

Andrews Community Forest Committee, Town of Richmond, VT

Meeting minutes for February 19, 2024

Meeting start: 6:00PM

Members present: Daniel Schmidt (co-chair), Ian Stokes (co-chair), Melissa Wolaver, Brad Elliott, Chase Rosenberg (joined at 6:20pm), Cecelia Danks via zoom (joined at 6:10), Wright Preston

Members absent: Julian Portilla

Public present: Sam Pratt

Public present via Zoom: Nancy Zimny, Paul Hauf, Bob Low, Dan Wolfson

Request to accept the January minutes: Brad called the question, Melissa seconded. Committee voted unanimously to accept the January 22, 2024 minutes.

Wright agreed to be the meeting secretary.

Daniel started with updates and stated Brad, Chase and Sam met twice during February to discuss wildlife “plan for a plan”. Brad noted that Jon Kart reached out to his co-worker, Andrea Shortsleeve to assist in looking at the property’s “keystone -umbrella species” and their habitats in the property.

Julian and Daniel met to discuss draft management plan “hotspots”. Melissa suggested that the word “Challenges” was a better descriptor.

Brad spoke about the “laundry basket” list of items to work on including “bringing better order” to all ACF web page and the listing of documents in the web page. It was noted the Ian has a vast store of ACF documents in his Word Store site. These documents can be linked to the ACF web page.

Cecelia noted via chat that the ACF trail plan should include indigenous landscape acknowledgement. The committee agreed with this point.

Daniel and Ian spoke about the need to fill three committee vacancies that will occur this April. The public posting of these three opening will be posted by April 24th and the Selectboard will look to make appointments at is April 21st meeting.

Daniel introduced the next agenda item, called draft management plan “Hot Spots”, now called “Challenges”. It was noted that there will be a need for important “compromise”, and to have these hard discussions and “do the best we can” concerning working through the draft management plan.

It was stated the challenges likely have themes and we should work to group them.

- Daniel said Julian came up with 10 guidelines for collaborative work on the management plan. They are:
 1. Listen with curiosity.
 2. Don’t interrupt (except to ask for clarification)...but be as brief as possible.
 3. Ask questions about the other’s perspectives
 4. Try to understand the needs and interests of the speaker
 5. Try to get the other more of what you understand they need and want. Make their concerns your concern.
 6. The text of the easement and/or the management plan, and the conclusions of papers written contain guidance for our decision but NOT prescriptions or answers to the specific challenges of

ACFC. They do not obligate us to do something or prevent us from doing something (within reason and common sense...no golf courses or airports, for eg). In other words, the answers to our issues are found only in our ability to find common ground.

7. Look for ways to build a complete picture/package of things that can get the most for the most people rather than seeking to negotiate each issue separately.

8. Separate the people from the problems we're working on.

9. Worry most about what we can control (suggestions for MP) and least about what we can't (DRB, SB, etc.)

10. We don't have to solve everything. If we solve 80% and leave the rest for the SB, we've done them a great service. Not agreeing on everything doesn't mean we don't agree on anything.

We listed pinch points or challenges:

- Melissa noted Connection to adjoining lands
- Brad said more ecological protections as aspirational with respect to proposed trail routes
- Wright mentioned connectivity and perhaps use the words human connectivity when referring to connecting trails. There is the connectivity term relating to forest block connectively that relates to non-human users of forests.
- Chase mentioned Selectboard approval for the final ACF management plan.
- Daniel noted Zones of Influence vs. Buffer Zones
- Brad mentioned Changes since the 2018 Management Plan with new knowledge based on wildlife impacts from human trails and human trail use
- Daniel said correct management plan to reflect the current moment
- Chase mentioned the importance said Monitoring Reports
- Daniel mentioned User Human Experience
- Melissa mentioned Sinuosity Plan and changes with the new road system
- Chase said the process makes it harder to honor earlier public voices and comments
- Wright noted the newly upgraded utility road system changed the forest
- Cecelia said adaptive management and mapping are important
- Brad mentioned the topic of Prioritizing Recreation over Natural Conservation
- Chase said Action vs. Legislation
- Daniel asked the Zooming Public to add in the Chat
- Chase noted the Andrews Community Forest is a proxy for the town's planning and its uses. He asked: What is the future of this town with respect to recreation?
- Brad mentioned Define Recreation
- Melissa said Cost and Money
- Chase noted Zoning compliance for trails

