

Application to the Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund

Phragmites australis Manual Removal Project

Richmond Conservation Commission

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Project Description

This application requests funding 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.

A VYCC crew lead and I will lead a team of 10–12 community volunteers over four removal days — two in July and two in mid/late August, depending on the growth of seedheads. VYCC will provide professional crew leadership, trained volunteer management, all necessary tools including maintenance and cleanup, and use of their dump trailer.

The removal 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. VYCC tools will be maintained and cleaned by VYCC staff. Removed plant matter will be bagged and transported in the VYCC dump trailer 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
- Supports the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, a beloved Richmond institution with a mission centered on conservation stewardship and youth development

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
VYCC Crew Lead (staff wages, training, volunteer management)	4 days	\$500.00	\$2,000.00
VYCC Tool Use (includes maintenance and cleaning)	4 days	\$250.00	\$1,000.00
VYCC Dump Trailer Use	4 days	\$100.00	\$400.00
Gas — 20 round trips, ~22 mi/trip, @ ~30 mpg, ~\$4/gal	~14.7 gal	\$4.00	\$59.00
Total Requested			\$3,459.00

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. The VYCC dump trailer will be used for hauling.

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. A partnership with VYCC could provide a sustainable, repeatable model for community-based invasive species management, drawing on their expertise, equipment, and volunteer networks in future seasons, and would remove the issue of tool acquisition and maintenance for the town. 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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