

March 29 ACF Management Plan Revisions - Public Meeting Feedback

Introduction

The Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC) has completed its revisions of the Andrews Community Forest Management Plan. In an effort to engage the community, the ACFC planned a public meeting on Wednesday, March 29, 2023 to present the plan revisions and the process behind them, and to request community feedback. During the March 29 public meeting and after, the public was asked to share their thoughts about the plan revisions.

This document represents the comments submitted during and after the March 29 meeting. This document includes:

1. A description of the methods the Committee used to engage the community.
2. A list of comments submitted, organized by theme.

Methods

Upon its completion of the Management Plan Revisions, the ACFC brought in consultant Melissa Levy (Community Roots) to help design the public meeting, facilitate the meeting, and analyze the feedback received. Prior to the meeting, the plan revisions were shared on the ACFC website. In addition, members of the public who had questions were asked to submit them.

The meeting itself combined a variety of methods in order to engage people in a variety of ways. This included a gallery walk of maps, a visual presentation by multiple ACFC members, a Question and Answer session with consultants to the process and other experts, a feedback form for written feedback which were collected at the end of the meeting. The feedback form was also offered in a Google Form, so people who attended the meeting either in person or virtually could provide feedback through Sunday, April 2.

Consultant Melissa Levy combined the data from the paper forms, the Google Form data and several emails she received as a result of technical difficulties with the digital form into a spreadsheet. Reviewing the comments involved sorting them into key themes and key actionable suggestions that the ACFC can take into account in

finalizing the Management Plan revisions. Upon completing the Management Plan revisions, the ACFC will submit them to the Selectboard for approval.

Themes Represented in the Feedback

Overall, the feedback received was mixed with both positive and negative comments and some actionable suggestions.

Overall support and appreciation.

There were many who felt that the Committee had done its job and felt good about the proposed revisions, admitting that they were a compromise between recreation and conservation; a common refrain was to complete the revisions and move on.

I think they are good! There is definitely a trade off between recreation and preservation, they are doing the best job they can to manage that.

Good! I think they are a balanced proposition between wildlife and conservation efforts and recreation. I feel that it's important to help our community have access to the ACF and trails are how we do this!

Feels balanced between recreation and conservation.

Fine, understanding recreational experience is still expected to be a good one (smiley face) Also happy this advances the other goal to protect habitat and wildlife.

You have done a GREAT job trying to satisfy many constraints and demands.

I like the changes.

I am in full support of the revised plan. Elimination of the 3rd trail in the NE quadrant is an acceptable compromise toward a solution that tries to make everyone satisfied.

I am in favor of the proposed trail network and revisions. I am most concerned with moving forward so the community can benefit from this resource. I also feel this has been adequate (excessive?) public comment without enough action. Please forward to the Selectboard post haste!

I commend the committee on their work and the outcome of a well balanced plan. I hope this completes five years of work.

I strongly approve. Thank you for your thoroughness.

I'm in favor of the proposed changes. I appreciate the compromises made. I appreciate the continued use of the rigorous evaluation of proposed trails.

I feel good about them. I think the committee has done an admirable job balancing the opinions of

those in the community.

I'm delighted by the changes. I think the balance and tradeoffs between conservation and recreation have been thoughtful and well-considered.

I am in support of these changes and the plan in general.

Not what I would have wished for but an ok compromise.

VERY GOOD- let's move forward! Thank you to all the volunteers, ecologists, and panelists!

It appears the new changes were well thought out.

The proposed changes reflect the ecological wishes of the community while maintaining recreation on the property. I am glad that was balanced.

It is well thought out and taking into account a lot of impact and learning and the changes are evidence of compromise.

Positive changes are eliminating trails in NW quadrant, eliminating trails in NE quadrant that was too close to wildlife corridor, including acknowledgement of indigenous people.

They don't seem too drastic.

I think it's a good balance between recreation and ecological concerns. I'm worried about over-restrictive policies that severely limit appropriate use.

Avoidance of wildlife and fragile ecology areas are great.

I am concerned about the direction this process has taken. It appears that the more vocal public voices have the desire to minimize the public access to this property to make it an unchanged and unaccusable preserve. This property was I believe purchase partly with Richmond tax money as a Richmond Community Forest and as such should be accessible as much as possible to the residents of Richmond. Nearly all of the time at this meeting was taken up with comments and questions from opponents of the plan itself and not only the changes. When one person did ask a question relating to the recreational opportunities, he received a 3 word answer. I came prepared to speak at this meeting but I did not because I understood from the very good presentations, the changes that were proposed, and I did not have any questions related to the purpose of the meeting. There was much talk about the effects on wildlife, I am not a wildlife expert but only an observer so here are some observations. I live at the end of Grandview Drive, a ½ mile spur off from Huntington Rd with 11 houses. My home is surrounded by forest, part of an area of forest bounded by Huntington, Dugway and Cochran roads. This forest is heavily crisscrossed with trails including the Preston and Stafford preserves and many trails constructed by mountain bike groups which I am sure have had much less scientific and public input than the trails you are proposing. These trails are quite heavily used. I almost always see other people when walking up there. With all of this human activity both residential and recreational, I am sure that the lives of the animals has been disrupted somewhat, but they seem to have adapted and do not seem to be too bothered by our presence. I believe that the animals at ACF would adapt in a like manner. In our yard within 100 feet of our house we have seen deer, bear, moose red fox, coyote,

porcupine, otter, turkey, red and grey squirrel, rabbit, woodchuck, bobcat, racoon, skunk, bared owl, and what I truly believe was a mountain lion however the experts tell me I was likely mistaken on that. When my 6 year old grandson comes to visit he asks what animals are we going to see this time. He wants to see a tiger but we have not found one of those yet. I have some concerns about the statement in the plan that seems to prohibit any future development of trails on the property. If people in the future believe that additional trails would be a benefit and could be done within the other constraints, I believe they should be free to do so. This seems to be a concession to the no access people. I commend the members of this committee. I know it is hard to make everyone happy and you have done a remarkable job of trying. I do support these changes and hope we can get this revised plan approved soon so that we can get these trails in place and begin enjoying this property. Thank you for your work.

It is a good balance between recreation and ecology. I like connecting the trails to the river and sip of sunshine. I am concerned that a few loud voices (on the preservation side) are being over-represented. I am somewhat concerned that ATF will be used heavily but that is just part of the situation and at least it won't be developed.

There are huge impacts already in place (whole tree logging, powerline, high end road building) that have nothing to do with appreciation for the natural resources that are there. Trails serve that purpose - well-designed, ecologically conscious, and accessible to all.

I think we should wrap it up and move on!

I would keep/adopt the proposed changes b/c I feel like more than plenty due-diligence has been done and a great trail plan has been presented that accomplishes the objectives.

None. THanks for keeping it all so respectful.

Overall it is a great product! While it's not everything everyone wants, it strikes a balance our town needs at this point in time. Personally, I would to see more recreation identified that people can enjoy specifically put in the plan.

