

# Renewing Richmond's Conservation Reserve Fund



- **Established by voters 2005**
- **Last Renewed by voters 2022 (Yes – 839; No – 245)**

**An 18-year successful track record at protecting water and air quality, biodiversity, working farms and forests, outdoor recreation, historic resources and education.**

- **Enables the Town to move quickly to capture prime, time-sensitive funding opportunities.**
- **Brings in major support from outside funding sources (State, Federal, foundations)**

# The Question on Australian Ballot

**Article 5. Shall the Town of Richmond vote to approve funding the Conservation Reserve Fund by adding one cent to the municipal tax rate in the 2023-2024 fiscal year? (To be voted by Australian ballot)**

# Information Sheet

[www.tinyurl.com/CRF-2023](http://www.tinyurl.com/CRF-2023)

## RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

### What is the Conservation Reserve Fund?

Richmond voters established the Fund in 2005 to enable the Town to better participate in important conservation projects. It allows Richmond to quickly work with willing property owners, non-profits and community volunteer groups to protect important local natural, agricultural and historic resources.

Since its inception voters have supported the Fund with a penny on the tax rate (\$10 per \$100,000 of property valuation per year). The Fund is voted upon annually. Last year the vote was 844-247 in favor of renewal. Voting this year is on or before March 7.

### How has the CRF been used?

As shown on the reverse, the Fund has supported numerous important conservation projects ranging from Town forests to protecting recreational treasures, working farms and historic preservation.

### Why was the Fund created?

In a growing town like ours, conservation opportunities can arise at any time – and just as rapidly disappear, 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 Fund 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 has helped spur \$3.95 in project funding from other sources – over \$2 million in all.

### How are funding decisions made?

Proposals are made to the Conservation Commission. The Selectboard makes the final decisions after considering the Conservation Commission's recommendations. Both bodies deliberate in public sessions. Voters must approve using the Fund for any land acquisitions by the Town over \$20,000.

### What does the Fund cost taxpayers?

By adding one cent to the proposed municipal tax rate (1.4%), renewing the Fund would cost taxpayers \$10 for every \$100,000 of a property's assessment. That would generate an estimated \$48,300 for important 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 Andrews Community Forest and the Stage Road Community Forest, as they are Town-owned.) To qualify for public funds, landowners usually must guarantee public access to conserved land as warranted for hiking, hunting, fishing, skiing and other activities (one exception being land used for agriculture or livestock grazing).

### What kinds of new projects does the Conservation Commission foresee?

Applications include saving Gillett Pond by helping fund a new dam. Other projects may be proposed at any time, as was the case with the Andrews Community Forest.

The Conservation Reserve Fund positions Richmond to consider and act on opportunities fairly, efficiently and in a timely way. It's also living, dollars-and-cents proof that our community embraces conservation, helping attract and qualify Richmond for major funding from foundations, agencies and other large donors.

Complete project list on reverse. More information on projects:

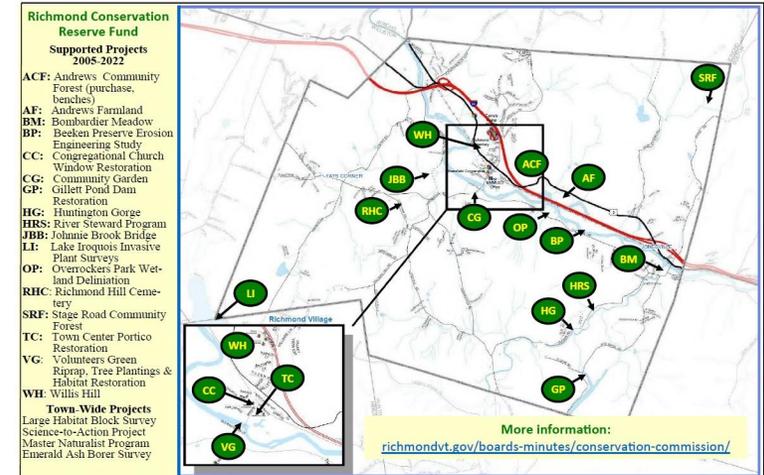
<http://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/>

