

Town of Bristol Conservation Reserve Fund Overview

The voters of the Town of Bristol established a Conservation Reserve Fund with an annually appropriated sum of \$10,000 to be expended by the Selectboard for the purpose of land acquisition, conservation easements and /or interests in property that achieve the Bristol Town Plan's conservation objectives. Since the creation of the fund, the Bristol Conservation Commission, a board of Bristol residents selected for their expertise in conservation and environmental science, has acted as the steward of this fund. Since its creation, the Conservation Commission has advised the Selectboard to use these funds on projects such as:

- Purchasing support for a conservation easement and property rights on 194 acres adjacent to the Waterworks property (Bacon development rights)
- Installation and maintenance of the first Universal Fishing Platform in the state of Vermont at Eagle Park
- Appraisal and acquisition of the Fuller Parcel (South 116 Rd) and invasive control measures on the riverbank
- Appraisal and acquisition of the Saunders River Access lands (South 116 Rd)
- Design and fabrication of the historic interpretive sign for the former Bristol Manufacturing Co.
- Plantings in the riparian zones of the Fuller Parcel and Roleau Farm (Baldwin Creek)
- Planting and invasive control at Eagle Park
- Construction of interpretive kiosks at Town of Bristol Parks
- Engineering safety inspection of the pedestrian bridge over the gorge at Memorial Forest Park
- Geologic mapping of the Town of Bristol

The Conservation Reserve Fund has seldom been used outright and in most of the examples above has been used to leverage tens of thousands of dollars when applying for grants. In the last decade, the Town of Bristol has invested \$15,849 from the Conservation Reserve Fund to support land acquisition, streambank stabilization, buffer planting and invasives management projects that cost more than \$173,600. For every dollar spent from the CRF, the town was able to leverage \$11 in grant monies from state and federal agencies as well as private and corporate donations.

Example: *New Haven Flood Damage Mitigation*

Since 1998, the New Haven River has experienced significant flood events costing millions of dollars in infrastructure damage and erosion. In 2011, the Bristol Conservation

Commission identified a 40-acre plot of floodplain off South 116 Rd (Saunders property) that could be conserved in Bristol to help mitigate future flooding, improve water quality, and provide public recreation. The Bristol Conservation Commission worked in tandem with agencies across the state to secure the easement rights to the Saunders River Access Property. The Bristol Conservation Reserve Fund (CRF) provided \$6,500 toward the project and the remaining ~\$100,000 was provided by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (\$28,000), New Haven River Anglers' Association (\$1,000), and the Agency of Natural Resources' Ecosystem Restoration Program (\$70,000). This project has been a resounding success and in 2019, the opportunity arose to expand the park by 14.7 acres of adjacent flood-plain. Bristol was able to purchase this adjacent plot, the Fuller property, by using \$6,500 from the CRF and the remainder was provided by private and corporate donations totaling \$30,120. The ~54 acre Saunders River Access park now acts as a permanently protected floodplain that slows high velocity flood water, protects water quality, expands public access to the river through 3,800 feet of river frontage, and acts as vital riparian habitat for birds, amphibians, and mammals. The Bristol Conservation Commission and the Vermont River Conservancy actively manage the park and continue to assess the efficacy of the floodplain.

The Conservation Reserve Fund has been immeasurably beneficial in conserving the natural and cultural heritage of Bristol. Continued support of the fund is vital to ensuring that the Town of Bristol can act to manage and protect their environment.