None. Thank you for your effort. It is time to move on.

None. I strongly propose that we approve the changes to the mgmt. Plan.

Send it in. Please let's move forward.

I do not propose any changes. I think the committee and all those consulted during the process have done well with the task they were given. I have a lot of respect for the committee and continuing to do right by the wildlife and the community in Richmond despite being under tremendous scrutiny. THank you!

I think we should move ahead as is.

I have none to add.

None - LET'S MOVE FORWARD!

No proposed changes. Very informative session. I learned a lot. Thank you for all your hard volunteer work!

No significant changes. Thank you for all your efforts and persistence!!

I do not suggest any additional changes, in fact I hope the plan does not bend in the direction of a few persistent voices, opposed to supporting the majority of this community which values trail use. Please do not change the mandates of the original management plan.

Trails that focus on avoiding sensitive areas while maximizing enjoyment. My concern is related to NOT moving forward! I believe that the forest is underutilized which will impact community investment and support.

I appreciate that the trails are concentrated as opposed to "fanned out" throughout the forest.

I am glad to see how much clarity has been achieved around the ecological value of specific areas, and how much emphasis is placed on protecting this piece of forest as a wildlife corridor. These two factors should be weighed heavily, acknowledging the inhabitants of this forest as equal stakeholders in the outcome of this process (despite not having any opportunity to speak for themselves).

Thank you for protecting wetlands AND please continue to honor the uplands corridor.

I like the connection to sip of sunshine. I like professionally built trails! RMT partnership, yes? No more delays please!

That there is a plan. That there is hope to move forward about 5+ years. I like the connectivity. Time to move forward. Concerned about the obstructionists.

I think the plan is well-designed. I love the fact that both trail designers and ecologists were engaged during the process. I don't have any major concerns. As was stated in the meeting, there are a number of requirements that need to be met in the management plan and the conservation easement. Not everyone is going to agree on the final outcome.

I like the existing and new trail(s) proposed south of - below - the powerline corridor.

It seems to me that plenty of effort and time has been applied to this plan. Human population growth is the ultimate problem to be addressed, but perhaps beyond the scope of this process!

Support - Specific parts - Indigenous Acknowledgement, Timber Management and Forestry

Respondents generally supported the indigenous acknowledgement parts of the revisions. Others mentioned the timber management and forestry activities.

I support the Indigenous Acknowledgment part of the changes.

Great to see the inclusion of native cultures.

Like: Addition of indigenous people acknowledgement

I like the Land Recognition and Timber Management and Forestry Activities.

The careful text editing and text 'clean-up' are both good.

I like the addition of the acknowledgement of the indigenous people.

I agree with the suggestion to call out Abnaki from other indigenous people.

The land acknowledgement is appreciated.

Concerns with Trail Map - Quantity of trails - Too many or too few

Respondents were either happy with the balance of trails and conservation or thought there were too many trails or too few trails, depending on which side of that balance they found themselves. Overall, "a good compromise is when both parties are dissatisfied."

Too many new trails at once.

Do we really need more trails? What would be wrong with just leaving it alone!!!

I have some concerns about the changes to the trail maps to reduce the areas accessible to the public. Over all with the conditions you have placed upon you, I do support the changes with some reservations.

Would love to see more trails instead of less.

More trails.

Connectivity and access to green space - we can't get to the woods without trails. PLEASE keep the trails. 2 seems like a minimum in terms of flow of traffic and decreasing impact.

There are well over 130 miles of trails within 15 or 20 minutes of the Round Church. Did you run a needs analysis to determine it was necessary to override ecological protections across such a large section of the ACF in order to add so little mileage to local networks?

Concerns with Trail Map - Different Users and Potential Conflicts

There were also concerns with the interaction of different users on the trails, mostly between mountain bikers and others (walkers, wildlife watchers, etc.). There were those who wanted mountain bike use to be limited to some but not all trails. There were concerns with e-bikes also, with some feeling that e-bikes should not be allowed. E-bikes do allow for accessibility for more

people.

We felt that the meeting was focused on the interests of the mountain bikers and not on the walkers and hikers and also those interested in wildlife.

Besides what's above, I am concerned about any e-bikes being considered non-motorized.

I like user access at appropriate times. I am opposed to e-bike use. I believe that mountain bike use should be limited to some but not all trails.

The over focus of mountain biking over the effect of the trail on wildlife in this last area of pristine wilderness in our town.

We're concerned that the mountain bikers will increase the degradation of the property through noise and erosion and use by those interested in an exciting experience but not of the enjoyment of nature

Will there be trails for hikers apart from mountain bikers? how will hikers be safe from speedy bikers?

I am concerned about getting "over-run" by mountain bikers - not so much on the trails, but running out of parking. I am concerned about ticks in the forest. I am concerned about erosion.

I am concerned about the already busy use by mountain bikes; but I hope it just spreads out the use.

I feel like these trails are being designed strictly for bikers and not for multi-use (hikers). The map shows the trails go up and down but fail to show the length of the switchbacks that are on both East Climb and Hemlock Valley. These switchbacks take up a lot of land

My concern is don't make trails too steep to accommodate some tight corridor. (Keep quality recreational experience!)

I like the long loop. I am concerned with the steep elevation for ease of walking. I have no concerns that the plan does not consider the appropriate ecological points.

Concerns with Ecological Impacts of Trail - Parameters for Trail Plan

Many were concerned with the parameters informing the plan, especially the need to provide a link to Sip of Sunshine trail, the aspirational buffers, and the overall impact of recreation on wildlife.

One recommendation was to build out the trails in stages, keeping recreation confined to the lower elevations to start and build out the trail network as we can see the impacts of the first trails, before building out more.

Another recommendation was to designate some trails as no bicycle trails. And that sensitive winter "deer habitat" should be closed to all traffic Jan. 1 - March 30.

We are concerned about page 35 of the Management Plan where it states that a 200' buffer is aspirational and may be changed to achieve the basic objectives of the Trail Design.

