

# **Fayston Conservation Reserve Fund Guidelines**

Approved by the Fayston Select Board on September 23, 2013

## **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 Fayston Town plan, adopted by voters in 2008, 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 enhance wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreational uses 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 projects should conform to the Fayston Town Plan and demonstrate a clear and important benefit to the residents of Fayston. Property to be conserved must be located in the Town of Fayston and will be considered based on the criteria below:

1. Projects adjacent to existing town land, public lands, or other conserved lands
2. Projects with existing or potential educational use by the Fayston Elementary School, town residents, and visitors
3. Projects of historic or cultural value to the Town of Fayston
4. Projects of scenic or aesthetic value to the Town of Fayston
5. Projects that provide meaningful recreational access

- a. To trails including snowmobiling, skiing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking
  - b. For hunting, fishing and water-based recreation
6. Projects that conserve 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. Projects that protect watersheds, wetlands and ground or surface water from point or non-point source pollution
8. Projects that protect lands identified by Arrowwood Environmental's *Natural Heritage Element Inventory and Assessment for Fayston* that
  - 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 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 is:

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 meet the priorities and criteria established above.
3. If a project meets the priorities and criteria, the FNRC will make its recommendations to the Select Board and present the 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 a number of 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 conservation projects
- To purchase land or conservation easements in a Fayston-only project, in cooperation with Fayston 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**

- FNRC encourages the Town of Fayston to add to the Conservation Reserve Fund annually by either adding a line item in the budget or by a majority vote on an article at Town Meeting.
- 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.