

# Fayston Conservation Reserve Fund Guidelines

## Introduction

According to a 2006 survey of Fayston residents the town's best assets are its rural character, scenic beauty, natural resources and recreational opportunities. Respondents strongly believed in the need to protect and preserve these assets. The 2008 iteration of the Fayston Town plan, adopted by voters, recommended the creation of a conservation fund to help ensure "the responsible use, careful stewardship, maintenance, preservation and enhancement of Fayston's natural resources, rural character, natural heritage and environmental quality for the benefit of current and future generations." In a time of rapid growth and development in Fayston, a critical tool for achieving this goal is our ability to conserve our land. In 2012, Fayston voters approved the creation of the Fayston Conservation Reserve Fund. The guidelines for the use of this fund are outlined below.

## I. Authority

This fund is a reserve fund established per 24 V.S.A. 2804 and shall be known as the Fayston Conservation Reserve Fund. Under the control of the Fayston Select Board, it shall be held as a separate account and invested as are other public funds and may be expended only for the purposes for which it was authorized by the voters of Fayston at Town Meeting on March 6, 2012:

"Shall the Town establish a Conservation Reserve Fund at a starting amount of \$10,000 to help preserve our lands with ecological, cultural, or recreational significance in Fayston?"

## II. Purposes of the Fund

The purpose of this fund shall be to conserve Fayston land and waters for forestry, wildlife, scenic, agricultural, recreational, and natural area uses. These are more particularly defined as follows:

- To minimize conversion of Fayston's best forest and farmland to non-forestry and non-agricultural uses
- To maintain Fayston's rural character, aesthetics, and scenic values
- To protect wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreational use of Fayston's natural landscape
- To preserve open space
- To promote a working landscape by encouraging local forestry and farming
- To educate the public on the value of conserving our natural resources and our rural heritage

## III. Fund Priorities and Criteria

The following priorities should be used to allocate funds to provide consistent, objective and sound criteria for making land conservation decisions. All conservation efforts should conform to the Fayston Town Plan and demonstrate a clear and important benefit to the residents of Fayston. Properties to be conserved must be in the Town of Fayston and will be considered if they satisfy any of these priorities:

1. Property adjacent to existing town land, public lands, or other conserved lands
2. Property with existing or potential educational use by the Fayston Elementary School, town residents, or visitors
3. Property of historic or cultural value to the Town of Fayston
4. Property of scenic or aesthetic value to the Town of Fayston
5. Property that provides meaningful recreational access
  - a. To trails including snowmobiling, skiing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking
  - b. For hunting, fishing and water-based recreation
6. Property that conserves the working landscape of Fayston
  - a. Forest lands that support a significant volume of mature timber, and have good access for timber harvesting operations

- b. Agricultural lands with prime agricultural soils, demonstrated productivity and the potential for economic viability
7. Property that protects watersheds, wetlands and ground or surface water from point or non-point source pollution
8. Property that protects lands identified by Arrowwood Environmental's *Natural Heritage Element Inventory and Assessment for Fayston*, which
  - a. Support threatened or endangered natural communities, plants or wildlife
  - b. Preserve large tracts of undeveloped lands
  - c. Keep *Core Habitat Units (CHUs)* intact
  - d. Maintain wildlife travel corridors

#### **IV. Review Process**

Before funds can be spent from the Conservation Reserve Fund, the Fayston Natural Resources Committee (FNRC) and the Fayston Select Board will follow procedures to make sure that each proposed conservation project meets the Town's established criteria and that interested citizens have an opportunity to comment on the proposal, unless the Select Board determines that emergency or confidential action is required. The process to be followed will include these steps:

1. Landowners, local organizations, Fayston citizens or other towns may approach the FNRC or the Select Board for assistance with a conservation project.
2. The FNRC will review all requests for use of the fund to make sure they align with the priorities and criteria established above.
3. Following review, the FNRC will make its recommendations to the Select Board and present a conservation project proposal for comment at a public forum.
4. Based on input from the FNRC and the public, the Select Board will ultimately approve the project, request more information, or decline the use of funds for the project.

#### **V. Fund Uses**

The fund can be used in several different ways and a few are listed below. There are many creative and flexible ways to conserve land and this list is not exclusive.

- To provide local-matching funds to secure private, state or federal grants for conserving property
- To purchase land or conservation easements in Fayston, in cooperation with landowners and/or nonprofit organizations
- For technical assistance (including, but not limited to, legal work, surveying, appraisals, stewardship costs, etc.) to landowners who want to place conservation easements on their land

#### **VI. Fund Sources**

- Fayston's 2014 Town Plan encourages annual additions to the Conservation Reserve Fund. FNRC supports this strategy, and recommends that the Select Board continue the practice of including these contributions as an annual budget line item.
- Funding can also come from voluntary contributions or grants from public or private sources. FNRC may hold fundraising events to support the Conservation Reserve Fund.
- The Fund can accept donations designated to benefit specific projects.

Original Guidelines Approved by the Fayston Select Board on September 23, 2013  
Amended Guidelines Approved by the Fayston Select Board on November 21, 2016