I believe the proposed Management Plan (MP) changes are to facilitate a trail plan. The trail plan was designed with the “parameter” to provide a link to Sip of Sunshine trail. That connection “guided the design in a major way” according to Caitlin. Had that not been a “parameter,” we “would have gotten a different product from Arrowwood,” according to the Doris Barton. This is the crux of the problem. I served on the Andrews Forest Committee in 2019, just after the MP was adopted. There were members of the committee who were advocating for construction of the connector trail even back then. By including that connector as a parameter for the trail design, the committee gave up the opportunity to get a more holistic evaluation of what could best meet the goals of the Conservation Easement, namely conservation and recreation. For example, the consultants may have decided to concentrate trails (recreation) below the power line and let wildlife thrive in the uplands (conservation). I attended the 3/15 Conservation Commission panel on recreation and conservation. It was very informative. I had four takeaways. 1. There must be an evaluation of the larger landscape within which the parcel is located. 2. To balance conservation and recreation, it is helpful to establish Zones. Generally the recreation area would be closer to the road and parking. The conservation area would be in the less accessible areas and those used by wildlife. 3. The science on conservation and recreation is evolving rapidly. On 3/29, Caitlin described it as a “growing field.” 4. Off-leash dogs do considerable damage. Andrews Forest is in a high priority conservation block and for that reason we should keep recreation confined to a smaller area and leave the areas favored by wildlife free of encroachment. I support Jon Kart’s comments about high priority areas. Let’s design a trail plan that allows some additional trail development now, in the lower elevations, and give ourselves some time for the science to catch up before green-lighting all of the proposed trails. Or, identify phases of trail development with some parameters to be met before later phases are constructed. I strongly object to off-leash dogs in the forest, particularly in the deep upland areas. They can be harmful to wildlife, particularly during winter months. Many dog owners will claim they have voice control over their dogs but they don’t. I’ve witnessed very clear examples of that. The views expressed by those on the Conservation Commission panel are views that have been mostly absent in most Andrews Forest Committee meetings I’ve attended. I feel that the committee is largely resting on the collaborative effort with the ecologists and trail designer they retained (as mentioned in all their marketing efforts) and have not sought out other expert opinions, of which many have been identified and have offered to assist. Good suggestions offered by community members don’t seem to be considered. I think it is imperative for the committee and the public to understand that the foundation for the MP is the Conservation Easement including the purposes and provisions within it. This should have been a prominent fact stated in the history presentation. I did not hear the term once in that presentation (though I think I spotted it on one page of the power point, perhaps in connection with Vernal Pools). While the VLT representative touched on the easement a number of times, I still wonder how many people in the audience understand that the MP is not a document that stands in isolation. The Committee and the consultants have a ton of effort invested in the plan they’ve presented. I think the flaw was at the start of this long process. I think the consultants should have been charged with designing a trail network that balances conservation and recreation, without a “parameter” to connect to Sip of Sunshine. If connecting to Sip of Sunshine was not the preferred approach, the MP could have been amended differently or perhaps no amendment would have been required at all.

Change the parameters. Protection of wildlife values should not be "aspirational."

I think some of the trails proposed, particularly in the northeast quadrant - the trail that encircles a wetland - are problematic.

An ACFC member stated at 15:20 or thereabouts in the recording that the Committee has a "requirement" to establish connectivity with Sip of Sunshine and VYCC. Isn't that the Committee's own "requirement"? Where is that written, and under what authority? What kind of public process was used to discuss and establish something that now has the Committee boxed into laboriously promoting an ecologically and even economically flawed trail plan?

Not good. We can do much better to not impact wildlife. Probably will not be supporting VLT if they equate conservation with recreation.

I believe you MUST designate some trails as NO bicycles. As bike traffic increases, the "walking public" will be impacted! Sensitive winter "deer habitat" MUST be closed to ALL traffic Jan. 1 - March 30.

Trail work needs to be scaled back in sensitive ecological areas.

I think that they do not take into account enough the effect of trails on wildlife.

I have hiked all the potentially flagged areas for bike trails in the ACF, and found many areas of concern. I will list just two questions concerning many of those areas but focusing on the trails i mentioned below. Has anyone thought about the cost to building these trails? Particularly, Hemlock Valley and East Climb which run through extremely steep terrain with several stream crossings. The trails would require several bridges and other structural supports along these steep slopes to prevent severe erosion and mudslides. It doesn't seem humanistically possible to reach these areas to build those structures without machinery. Why do you need to incur extremely high costs when you could improve existing trails and stay at the lower elevations? It seems to me the higher elevation you go the higher the cost to build these extreme trails. Not to mention the impact this will have on wildlife and their sensitive Natural Communities that run throughout that forest.

We are still concerned about negative impacts the trail design will have on wildlife and wildlife corridor connectivity.

I'm concerned that connectivity of wildlife corridor will be negatively impacted. Concerned that people will go "off trail" and impact wildlife.

You didn't discuss parking. Are we prepared for increased use.

Everything works for us. Am concerned about dogs not on leashes.

My main concern is for wildlife and ecology. That is the priority in my mind, over more recreational trails or mountain biking trails!

Lack of consideration / incorporation of available recent knowledge regarding sensitive ecological

/ wildlife features surrounding and in the ACF. Most particularly, the need to take advantage of the findings and language from the Naughton trails Report for the State and the Field Naturalist study of the Forest.

An ACFC member stated at 15:20 or thereabouts in the recording that the Committee has a "requirement" to establish connectivity with Sip of Sunshine and VYCC. Isn't that the Committee's own "requirement"? Where is that written, and under what authority? What kind of public process was used to discuss and establish something that now has the Committee boxed into laboriously promoting an ecologically and even economically flawed trail plan?

What is the basis for making buffer protections "aspirational" and building trails and infrastructure through sensitive areas compulsory, other than words the ACFC is free to revise? The VLT steward correctly stated at the meeting that all the Purposes of the Conservation Easement must be observed, including the first one about protecting wildlife, biodiversity, Forest functions, etc. There are no loopholes such as the one in the Management Plan the Committee is proposing and relying upon to justify numerous encroachments on sensitive areas above the powerlines.

6.3 Management Objectives – "Retain soil integrity, water quality, natural species composition, natural disturbance regimes and natural hydrology" – How are you planning to achieve this?

Concerns - Specific Language

There were some concerns about specific language.

1. The removal of these sentences from the original plan on Page 26 was problematic for some. They felt that the statement should have been made conditional based on the carrying capacity of the land, parking, etc.

"The forest and its trail system shouldn't be explicitly a destination, but rather an additional amenity that adds to the array of outdoor rec. opportunities that draw visitors to Richmond."

I'm concerned about the removal of these sentences from the original plan - pg. 26: "The forrest and its trail system shouldn't be explicitly a destination, but rather an additional amenity that adds to the array of outdoor rec. opportunities that draw visitors to Richmond." I think this statement should have been made conditional based on the carrying capacity of the land, parking, etc. but it generally reflects my view of ACF as described in the easement with its emphasis on land and habitat conservation. So it should remain. With regard to the original language on page 26, many would argue that Richmond has already become a "destination" for Mt. biking and other trail uses. As such, the addition of more multiuse trails in ACF, in general, violates the spirit of the original management plan and the ACF easement in my view. Please describe why it was removed. Thanks.

2. Someone was concerned about the Conservation Easement not being properly represented in the plan. Changes to the MP should include 1.) adding rules for non-motorized mechanized recreation to the MP AND 2.) a revision of lines 1279-1281 that includes full representation of what is actually stated in the Conservation Easement on this topic,

including the constraints and priorities stated in sections V, VI, and VII as noted above. ** A similar issue exists in the revised MP for non-mechanized recreation as well – ie, the CE’s statements identifying constraints and priorities have been left out. (See incomplete statement in lines 1277-1278 of revised MP and relevant CE section III E which states that trail building must be consistent with the purposes/provisions of the Grant AND Sections V, VI, and VII of CE.)

