
3. *Will help the Town of Richmond meet natural resources and planning goals identified in the Richmond Town Plan or other representative community forum.*
5. *Is directed at threatened resources.*
6. *Expands an existing, protected resource, including those that benefit not only Richmond but also neighboring communities and those beyond.*
7. *Attracts and leverages funds from other sources.*

Project Significance – Specific Criteria

In addition to the General Criteria above, the project supports the following specific criteria listed in the Conservation Reserve Fund Policy:

Natural Resources Protection Criteria

6. *Maintains woodlands, meadows or pastures.*
8. *Preserves outstanding scenic views or is scenic itself.*

Agricultural Resources Protection Criteria

1. *Includes prime agricultural soils that are most ideal for development and therefore most in need of protection.*
2. *Contiguous with a working farm and contributing to the protection of significant area of open agricultural land for family farming or forestry.*
5. *Farm buildings and equipment are suitable for their purpose and are in usable condition.*
6. *Uses local farm support services, including local businesses and employees.*

Historical Resources Protection Criteria

1. *Defines and maintains special landscape or setting.*
2. *Preserves, enhances and/or rehabilitates historical structures, features and character.*
5. *Represented an important central function in Richmond's past, or is associated with an important person, movement, industry or function.*

Project Partners

VYCC is working with the Richmond Land Trust (RLT) to conserve the 4.5 acre agricultural field. RLT will hold a permanent conservation easement on the parcel that is consistent with

the conservation easements conserving adjacent land and will insure that the land is used for agricultural, scenic, and open space purposes in perpetuity.

Project Timetable

The parcel has been surveyed and baseline documentation is being completed. Closing on the Conservation Easement is anticipated by mid-July.

Project Budget

Total expenses for acquisition of the parcel and associated costs are anticipated to be \$12,200 (see project budget below). Richmond Land Trust will contribute \$4,700 in direct and in-kind funding toward the project. VYCC will contribute \$7,500 in direct and in-kind funding, including the \$3,000 stewardship endowment contribution.

Long-Term Plans

VYCC will continue to own and manage the parcel of land as part of its overall operations. The Conservation Easement restricts the uses of the property to agricultural, forestry, educational, non-commercial recreation, and open space purposes only. Richmond Land Trust will conduct annual stewardship monitoring visits to insure that the property is used for the allowed purposes and no violations of the Easement have occurred. RLT has an active Stewardship Committee, which oversees the organization's land and conservation easements held on private land. RLT's stewardship endowment is a dedicated fund which supports annual maintenance, stewardship activities, and, if necessary, legal costs associated with stewardship. RLT requires a stewardship endowment contribution for all newly acquired conservation easements, donated or purchased.

Organizational Information

The Richmond Land Trust (RLT) is a non-profit, all-volunteer land conservation and community service organization founded by a group of Richmond residents in 1987. RLT's mission is "to preserve the rural character and quality of life in Richmond, Vermont, and its surrounding communities through land conservation, historic preservation, land stewardship, and community service and education." Since 1987 RLT has conserved more than 1,200 acres of land through direct acquisition or conservation easement. RLT pays property taxes on all of the land it owns. RLT's recent project, the Gillett Pond Preserve and dam replacement, protected 102 acres including Gillett Pond and restored recreational access to the pond by replacing the failed dam at the pond's outlet.