- Ian said the existing paths, trails and roads in the forest provide recreation resources
- Daniel asked what do we lack?
- Daniel then noted 2 sticking points: 1. Criteria for new trails and whether to maintain existing trails; 2. Plan and design for new trails
- Ian noted not sufficient guidelines and criteria for building and use of trails of walker / hikers and mountain bikers
- Brad asked what is the conservation easement trying to protect? Mentioned talking to VLT.
- Dan Wolfson talked about the great ecological reports the committee has and has access to. the committee should use these reports.
- Chase mentioned the tension about starting over
- Daniel noted there are four general and different categories of challenges:
 - 1 Ecological Imbalance
 - 2 Make ecological protections aspirational
 - 3 Recreation
 - 4 Process
- ((See Daniel's List at end of these minutes))
- Brad mentioned Zones of Influence
- Ian said he agrees with the matter of Zones of Influence
- Melissa said we need a detailed map that shows zones of influence with overlapping buffers and noted 200' buffers
- Chase said the ecosystem is always in flux and we are managing for this
- Melissa asked what a 400' buffer means and what is the impact?
- Chase said identify the keystone species and we can hire an expert to do this.
- Daniel, Buffer and or vs. Zones of Influence
- Cecelia, Concentration of trails
- Sam, Compromise
- Chase, Don't lump all trail types together, lots of different types of trails
- Bob, offers map for overview
- Ian, RFP. Brad and Ian form a subcommittee for the RFP
- Ian, things moving slowly, new management plan, bridging comments, external consultant to help bridge ideas
- Brad, Set RFP person up for success, Editorial eye – contractor

- Daniel, Looking back, there's a gap. Goal, objective to tasks, Poor sequencing, task to Objective or vis versa, Need to work together, Sift detail to prioritize
- Ian, Clear vision statement, then Objectives, then Tasks, Ian and Brad will work on this
- Daniel, Shopping the idea of the RFP
- Wright, Review the timeline RFP and Challenges conversation, Discussion on subcommittee meetings

Committee discussion ended at 8:04PM,

Next meeting 3/25/23, 6:00PM

Adjourn. Motion made by Wright, Seconded by Cecelia. Voted unanimously.

Daniel provided a list of Challenges below during and after meeting:

Ecological and recreation imbalance

Making ecological protections inspirational

Action vs legislation – tension about talking about it for a long time

Mandating specific trail routes

Connectivity – connections with adjacent landowners (Wildlife connectivity vs recreation connectivity)

Ecology

Zones of influence and buffer zones

Mapping – how do we get useful without overwhelming ourselves and the public

Do we have the right layers to make a decision

Monitoring for impacts

Monitoring in the context of adaptive management

Process

How to honor public comment from the beginning to now (public comment burn out)

Cost and money

Defining conservation

Selectboard approval

How the MP might not reflect the current moment

Town plan and zoning for development

Criteria for creating a new trail or maintaining an existing trail

Cecilia – how to handle existing farm and logging roads currently used as trails

Criteria for creating a multiuse trail

How to interpret the easement

How to incorporate other studies and documents about the ACF and other Vermont forests

Tension of starting over given the amount of work that has already went into the MP and other documents

Recreation

Mountain biking and the impact of mountain biking

Human experience – how we all think the forest should be experienced

Sinuosity/arrowwood plan

Much has changed with the new road system

Convo around ACF is a proxy convo about a lack of a larger town vision regarding recreation