Concern: Regarding non-motorized mechanized recreation in the ACF, the revised MP incompletely (and therefore inaccurately) represents what’s in the Conservation Easement (CE) about this topic. The revised MP (p 33, lines 1279-81), states the Conservation Easement allows for non-motorized mechanized recreation IF the MP provides rules for this type of recreation and guides mgt of any recreational infrastructure. The section of the Conservation Easement (IIIa) to which this statement refers, says such uses may be permitted IF they are regulated in the Management Plan AND they are consistent with the Purposes of the Grant AND consistent with Sections V (riparian buffer zone), VI (ecological protection zone), and VII (vernal pool EPZ). Furthermore, within Sections V, VI, and VII, the Conservation Easement states that IF there is any inconsistency between Sections V, VI, and VII and the stated purposes of the grant, permitted uses, or restrictions on the property, that the respective protection provisions (for riparian buffers, natural communities, and vernal pools) shall take priority. Therefore, as currently written, the revised MP: 1. Lacks the very rules for non-motorized mechanized recreation that its own statement says are necessary if these types of recreation are to be permitted in the ACF. 2. Incompletely (and therefore inaccurately) references the Conservation Easement on non-motorized mechanized recreation by not including the part of the sentence in the CE that refers to the constraints and prioritizations included in Sections V, VI, VII.** Changes to the MP should include 1.) adding rules for non-motorized mechanized recreation to the MP AND 2.) a revision of lines 1279-1281 that includes full representation of what is actually stated in the Conservation Easement on this topic, including the constraints and priorities stated in sections V, VI, and VII as noted above. ** A similar issue exists in the revised MP for non-mechanized recreation as well – ie, the CE’s statements identifying constraints and priorities have been left out. (See incomplete statement in lines 1277-1278 of revised MP and relevant CE section III E which states that trail building must be consistent with the purposes/provisions of the Grant AND Sections V, VI, and VII of CE.)

Concerns about Process

A variety of comments were concerns about the process the ACFC has gone through to engage the community in its revisions, mostly about insufficient responsiveness to previous comments, the email address of the ACFC not being consistently available, the management plan not being easily accessible, not enough opportunities for the public to comment, etc. Some comments were about how long the process has been, as they want the process to be over. Some were about the recreation side being sidelined while others were about the conservation side being sidelined.

THESE ARE FROM ONE PERSON:

My concerns (about insufficient responsiveness of the ACFC): I am concerned that after several

years and a huge effort by many folk to make changes to the Management Plan (MP) and its Trails Plan, those suggestions have not resulted in any substantial changes. This has been a missed opportunity to benefit from the interest, expertise and efforts to engage by Richmond people. For example, in March 2022 several dozen citizens responded to the ACFC online tool to propose changes to the Trails Plan, but no changes were made. Myself, I have offered concrete suggestions at warned ACFC meetings, documented at <https://infoacf.files.wordpress.com/2022/11/iancommentstoacfc-1.pdf> - again I'm concerned that these suggestions were not seriously considered and that no changes were made. Also, many Richmond people have posted their concerns to Front Porch Forum (see https://infoacf.files.wordpress.com/2023/04/fpf_postings_about_acf.pdf) - again these carefully composed and researched comments have apparently not altered the momentum or direction of the ACFC. My concerns: (About Trails planning): People have expressed concerns about the trails and ecology components of the MP in many forums and formats. However, the proposed MP has not been changed to take into account the latest science, or the local expertise documented at the recent RCC meeting on trail-based recreation. My own concerns here focus on three trails, and I have expressed these concerns verbally and in writing to the ACFC. I'm very concerned that the ACFC has not been responsive after two years and a huge effort by many folk to encourage changes to the Management Plan consistent with the Conservation Easement, especially as they relate to conservation of this conserved parcel. Specific suggestions about sections of the Management Plan have not resulted in any substantial changes, and the Plan is lacking important details about required and specific management details. The Plan does not appear to recognize that cumulative impacts depend on the volume of traffic on trails and focuses only on the routing of trails.

My concerns: (About Communication with/by the ACFC): Immediately, we need easy access to the proposed Management Plan (MP) revision in order to discuss it in an informed way. The new MP only appeared at the ACFC webpage towards the end of March, and the link was not adequately publicized. Printed copies of the MP have not been made available – some of the funds released for the engagement meeting could have been used for that.

Further, the email address of the ACFC has not been consistently available; it's not clear whether answered and unanswered emails are secured in a public record

The process is too lengthy and as mentioned could be divisive and nonproductive for future conservation projects.

- Availability of the Revised MP: The process for people to provide constructive comments on the proposed MP should be improved such that recommended changes can be considered and potentially implemented, consistent with normal practice for Town policy documents. This is especially important to Town residents as the Town Conservation Fund provided a substantial amount of the funding to purchase and conserve the ACF. This should go without saying. We need easy access to the proposed MP revision if we are to discuss it in an informed and factual way. So the link to the revised Plan should be publicized and printed copies made available, together with the announcement of a (several weeks) public comment period to allow residents to examine the revised MP and make their informed opinions, comments, and suggestions known. Personally I was able to obtain access to the proposed revised MP thanks to Assistant Town Manager Duncan Wardwell whom I contacted because the Engagement meeting announcement initially gave a link only to the 2018 MP. He let me know that the revised version would be available during the week of March 13th 2023, as indeed it was in the middle of that week at the ACF webpage, under the Engagement meeting announcement. So at least I personally had that information and I forwarded it to others.

- Communication with ACFC: Public comment should be encouraged at the start of ACFC meetings, and any comments addressed or deferred for consideration, and minuted accurately. Public should be encouraged to copy their comments into the 'chat' (if they fit) or via email to facilitate recording and documentation. A consistent email address for contacting the Committee should be prominently displayed at the Town website; emails sent to that address should be forwarded to Committee members, acknowledged and placed in the public record along with any replies from the Committee. My own comments at the ACFC meetings are documented here: <https://infoacf.files.wordpress.com/2022/11/iancommentstoacfc-1.pdf>

This is only my second meeting so I do not have enough knowledge to answer this. Also, this meeting REALLY needed to have someone from the trails because from what I have heard there was/is conflict between them.

Concerned that recreation, which is a desire of many, will be sacrificed in this extensive and thorough public process. Concerned this process will drag on indefinitely!

I am concerned the committee might acquiesce to the complaints of a loud few individuals and undermine the extensive professional work conducted by Arrowwood and Sinuosity.

I've been frustrated by the difficulty of accessing information that I feel should be easily available to the public. I felt there was a need for an organized and easily accessible source of information. So, in March 2022 I established a website to serve as repository for important information organized by topic. Many people have submitted useful and important information for inclusion at that site. Also, I feel that the meetings of the ACFC are usually lengthy and unstructured (inefficient) and communication to and from the ACFC has been difficult at the warned meetings and via email.

