

Richmond Conservation Commission Annual Report for 2024

The Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC) assists residents and Town officials in recognizing and supporting natural resources, by preserving water quality, providing outdoor recreational opportunities, protecting wildlife, and conserving important agricultural, archaeological and historic resources. The Conservation Commission continues to meet the second Tuesday of the month, 7:30 at the Town Center. Its activities can be found at: <http://www.richmondvt.gov/boards-minutes/conservation-commission/>.

Issues surrounding the recent flooding that has occurred in Richmond took much of RCC's time. We spent time with general issues surrounding our flood-prone town and looked in-depth at specific problem areas including Donahue Brook and The Old Jericho Road trail. We worked with our Trail Committee and met with Town officials to coordinate supplemental activities in the context of FEMA awards. Kudos to the Town for the flood resiliency projects they have taken on, including the recent Stone Environmental initiative. RCC continues in touch with the State and Friends of the Winooski to draw up project lists and is joining a regional group, Recovery After Floods Team, RAFT, to examine regional solutions. Together with our Climate Action Committee, RCC also has been working with UVM Professor and State Climatologist Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Giroux and her UVM students to undertake a climate change study for Richmond as well as working with the Planning Commission to update the Natural Resources, Future Land Use and other relevant sections of the Town Plan. It is anticipated that significant funding will be needed for mitigation, expecting the Richmond Conservation Fund (CRF) to be a key source. More information about the Conservation Reserve Fund can be found on the Town of Richmond VT website. Please note that the CRF is open to all Richmond residents as a resource.

BioFinder, an important tool for understanding Richmond's natural environment, recently has come online (<https://anr.vermont.gov/maps-and-mapping/biofinder>). This allows the interested reader to look at landscape to species-level features that characterize our Town. One use has been to appreciate the natural resources found in our Andrews Community Forest and how to use them wisely. RCC held a workshop in January, led by Jens Hilke who illustrated the ins-and-outs of its use. Readers are urged to take a look.

Special effort was made this past year for our Save The Salamanders project. Wet nights were spent moving herps (reptiles and amphibians) across local roads including Route 2 and Cochran roads and included efforts to map key cross-over locations. A dozen volunteers recued some 1000. Great interest in this project was expressed at the RCC Farmers' Market table which also offered the opportunity for education/outreach experiences about local introduced plant species, another recurring RCC issue.

RCC continues its involvement in the management of highly successful Green-Up day and coordinating conservation efforts locally and regionally. Plans are afoot to once again bring together the several Richmond Committees that oversee Town-wide efforts related to conservation, recreation and trails. Let's hope this year brings calmer weather.