

April 4, 2024

Richmond Conservation Commission
c/o Judy Rosovsky, Chair
judy.rosovsky@comcast.net

Re: Conservation Reserve Fund Application—Volunteers' Green Habitat Restoration

Dear Commissioners,

We request \$1,310 in Conservation Reserve Funds for materials for planting trees at Volunteers Green as part of an ongoing riparian buffer restoration project.

In 2020 and 2021 we, as part of the Ad Hoc Volunteers' Green Committee, helped plant more than 450 native trees at Volunteers' Green to widen the riparian buffer between the Winooski River and the ballfields. The goal is to protect the fields and other park amenities from Winooski River erosion by widening the park's forested buffer to approximately 75-feet wide. The restoration plan was developed in conjunction with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Friends of the Winooski River.

Most of the trees planted in 2020 and 2021 are thriving, but there are gaps within the buffer zone that could be augmented with additional trees. The two major flood events in July and December 2023 cut out significant chunks of riverbank further narrowing the buffer area. We seek to plant approximately 150 additional trees in the buffer area and 50 in the riprap zone adjacent to the bandshell to help improve the buffer zone's soil retention capacity.

This request is in keeping with Conservation Reserve Fund's primary purpose "preserving water quality, providing outdoor recreational opportunities, protecting wildlife, and conserving important natural, agricultural and historic resources."

Trees will be planted in two stages: Late-April to mid-May 2024 live stakes (50) and tube stock (50) trees each 10"-18" tall will be planted with the help of students from Camels' Hump Middle School and St. Michael's College. In October 2024, 50 larger trees 4'-5' tall will be planted with the help of students.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact us anytime.

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Volunteers' Green Background

The Town of Richmond has maintained the recreation area known as Volunteers' Green for many years. This is the town's primary active recreation facility and is home to youth soccer, baseball and other organized sports as well as a trail, open space, river access and the Town's only public playground. During winter-months, the park is used less formally but hiking, cross-country skiing and ice skating are popular. Dog-owners (and their dogs) are likely the most consistent users of Volunteers' Green, visiting in every season, every kind of weather and from dawn till well after dark.

Additionally, Volunteers' Green hosts the weekly Richmond Farmers Market from May to October, performances of the Richmond Community Band and the town's annual July 4th celebrations.

Volunteers' Green is approximately 18 acres in size, with over 2,000 feet of rivershore. Due to floodplain and floodway restrictions, hardened or permanent facilities are restricted, and no new development is likely to occur to expand or improve upon the existing facilities.

Problem: Riverbank Erosion Threatens Volunteers' Green

One of the most attractive features of the park is its location beside the Winooski River. This picturesque river provides additional recreational opportunities and adds to the aesthetic value of the park. Unfortunately, the location beside the river means that the entirety of the park lies within the river's floodplain, with a significant portion within the floodway – an area that is exposed to swift flowing water during floods.

The park is vulnerable to erosion damage, as evidenced during the Irene flooding in 2011 and again in July and December 2024. Erosion during each of these events damaged the playground, ballfields and restrooms. It also sheared off significant sections of the riverbank. Erosion is less obvious in years without significant flooding but occurs nonetheless when the river overflows its banks and from bank-full flows, particularly in the early spring when the river is carrying ice.

Project Significance – Volunteers' Green is a vital and important natural asset and meets Conservation Reserve Fund's eligibility criteria

Volunteers' Green is an important community asset and its long-term protection is a priority for the Town. The park must be viewed in context with other town recreational facilities and needs. Other than the relatively small Browns Court Ballfield, the town owns no other active recreation property, nor any property that offers the same variety of uses, serving as many people. The recently purchased Andrews Forest is similarly restricted from development through conservation easements, and properties on Cochran Road also lie within the floodplain. For that reason, protection of the rivershore from loss by erosion is of high importance. Volunteers' Green cannot be replaced.

This project fits the following General Criteria

- III.A2:** Permanently preserving the integrity of the park through erosion management.
- III.A5:** Erosion loss of the park property itself is the target of this project.
- III.B1:** Erosion prevention eliminates a common source of sediment pollution from the river during high water and flooding.
- IV.C:** This preserves land of Richmond’s primary recreation resource—the town-owned Volunteers’ Green.

Project Schedule

Late-April to mid-May 2024: live stakes and tube stock trees. Trees will be tended through the growing season to remove competing vegetation and will be watered if needed.

October 2024: larger trees.

Project Partners

Jon Kart is a Richmond resident who helped lead the Ad Hoc Volunteers’ Green Committee from 2019-2021 which started the tree planting/riparian buffer enhancement project at the Green. He’s also led the Great Richmond Root-Out! and Richmond Floodplain Forest Restoration project since 2010.

Trevien Stanger is a Richmond resident, author and member of St. Michael’s College Environmental Studies and Science program. He’s worked with the College’s Ecological Restoration Nursery to organize tree plantings at the College and in Richmond with St. Mikes and MMU students.

Additional project partners include Tree Warden Caitlin Littlefield, Camel’s Hump Middle School Science Teacher Dan Hamilton, Saint Michael’s College, and Friends of the Winooski River.

Financial Information

We request Richmond’s Volunteers’ Green Ad Hoc Committee requests \$1,310 from the Conservation Reserve Fund to purchase trees (live stakes, tube stock and bare root trees) from the Intervale Conservation Nursery. The labor for planning and planting is all donated at no cost to the town. The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps will provide tools to help with planting.

We anticipate that costs will be no more than \$1,310 and will only bill for out-of-pocket totals.

Item	Cost/Unit	Units	Total
Dogwood and Shrub Willow live stakes	\$3	50	\$150
Dogwood and Shrub Willow tube stock	\$4	100	\$400
Silver Maple, Sycamore & Cottonwood 4’-5’ bare root trees	\$14	50	\$700
Other materials (e.g., flags, tape, gloves)	\$60		\$60
Total			\$1,310