It is clear that the ACFC has done a great deal of important and helpful work in their revision of the ACF Management Plan. Unfortunately comments on the plan alone will not solve the discontent that exists among some in the Richmond community about plans for the forest. Many people have offered verbal and written thoughtful and reasonable comments and do not feel that they have received that in return. While the public meeting that the ACFC held was a good meeting, it was frustrating in that some of the ACFC responses seemed reactive and this meeting would have been a good opportunity for much needed dialogue. In the interest of clear public communication, the deadline on public comments might have been highlighted to infuse people with a sense of urgency. I imagine it may be frustrating for people who spent time writing comments to go to the website and see that the deadline for submission had passed. But I certainly appreciate the opportunity to comment.

My major concern is that the recreational users has been marginalized in the planning process.

I am concerned with the sacrifice of an expertly designed trail plan that balances the goals of the mgmt. Plan.

Opening the public dialogue including maximizing public comment at the ACFC March 29 meeting and allowing for post meeting submissions

Past and continuing opportunity for the public to be involved. In the latter case, the timeline on submission of comments following the March 29 meeting was not announced at the meeting. Nor

was there advertisement on FPF. There are additional concerns regarding whether the e-submission process works. MP changes are not all minor as proposed by ACFC, most particularly with regard to trails.

Why does the ACFC web page imply that questions are only being taken from people who “attended” the March 29 event, and not those who watched the MMCTV video of the meeting? W

Why were people given only four days to ask questions – and then why did the form close before the deadline – and not “at the end of Sunday, April 4” as the webpage states?

What is the rush? The meeting itself was exceedingly short, and the time limits did not allow for any meaningful follow-up questions or discussions about important points. The tone of most Committee members was defensive throughout – even dismissive of the good-faith attempts by the community to engage in the issues, not to be talked at or have its questions branded as “impolite.”

Public access to the revised MP with changes visible is appreciated, though more time with the final version would have been helpful.

Disappointed that the MP revision does not even acknowledge critical contemporary issues. Issues such as forest fragmentation, climate disruption, species extinction, or need for supporting biodiversity, are important background context to be considered in any management decisions about the ACF. B. Puzzled by the resistance of ACFC members to make any mention in the MP of the current explosion of all outdoor recreation and in particular, the popularity of mountain biking, as forces driving trail development. This explosion has direct implications for management decisions related to numbers, kinds, siting of trails, their ‘carrying capacities’, parking lots, potential user conflicts. C. Frustrated at ACFC reluctance to incorporate relatively newer ecological science information (not available in 2018) into the MP revision (despite members of the public drawing attention to this science and the Conservation Easement (section V) stating that “up-to-date ecological knowledge” be incorporated.) The reason given at the ACFC public mtg was that recreation science is still a ‘growing area’ which is true but there is still plenty of valuable relevant and available information which could help to better inform the process in the ACF. And if the ACFC truly feels the up-to-date available science is as yet an insufficient base on which to make decisions, then a ‘start low and go slow’ approach to trails should be used – as closure of trails, while not impossible, is highly improbable once they are in use. My understanding is that the MP will not be ‘revisited’ for changes again for 10 more years – all the more reason to acknowledge the issues noted above and not let 10 more years go by before recognizing them

Discouraged – a large number of concerned citizens have spent countless hours collecting information, exploring the ACF, preparing maps of natural resources and proposed trails, attending and speaking at ACFC meetings, writing to Times Ink! and FPF, talking informally with ACFC members and Select Board members, and holding informal group meetings in the library, Town Center, and individuals’ homes. However, input to the ACFC has not resulted in any substantial changes in the Management Plan (MP) and the associated Trails Plan. I’m feeling disappointed – I’m aware of numerous concerns raised by people with relevant expertise and expressed to the ACFC. The Committee has not taken advantage of the substantial efforts by these individuals.

To move forward it might be helpful for the ACFC to clearly identify the problems that have been laid out before them and provide clear and thoughtful answers to them. Is the problem, for example, that there are going to be trails at the ACF? Is the problem the location or number of trails? Is the problem the impact on wildlife or other natural resources? If the key problems can be clearly identified then having a dialogue-rich meeting to discuss the means for mitigating those issues would be invaluable.

Having the documents related to the ACF on a webpage as individual units instead of buried in a single document would be helpful too. I would be happy to index them for you if you don't have the time to parse them each out. Having an index would help Richmond residents find them or just be aware of their existence.

Keep public dialogue open.

Suggestions

Suggestions were made through these comments, some broad and some very specific. The broad suggestions were generally about the objectives of wildlife protection taking precedence over the objectives of trail design and recreation. Parking was discussed as well, in the sense that preparations need to be made for increased use and the parking that comes with that. Others were interested in creative ways of evaluating impacts on wildlife, including microphones or focusing efforts on a smaller number of species. Others wanted to see more detail about management and more stringent controls on dogs.

Wildlife protection takes precedence over trail design.

Several wanted wildlife protection to take precedence over trail design in the plan. This manifested itself in different ways, including closing sections of the trail at time of the year when wildlife is vulnerable, estimating the daily carrying capacity of the trails with plans for what to do if they are exceeded, eliminating the parameter requiring connection with the Sip of Sunshine Trail, etc.

Wording added to close sections of the trail at times of heavy year when wildlife is vulnerable.

Wording added about the estimated daily carrying capacity of trails with plans stated upfront what will occur if and when the number is exceeded.

We propose that the basic objectives of wildlife protection take precedence over the basic objectives of trail design. Our reason is that places for wildlife in Vermont are shrinking while places for recreation are exploding. Everyone profits when wildlife and the environment is protected.

Many of us have examined the original MP and now the ACFC revised MP in detail. We have suggested numerous and detailed changes (complete with clarifying comments to explain why a

revision was suggested) to the document. These detailed changes were sent to the ACFC previously, but to date, have not been acknowledged and since the recent revised MP does not include them, it is unknown if they have been considered. They are available at this link (best downloaded and read in Adobe Reader):

https://infoacf.files.wordpress.com/2023/03/mp2_plus.pdf

https://infoacf.files.wordpress.com/2023/01/list_mp2_suggestions_jan_2023.pdf

Evaluate Impacts on Wildlife

Many wanted a way of evaluating the impacts of the trails on wildlife and correcting any problems.

I do agree with some that we should use creative means to evaluate impacts on wildlife. Some reports suggest that microphones can be used to evaluate wildlife activity. This cost effective means of analysis should be used perhaps in a monitoring station located near a sensitive area.

Around the 36:00 mark, one Committee member twisted a legitimate question about how trail impacts on flora and fauna would be monitored and managed into a call for “super-rigorous, quantitative analysis to track population levels for every animal and every single plant.” Why not focus on a manageable number of species whose presence in the Forest is an indicator to overall Forest health? Why not include in the Plan monitoring and management methods built from those suggested to you, such as by the UVM Field Naturalists, or the Naughton study? Or is the Committee simply telling the community that the trail design it’s promoting is too large for it to responsibly manage for any ecological impacts beyond “trail conditions”?

