

**Application to the Richmond Conservation Reserve Fund
to support the Vermont Master Naturalist-Richmond Program**

**Submitted by: Vermont Master Naturalist, LLC
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Since 2016, Vermont Master Naturalist has engaged people in conservation activities in their towns through professional training and volunteer projects. In the VMN Middle Winooski Watershed Program, we will recruit between 12 and 15 residents from Winooski, Richmond and Huntington to start nine-months of training in September 2025.

Project Description:

Participants will pay \$675 in tuition to learn the natural and cultural history of the region from geology and glacial history to wildlife, natural communities, settlement patterns and more. Participants in the VMN MWW Program will attend five field trips exploring different layers of the landscape along the Winooski River from Williston, through Richmond and up into the Huntington River Valley. These trips are led by experts in the field, such as glacial geologists, wildlife trackers, cultural geographers, and more.

Strong support for the Conservation Reserve Fund in the town shows that Richmond residents are deeply interested in conservation. Richmond's conserved lands and rivers are heavily used by residents (and people from out of town and state) for outdoor recreation and other purposes, including mountain biking, skiing, swimming, fishing, hunting, and wild harvesting. Natural history-focused events and workshops are popular, indicating a need for more natural history related work, training, and educational opportunities. VMN trains citizens to understand the significance and ecology of Richmond's natural resources, promoting protection of its natural communities and special places as well informed decision-making on town conservation issues.

VMN participants will then apply their knowledge to educational and stewardship projects in the towns with each participant contributing at least 20 hours. These volunteer team projects may include leading nature walks, working on restoration projects to create native plant habitat for pollinators and other wildlife, documenting local wildlife, and more. We will work with you at the Richmond Conservation Commission to identify projects in Richmond.

Project Significance:

Across Vermont, VMN alums have gone on to join their conservation commissions, continue work on restoration projects, lead public walks, teach in public schools, become rare plant conservation volunteers, conduct wildlife monitoring and more. When they graduate, VMN participants will become part of this VMN network of nearly 500 naturalists.

VMN naturalists will also expand the community of residents in Richmond who have a deeper ecological knowledge and a greater passion for protecting special places and will share that with others through their projects and other events.

Project Conservation Reserve Fund Criteria:

Vermont Master Naturalist fulfills the General (A. 1-6) and Natural Resource Protection Criteria (B. 1-9) by providing professional natural history training and education in support of land conservation, wildlife preservation, and environmental quality. VMN lays the groundwork for meeting specific conservation goals by nurturing community knowledge, civic engagement, and relationships with place. With Vermont Master Naturalist, the town will be provided with a corps of trained conservationists who will lead activities that encourage conservation.

Budget:

VMN is seeking funding to design and run this unique VMN MWW Program.

\$10,000 for program development in the Williston, Richmond and Huntington area, including field trips led by local experts and VMN staff.

\$500 for project materials such as printing costs of educational materials

Total multi-town costs: \$10,500

Potential Match:

Dependent on participation of Richmond residents but could include a team of 2-3 people contributing 50 hours of volunteer labor

Financial request by Vermont Master Naturalist from Conservation Reserve Fund:

\$3,500

VMN has a proud tradition of never refusing admission into the program for financial reasons. If you would like to support one naturalist through a scholarship the total request would be:

\$4,175

Visit the VMN website: <https://vermontmasternaturalist.org/>