

# Town of Berlin Conservation Fund

**Purpose:** The purpose of the fund is to conserve Berlin land and waters for agricultural, forest, wildlife, scenic, recreational, or natural area use pursuant to 10 VSA Chapter 155. Uses of the fund may include but are not limited to purchase or assistance in the purchase of rights of first refusal, options to purchase, long term leases, conservation restrictions (Development rights), and land in fee. Funds may be used for site work, appraisals, and land surveys with the understanding that such funds will be reimbursable to the fund if conservation is not achieved.

**Eligibility:** Any Berlin landowner or official landowner representative is eligible to submit an application. Funds will be granted to proposals which meet purposes and guidelines described in this document.

**Guidelines:** A primary requirement for the expenditure of monies from the fund is that such expenditure must yield a clear benefit to the town and must result from a voluntary agreement between the town and the owner. When determining whether the fund should be used on a particular parcel of land or body of water, a number of items should be considered. Since each possible use of the fund is different, the guidelines listed below are general and are meant to bring up broad issues which would be applicable to any proposed use of the fund.

Consideration will be given to the following issues: \*Relative importance of the proposal for agriculture, forest, wildlife, scenic, recreational or natural area use according to available evaluation systems. \*Effect of proposal on adjacent land and other land in the area.

\*Effectiveness of the proposal to meet conservation goals. \*Opportunities presented by the proposal to offer significant recreational or scenic benefits to Berlin citizens, the loss of which would detract from the quality of life in Berlin. \*Preservation of important natural areas in the community. \*Threat of conversion to other uses. \*Ability to leverage other funds and private participation in the project. \*Cost of the proposal relative to the funds available in the Conservation Fund.

**Benefits:** Use of the fund must result in at least one of the following benefits to the town:

\*Protection of agricultural land that will help ensure the continuing viability of farms and agricultural enterprises in the town. \*Protection of the town's rural character and scenic open space. \*Provision of public outdoor recreation for the people of Berlin. \*Preservation of natural habitats for plants and animals. \*Prevention of excessive increases in public service costs.

**Administration:** Ultimate responsibility for the disposition of monies from the fund rest with the Berlin Select Board. The Berlin Conservation Commission and Recreation Board will evaluate requests and make written recommendations to the Select Board. Proposals for use of the fund shall be submitted on the "Request for Funds" form to the Conservation Commission and Recreation Board through the Chair of each board, or to the Town Administrative Officer.