

## CHARLOTTE CONSERVATION FUND - APPLICATION

Applicant: Charlotte Land Trust / Vermont Land Trust

Address: CLT – P.O. Box 43, Charlotte, VT 05445

VLT – P.O. Box 850, Richmond, VT 05477

Contact Person: CLT – Kate Lampton (klampton@gmavt.net)

VLT – Allen Karnatz (allen@vlt.org)

Project Name: Hinsdale-Preston

Landowner: Clark Hinsdale

Number of Acres: 101

Date: April 25, 2016

Amount of Charlotte Conservation Fund money requested: \$90,000

Total conservation project cost: \$599,400

Percent of town contribution to total conservation purchase: 15%

Project Summary: The project would conserve 101 acres of excellent farmland at the corner of Guinea and One Mile Roads. Of that acreage, 32 acres are under an existing Town Open Space Agreement. This project would convert that agreement to the far stronger conservation easement for the entire 101 acres. Clark Hinsdale would enter into the conservation easement with VLT and transfer the conserved land to Ward and Dylan Preston for continued agricultural use. The project would allow Dylan Preston to establish and expand his hay and beef cattle business on owned land.

### Nature of your Organization:

**The Charlotte Land Trust** is a private non-profit land conservation organization. Its mission is to protect and enhance the historic and rural beauty of the area by conserving important agricultural lands, forestlands, natural areas, scenic views and historic sites.

The primary focus of the **Vermont Land Trust** is on permanently conserving productive, recreational, and scenic lands vital to Vermont's and rural economy and environment.

Date Reviewed (attach comments):

Charlotte Conservation Commission –

Charlotte Recreation Committee – May 3, 2016

Charlotte Trails Committee – May 10, 2016

Date Approved-

Charlotte Selectboard

### SUPPLEMENTAL CONSERVATION FUND APPLICATION

1. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: Describe the property and attach any relevant site plans, photographs, deed restrictions, planning/zoning approvals, etc.

The property is 101 acres at the corner of Guinea and One Mile Roads. It is almost completely open meadow with 97%

agricultural soils (ranked as Prime or Statewide). There is a very small wetland area (1 acre) and a small tributary that will be subject to the NRCS Ag Land Easement Plan for water quality protection and buffer areas. Visually the land is a component of the highly scenic valley along Guinea Road.

There is a farmhouse on the property that will be excluded from the easement on a 2 acre section and a building envelope line around the house exclusion to allow for farm labor housing, if needed. A parcel directly across One Mile Road with a barn will also be acquired by the Prestons. These additions are important in that they help provide for farm housing and infrastructure. The barn parcel is not part of this funding request.

2. **RESOURCES**: Describe – e.g. habitat, wetlands, scenic, streams, productive soils, historic sites, public access

There is approximately 1 acre of wetland on the property and a small tributary through the middle of the parcel. Other than these portions, the property consists of 98 acres of tillable land. All of the tillable land is ranked as either Prime or Statewide soils. The Charlotte Significant Wildlife Habitat Map shows a habitat area along the tributary. In addition to the protection provided by the conservation easement the tributary will be additionally protected with buffer and water quality provisions under the NRCS Ag Land Easement Plan.

This parcel is in an area of high scenic resources and One Mile Road is shown as a scenic road on town plan maps. The open views across this parcel to surrounding farmland and to the Green Mountains in the distance will be protected through the conservation easement.

3. **PUBLIC BENEFIT**: Describe the public benefit to be derived from this project and the future use of the land. This should include any proposed trail easements, agricultural uses, recreational uses, scenic preservation, municipal uses, etc.

The principal public benefits of this project are agricultural and scenic, with the additional natural resource benefits associated with stream corridor protections. This area of Charlotte has long been recognized as one of the most significant agricultural areas, with large contiguous stretches of good farmland. There are nearby parcels that have already been conserved and the addition of this land will strengthen the continued agricultural viability of Charlotte's central valley.

Of particular importance with this project is the chance to assist a young farmer establish and strengthen his first farm. Charlotte has been fortunate to have several young farmers become established here in recent years, contrary to the national and Vermont trends. Conservation, with the assistance of the Charlotte Conservation Fund, has been a large part of this success. Helping the next generation of farmers in Charlotte is consistent with the Town Plan and Charlotte's longstanding commitment to agriculture.

The scenic value of this project cannot be overstated. Charlotte's central valley is characterized by open space and the broad sweeping views to the Green Mountains. The Hinsdale-Preston project land is a key component of that vista. Together with lands already conserved, and lands with the potential for conservation, this area has high scenic value and the potential for that value to be protected in perpetuity.

Public access is not included as part of this project.

4. **PROJECT STATUS**: Describe the status of the project, including the timetable for completion and closing dates. Attach any relevant documents such as Purchase and Sale Agreement, appraisal etc

The project application will be considered at the June VHCB hearing. A decision on VHCB funding will be made at that meeting. CLT will be meeting with the local review committees/commissions within the next two months. A local fundraising campaign will be conducted over the summer. Closing on the project is anticipated late in 2016 or in early 2017.

Funding Plan:

**Expenses**

Acquisition	475,000
Project Costs	9,200
<u>Value Donation</u>	<u>115,200</u>
Total	599,400

**Income**

VHCB	356,600
Town	90,000
Bargain Sale	115,200
Landowner Funds	2600
<u>CLT</u>	<u>35,000</u>
Total	599,400

5. CONSERVATION FUND ASSISTANCE: What specific use will be made of an allocation from the Conservation Fund? Why is an allocation considered necessary for the project's viability? Is an allocation requested in one lump sum or over a period of years?

The allocation is requested as a lump sum payment to be used at the closing on the conservation easement purchase. This is a high value property because of its good soils and scenic views and vistas. The maximum amount allowed for VHCB grants is being sought and the Conservation Fund grant will be essential in closing the funding gap, together with a local fundraising effort, to be undertaken by CLT. The VHCB grant process is highly competitive and in addition to the dollar value of the Fund contribution, the commitment of local money is essential in making the application competitive.

\*\*To achieve community conservation goals through non-regulatory means, the Conservation Fund Advisory Board suggests funding standard projects at levels up to 20% of total project costs.

6. LEVERAGE: What is the value of any neighborhood or other matching contributions to the project?

This project highly leverages Town Conservation Fund money. The Fund request is only 15% of the total project expenses, below the recommended 20%. The landowner is actively contributing to the project through a generous 20% bargain sale. CLT is committed to a local fundraising campaign to bring in the remaining project funds (see budget for detailed amounts).