Specific methodologies for observing, managing and monitoring impacts of humans and recreational use on the forest and wildlife. And correcting any anticipated or unexpected problems. Timing, who does monitoring of trail traffic, and which sensitive areas and species should be monitored. A method to sample traffic and extrapolate to monthly and annual traffic is provided: www.bikepeddocumentation.org. Monitoring the numbers of users of trails at a minimum.

New Plan that Balances Conservation and Recreation Consistent with Conservation Easement.

I suggest that Arrowwood and Sinuosity be asked to develop a plan that balances conservation and recreation to be more consistent with the Conservation Easement.

Need for Management Procedures in Greater Detail

Many respondents wanted the management procedures to be laid out in greater detail, including how trails and conditions will be monitored, by whom and what will happen if issues come up. Others wanted more specific rules around dogs, leaf blowers/snow compactors, ebikes, mountain bikes, horses, etc.

I’m worried about the lack of detail about management in the Management Plan (MP) which

should specify management procedures in much greater detail. (It is after all a *management* plan and can exclude excessive details of historical events not pertinent to future management.)

The Town's dog control ordinance does not prevent the Committee from establishing tighter controls on dogs in the forest and even prohibiting them as a known threat to the wildlife and habitat integrity. The Town allows cars and 18-wheelers to use its roads; the ACFC rightfully prohibits them from the Forest. Under its responsibility for protecting the Forest, why doesn't the revised Plan prohibit dogs in the Forest?

The statement about the ACFC needing to "thread a difficult needle" is correct. But now the Committee is revising the Management Plan that gave you that difficult needle. You now have much more ecological and trail management information available to you – most recently through the recent RCC expert panel. So why not use that information to revise problematic areas – like the passage saying protections are merely aspirational

Wording added about whether leaf blowers and snow compactors (for fat biking) and like machinery will be allowed.

E-bikes not being allowed; mountain bikes restricted to certain trails.

Strong language that says "We will continue to monitor and re-assess and make changes as needed." Remove the intent that there will not ever be more trails.

Review Hinesburg Town Forest plan as it pertains to some trail closures during hunting season.

Change the parameter that says there needs to be a connection to the Sip fo Sunshine trail.

Include a stewardship section. How to monitor, minimize and restrict impacts on wildlife habitats.

More clarity around "mechanized" and what it means, regarding mountain bikes.

Let horses use the trail.

Communication about when to ride and when not to ride.

Cleaning up contradictions within the MP. Examples:

- The multi-use nature of trails use.
- Clarifying whether future trails are or are not to be contemplated.
- Inclusion in the MP of trails closure regulations.
- The need for a consolidated list of trails rules.
- Clarifying use of e-bikes.
- SOS connection as a driver in terms of locating proposed trails.
- Need for Trail monitoring policy and plan.

Trail Map Changes Suggested

Many suggested changes to the trail map, including taking out particular trails and rerouting trails.

1. Trail specific suggestions:
 - a. 1) The "Roadside Trail" should be deleted. It is redundant as it parallels and duplicates the Access Road and Dana's Climb. Also, it runs within about 20 ft. of a flagged wetland area, and it is technically difficult to construct and ecologically questionable according to the Sinuosity description.
 - b. (2) The dense convoluted trail network above the power lines consisting of Rocky View (#11), Cascade Trail (#12) and Stream View (#13) should be consolidated into a single trail providing basically the same access but with minimized impacts and avoiding the unnecessary stream crossings at the top of Cascade Trail, as well as ensuring that Stream View avoids the buffer region around the flagged wetland noted above.
 - c. (3) "Sip of Sunshine Connector" should be redesigned to avoid the flagged wetland noted above. It appears that a single trail could be used to approach the SOS Connector instead of the presently proposed two trails. Based on my own exploration of the terrain and the ecologists' mapping of the ecology and habitat, it appears that a single trail should be located east of the proposed East Climb to avoid its three stream crossings and the wide switchbacks near the top (that invite switchback short-cuts).
2. Trail use rules. Seasonal restrictions on trail usage. Trail closure policies.
3. Clarify inconsistencies in the current MP draft; whether all trails are multi-use; whether there are to be future trails.
4. Consider dropping Hemlock Valley as it is in the highest wildlife sensitivity area.
5. Modify trails to not go through key areas of wildlife travel.
6. Dropping the Rldgetop Trail, which also tentatively modifying the Hemlock Valley Trail to ensure it is more optimal for multiple uses. How to more formally and sustainably connect to VYCC (via VAST).
7. Set aside for hikers/walkers where mountain bikers will not come.
8. Remove the East and Hemlock trails from their current locations and find better options.
9. Go back to original plan.
10. Redesign the loop trail east of the central wildlife corridor to remove the western side of the loop and make another part.

Specific Document Suggestions

11. 1.4, governance, 1st paragraph; the Town Plan should be in this section.
12. 1.4, 2nd paragraph, committee appointments; this is not what the Richmond Conservation Commission (RCC) agreed to with the Town Forest Steering Committee. Our agreement was to appoint one person from the RCC and one person either from the RCC or from outside the RCC.

This needs to be rectified.

13. 1.4.1 Purpose of committee: should probably mention Town Plan in here. Please note the point about commitment to natural resource protection – where in the plan is this discussed
14. 1.5.2 Pdf page 13 – the stipulations placed on trail location (connection to Sip O Sunshine Trail) should be mentioned here to provide needed context
15. 1.5.2. “Various and Ongoing: Consulted with Judy Rosovsky, Chair of the Conservation Commission on development of the trail design and revised management plan.” Do you have written or recorded notes on this? The RCC has not taken a position on the trails and as chair I have tried to be careful not to officially comment on the trail design. The statement in quotes would imply that the RCC does have an official position on the trail design, which we do not.
16. 1.5.3 This section should state that changes in the Concept Map require a Mgt Plan revision.
17. 1.5.3. “Any activities on the property which are not contemplated in the management plan Management Plan must be reviewed and approved by VLT Vermont Land Trust stewardship staff to ensure compliance with the Conservation Easement (see Appendix D).C.” – Does the SB need to sign off on this too?
18. 2.2 Timber Mgt and Forest Activities. In reference to existing logging trails -“Some may still serve as a component of a multi-use recreational trail network”- Why aren’t these included on the trail map ACFC has produced? These should be incorporated into trail planning. Many of the criticisms of the number and location of trails that I’ve seen may be offset by incorporating existing trails into the plan and thus not creating new trails. I understand that there may be issues with erosion but the planned bike trails have been identified as having issues with erosion by the trail designers themselves. In addition, every time I’ve been to the ACF I’ve seen people on the logging trails. The ACFC by its own admission does not have the staff to police the forest, and people are going to use those logging trails regardless of rules, policy or brushing in. Why not incorporate those trails into the proposed trail plan? That might allow the ACFC to reduce the overall number of trails and eliminate the objections to trail quantity
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20. 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 Management Objectives and Management Actions – these objectives and actions, if taken seriously and implemented as stated, argue against putting trails in grades of 7-8%. And they argue for incorporating existing trails instead of building new ones.