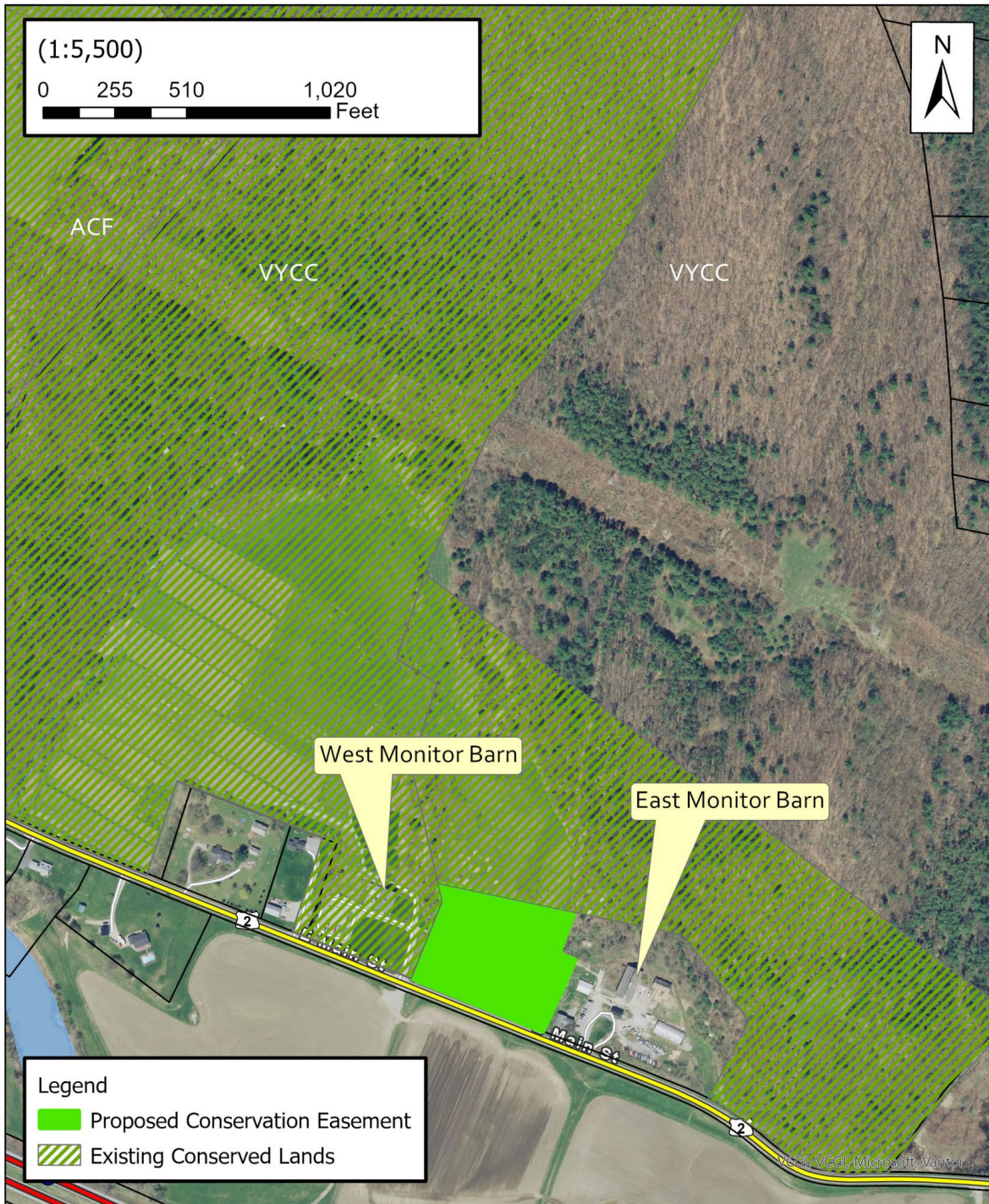
The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, founded in 1985, is one of approximately 150 conservation corps across the country. Each year, VYCC enrolls 150 – 200 youth and young adults in meaningful service project that support Vermont communities. With over 7,500 alumni, VYCC is Vermont's leading service organization with a mission to *take action and build community by working and learning with the land.*

Project Budget

<u>Expense</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>	
Easement Value	VYCC Donation	\$ 4,500 (Est.)
Mapping/Documentation	RLT (in-kind)	\$ 2,500
Stewardship	VYCC (Richmond CRF)	\$ 3,000
Title Insurance/Closing Costs	RLT (in-kind)	\$ 1,500
Recording Fees	RLT	<u>\$ 700</u>
	TOTAL	\$ 12,200

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