Please Vote on or before March 7

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

## PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY RICHMOND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

	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 (VHCB)
	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 agricultural 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 (includes in-kind service donations)
2014	Window restoration at Congregational Church	Rich. Cong. Church	Protect 100-year-old stained glass windows	\$6,564	\$12,423
	Willis Hill	Rich. Land Trust	20 acres on Rt. 2 at west of village, backing up to elementary and middle schools	\$64,000	\$122,500
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	\$547,000
	Huntington Gorge	Rich. Land Trust, Vermont River Conserv'y	3.7 acres, dramatic 40-foot rocky gorge, popular swimming holes, site of early 20 <sup>th</sup> -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
2019	Lake Iroquois Plant Survey	Lake Iroquois Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,000	-
	Richmond Master Naturalist Program	UVM Extension	Support citizen-scientist training to inventory and monitor health of important habitat and other resources	\$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
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 Stage Rd. Town Forest	Town of Rich.	Mitigate beaver damage to riverbank trees	\$200	-
	Johnnie Brook Bridge	Town of Rich.	Repair flood-damage on Cross Vt. Trail	\$8,400	-
	Emerald Ash Borer Control	Town of Rich.	Phase 1 of project to manage impending ash tree losses	\$20,000	\$15,000
2021	Andrews Forest Trails and Benches	Eagle Scouts	Build benches using timber logged on-site; expand trails below power lines	\$500	-
	Volunteers Green Habitat Restoration	Town of Rich.	Widen tree buffer between river and fields	\$15,000	\$35,000
	Volunteers Green Tree Plantings	Town of Rich.	Establish garden on donated land	\$2,000	\$500
	Community Garden	Town of Rich.	Delineate wetlands for state permit	\$2,500	-
	Overrocks Permitting	Rich. Land Trust	Assess erosion threat to Cochran Rd. and costs for improving parking facilities	\$2,500	-
	Becken Preserve Engineering Survey	Rich. Land Trust	Assess erosion threat to Cochran Rd. and costs for improving parking facilities	\$2,500	-
2022	Lake Iroquois Plant Survey	L.I. Association	Invasive plant inventory	\$2,200	\$3,200
	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 parking options and river access	\$625	-
	Becken 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	\$3590	-
TOTAL	Gillett Pond	Rich. Land Trust	Replace aging dam	\$150,000	\$850,000
				\$528,407	\$2,089,783



# CRF Funded Projects

**Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund**  
**Supported Projects 2005-2022**

ACF: Andrews Community Forest (purchase, benches)  
AF: Andrews Farmland  
BM: Bombardier Meadow  
BP: Beeken Preserve Erosion Engineering Study  
CC: Congregational Church Window Restoration  
CG: Community Garden  
GP: Gillett Pond Dam Restoration  
HG: Huntington Gorge  
HRS: River Steward Program  
JBB: Johnnie Brook Bridge  
LI: Lake Iroquois Invasive Plant Surveys  
OP: Overrockers Park Wetland Delineation  
RHC: Richmond Hill Cemetery  
SRF: Stage Road Community Forest  
TC: Town Center Portico Restoration  
VG: Volunteers Green Riprap, Tree Plantings & Habitat Restoration  
WH: Willis Hill

**Town-Wide Projects**  
Large Habitat Block Survey  
Science-to-Action Project  
Master Naturalist Program  
Emerald Ash Borer Survey

**More information:**  
[richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/](http://richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/)

- ### Recent Projects
- Rivershore Trail Improvements
  - Emerald Ash Borer Control
  - Bombardier Parking Engineering
  - Beeken Preserve Riverside Bench
  - Andrews Forest Trails
  - Gillett Pond Dam Replacement

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# The CRF Advances Town Plan Priorities

- **“Protect priority natural areas in order to maintain the health and function of those areas and their ecosystem services.”**
- **“Preserve healthy and resilient working lands, agricultural soils.”**
- **“Maintain Richmond’s rural character and scenic beauty.”**
- **“Utilize best management practices for Richmond-owned, publicly accessible natural and recreational areas.”**
- **“Utilize the conservation reserve fund to protect important natural resources and public access to them where appropriate”**

## Funding

- **Financed by 1 cent on the tax rate.**
- **Anticipated FY 2024 yield: \$48,300.**
- **Taxpayer cost \$10 for every \$100,000 of assessed value.**

## 400% Return on Taxpayer Funding

### To date:

- CRF grants: \$ 522,739
- Additional \$ generated: \$2,062,533

LEVERAGE: \$1 CRF brought in \$3.94

# 2022 Projects

CRF Allocations		Sponsor	Description	CRF	Match
2022	Riverside Trail Work	Town of Richmond	Replace failing bridges on hiking/biking trail	\$9,500	
	Emerald Ash Borer Control	Town of Richmond	Mill and process for firewood downed ash trees	\$5,500	
	Bombardier Engineering Study	Richmond Land Trust	Improve parking options and river access	\$625	
	Beeken Preserve Riverside Bench	Richmond Land Trust	Co-fund Gary Beckwith's bench installation project	\$300	\$250
	Andrews Forest Trail Review	Town of Richmond	Check in summer for rare plants along proposed trails	\$3,590	
	Gillett Pond	Richmond Land Trust	Replace aging dam	\$150,000	\$700,000

## Upcoming - 2023

**Expert Panel Workshop: Balancing Conservation, and Trail-Based Recreation**  
**6-8 PM, March 15, Richmond Free Library**

# Gillett Pond Work in Progress



**Wood for Good**

# The Question on Australian Ballot

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# Questions / Comments?

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