21. 5.2 History – In Harriet Wheatley Riggs History of Richmond the name of the family who farmed at ACF prior to the Andrews appears as Rhoads, (see pages 76 and 390-392 in Riggs et al.).
22. 5.5 “Maintain viable populations of plants and wildlife of cultural importance...” – I’m pretty sure the Abenaki people would like to see viable populations of plants and wildlife of ecological importance maintained too, if my understanding of their culture is correct. And see last line at 8.3.
23. Management Actions 6.4 “Update natural community mapping as more on-the-ground data becomes available; communicate this information forward to VLT the Vermont Land Trust” – Why not communicate this to the public, with the possible exception of rare plant locations?
24. 6.4 “New roads or trails are prohibited without VLT’s the Vermont Land Trust’s prior written approval.” Why doesn’t the town get to sign off on new trails? They affect the town.
25. 7.1 “● Preserve wildlife travel corridors. ● Buffer aquatic plants and animals from disturbance.” Just a reminder that these are important goals and that the ravine near the proposed bike trails appears to be a wildlife corridor that should be protected from disturbance.
26. 7.2.3 Great idea to ID where wetlands are threatened by invasives. I am happy to help with this endeavor.
27. 9.1 Interior Forest and Connectivity. Pdf pg 49. I call the attention of the ACFC to paragraph two in this section to reiterate the importance of this parcel for wildlife over trail connectivity.
28. 9.6 Management Actions, pdf pg 54. Please note the section on mast and human disturbance and the section on deer wintering areas. Please note the statement “Avoid the introduction of new trails, especially which would be used in the winter, in these forest types.” I trust that the ACFC has included a map of deer wintering areas and mast stands and has ensured that trails do not go through these areas.
29. 10.5 Connectivity to Other Properties. My objections to this section are as follows:
 - a) The stipulation that a trail connect to Sip O Sunshine was given to the trail designers and ecologists. They had a very difficult time agreeing on a trail location due to the steepness, the rockiness and other physical attributes of the forest.
 - b) I respectfully suggest that the original designers and ecologists be re-hired and be allowed to suggest alternate routes anywhere in the ACF for this connection, including the possible recommendation to not connect to Sip O Sunshine.
 - c) If the ACFC is discussing trail routes with neighbors, I recommend they explore the possibility of moving the trails that are currently proposed to connect to Sip O Sunshine (SOS) as far east as possible to move them away from the ravine and other ecologically sensitive areas like deer yards.

d) It would be of greater benefit to the town to have trails that connect from the town center to the forest. The proposed connections to SOS are steep and as such are not likely to have wide appeal.

30. 10.6 Trail design map – add existing logging trails to this map and use them instead of creating new trails. Establishing connectivity between existing trails is part of the trail concept (bullet 1).

a) “Avoid sensitive {natural features} areas whenever possible and give give an appropriate buffer to natural resources sensitive areas, as guided delineated by professional ecologists” – substituting “areas” for natural features” would remove protection from natural features such as cool rock formations, unusual but not RTE plants, etc. I do not support removing this protection.

31. 10.7 You might, based on your current experience, want to include a conflict resolution process or check-ins or something to avoid the situation that arose. I realize that Arrowwood and Sinuosity did finally agree on a trail design, but we all should have realized that with that much conflict in the trail’s creation there was sure to be conflict to follow.

32. 10.9 You might want to add some of the bike groups or the RCC or birders or hunting groups to your potential recreation partners.

33. 10.11 Monitor – “Engage recreational groups annually (VAST, Trails Committee, Richmond Mountain Trails, hunters) on a regular basis to obtain feedback about user group coordinator coordination and conflicts.” - You might want to include RCC and some hiking or birding groups on this one. Get some different voices in there. And you need to explain how you are going to monitor wildlife and impact. There are many easy ways to monitor for impact and wildlife and doing so is both an educational opportunity and a citizen science opportunity. Monitoring the impact of these proposed trails on wildlife is critical to fending off criticism. If the ACFC does not have the expertise or time to do so the RCC could take on this task. It would have been beneficial to the ACFC to have helped allay public concerns about impact by initiating monitoring activities to collect some baseline data. The Conservation Reserve Fund or others funding sources are available and supportive of monitoring efforts.

Some wording needs to be added to close sections of the trail at times of year when wildlife is vulnerable. I personally think that mountain bikes should be restricted to some of the trails. I strongly believe that e-bikes shouldn't be allowed at all.

The revised plan ideally will include what limitations ACFC will or may include in the plan covering the use of the forest, prior to building amenities that may produce unintended consequences. For example, the plan should describe up front whether leaf blowers and snow compactors (for fat biking) and like machinery will be allowed. If possible, I would also add the estimated daily carrying capacity of trails to this list with plans stated up front what will occur if and when the number is exceeded. Why? We can already anticipate overuse of this resource given the popularity of other local and regional recreational venues of this kind.

Having walked all the proposed trails I have observed three proposed trails that pass within 20 feet or less from flagged wetlands: specifically Stream View at approximately (-72.970240, 44.407409), foot of Sip of Sunshine Connector at approximately (-72.968103, 44.414371), and Roadside Trail at approximately (-72.974825, 44.404054). I urge the ACFC to ask trail design and ecological experts to address and implement the following suggestions for providing alternatives or clear justification for the present proposals; (1) The "Roadside Trail" should be deleted. It is redundant as it parallels and duplicates the Access Road and Dana's Climb. Also, it runs within about 20 ft. of a flagged wetland area, and it is technically difficult to construct and ecologically questionable according to the Sinuosity description. (2) The dense convoluted trail network above the power lines consisting of Rocky View (#11), Cascade Trail (#12) and Stream View (#13) should be consolidated into a single trail providing basically the same access but with minimized impacts and avoiding the unnecessary stream crossings at the top of Cascade Trail, as well as ensuring that Stream View avoids the buffer region around the flagged wetland noted above. (3) "Sip of Sunshine Connector" should be redesigned to avoid the flagged wetland noted above. It appears that a single trail could be used to approach the SOS Connector instead of the presently proposed two trails. Based on my own exploration of the terrain and the ecologists' mapping of

the ecology and habitat, it appears that a single trail should be located east of the proposed East Climb to avoid its three stream crossings and the wide switchbacks near the top (that invite switchback short-cuts).

Human Impacts: The management plan (see line 1447) currently lacks specific methodologies for observing, managing and monitoring impacts of humans and recreational trail use on the forest and wildlife (it only contains suggestions that the idea be pursued in the future). It should contain specific plans for monitoring and correcting any anticipated or unexpected problems. At the March 29th 'engagement' the expert panel focused on 'after-the-fact' trail erosion, and claimed any monitoring or impacts of traffic would be impractical and too expensive. However, an attendee noted that there are easy methods available, and traffic can be easily monitored by volunteers. So this section of the Plan should include a process for monitoring cumulative impacts - minimally monitoring the number of users of trails. - The Committee should identify and ensure access to experts who can draw attention to current and new science relating to impacts of measured recreational use on natural resources. - More detail is needed in the MP on timing, who does the monitoring of trail traffic, and which specific sensitive areas and species should be monitored. - A method to sample traffic and extrapolate to monthly and annual traffic is provided here: <https://www.bikepeddocumentation.org/> . The Cross VT Trail Association conducted a count of traffic on the Johnnie Brook Trail in 2020 by a student volunteer over the course of six days, counting just four hours per day, and used the above method to estimate monthly and annual traffic.

Before I can feel good about additional trails Seasonal restrictions need to be put in place. Some form of signage should be put up to explain the rules . If we put too many trails in and drives wildlife out It will be very difficult to recover from.

Keep public dialogue open. Involve standing Town Committees as indicated by the Richmond Town Plan, including the Conservation Commission.

Clarify inconsistencies in the current MP draft: examples are the statement that MP has been approved as of 2022; whether all trails are multi-use; whether there are to be future trails.

Must consider dropping Hemlock Valley trail as it is in the highest wildlife sensitivity area in the Forest according to the Field Naturalist study and State data regarding surrounding forest lands.

\Take advantage of the findings and language from the Naughton trails Report for the State and the Field Naturalist study of the forest. Use findings and conclusions. regarding buffers and Zones of Influence to realign trails in certain locations, providing education as to their meaning.

A trail monitoring plan needs to be part of an approved MP.

Additional future trails are problematic due to the demonstrated ecological / wildlife habitat sensitivities in the Forest.

Permission for e-bikes in the Forest is not part of the current MP draft: permission should not be added. Include trail closure policies in the approved MP. Develop a concise, bulleted list of trail use rules as part of the MP.

Modify trails to not go through key areas of wildlife travel. Listen to experts like Sue Morse

I support a revision suggested in the latest selectboard meeting: dropping the Ridgetop Trail, while also tentatively modifying the Hemlock Valley Trail to ensure it is more optimal for multiple uses, and exploring how to more formally and sustainably connect to VYCC (likely via the VAST trail) following direct ecological assessment. This seems to achieve a balance in all the various human use desires with no individual group of stakeholders receiving a larger share of

opportunity. With that balance, we can expect as little impact on the land as possible while also creating an open and accessible space for people to enjoy. As a town forest these trails should serve all, including (and most importantly) the wildlife that depend on this area as habitat.

We need a setaside for hikers and walkers where mountain bikes will not come careening down the trail and run in to us. And how do you deal with the erosion that bikes cause on the trails?

I don't know what the language in the Mgmt. Plan is currently, but I would make sure there is strong language that says "we will continue to monitor and re-assess and make changes as needed."

Remove the intent that there will not EVER be more trails. Future townspeople should decide that. Although if that statement helps you move forward and build the plan... ok (smiley face)

Remove the East and Hemlock trails from the locations they are currently in. Find best options.

Go back to original plan (Arrowwood/Sinuosity design). The RFP produced a trail design that met ecological and design goals.

Review the Hinesburg Town Forest Plan as it pertains to SOME trail closures during hunting season. Need to develop rigorous monitor plan of trail and degradation of trail surfaces. Thanks.

I would redesign the loop trail east of the central wildlife corridor to remove the western side of the loop and make another part.

Re-evaluate the SOS aspirational trail connection. Change the parameters for the experts. Do a thought experiment and try it. Make a summary of the 100+ page report with bullet points for each section to fully inform more folks. Share with the public and give them adequate time to provide feedback. Include a stewardship section in the management plan - how to monitor, minimize, and restrict impacts on wildlife habitats. Seek guidance from expert wildlife biologists such as Sue Morse and from the state of Vermont. Andrea Shortsleeve recently advised this. Consider ALL Trail options openly with the public such as improving existing trails to provide less impactful connectivity going east-west and closer to the powerlines.

Consider not connecting to Sip of Sunshine. That directs a large volume of users through the forest and will diminish the value of the connectivity of the forest.

Is there any way to change parameters of connectivity of trails and going to Sunshine loop?

The term "mechanized" was used as a "prohibited use" though mountain bikes are permitted, ensuring clarity with these terms would be important

None. Committee has eliminated one trail recommended by Sinuosity and Arrowwood who are the experts here. Allow pedal assist bikes.

Under Section IIIA of the Conservation Easement Plan, it states that "use of permitted property by animals capable of transporting humans including but not limited to horses may be permitted in the discretion of the Granters if such uses are regulated in the Management Plan..." On behalf of horseback riders could you please add equestrian use trails to the plan? The VT Horse Council has several studies on the impact of horses and while it might not be perfect, the impact seems to

be minimal. Hinesburg and Jericho have horse trails, can't we have some in our town? We are a small community of riders so very few of us will be on them.

Parking spaces should not be increased. More parking equals yet more cars and possibly too many people impacting wildlife. Wildlife should take priority even though it is valuable to get people out in nature so that they appreciate and protect it.

Will leaf blowers be allowed in ACF to maintain trails in the Fall? (I hope not)

I'm concerned about the hemlock trail running right through the deeryard. This makes no sense. If you map key wildlife areas, why not keep the trails out of them.

A better link to Sip of Sunshine - the NE section seems to be very vulnerable. I think you need to use resources like Sue Morse more.

I like some trails were moved due to habitat sensitivities. Does Sip of Sunshine allow exit onto Valley View/Extension? If so, this is a private road. Have residents been asked if this is ok.

I hope the communication about when to ride and when NOT to ride is critical.

Upfront trails closure regulations, such as seasonal need to be in place in the MP.

Cleaning up contradictions within the MP. Examples: •The multi-use nature of trails use. • Clarifying whether future trails are or are not to be contemplated. Inclusion in the MP of trails closure regulations. The need for a consolidated list of trails rules. Clarifying use of e-bikes. SOS connection as a driver in terms of locating proposed trails. Need for Trail monitoring policy and plan.

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15) 6.3 Management Objectives – “Retain soil integrity, water quality, natural species composition, natural disturbance regimes and natural hydrology” – How are you planning to achieve this?

16) Management Actions 6.4 “Update natural community mapping as more on-the-ground data becomes available; communicate this information forward to VLT the Vermont Land Trust” – Why not communicate this to the public, with the possible exception of rare plant locations?

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a) The stipulation that a trail connect to Sip O Sunshine was given to the trail designers and ecologists. They had a very difficult time agreeing on a trail location due to the steepness, the rockiness and other physical attributes of the forest.

b) I respectfully suggest that the original designers and ecologists be re-hired and be allowed to suggest alternate routes anywhere in the ACF for this connection, including the possible recommendation to not connect to Sip O Sunshine.

c) If the ACFC is discussing trail routes with neighbors, I recommend they explore the possibility of moving the trails that are currently proposed to connect to Sip O Sunshine (SOS) as far east as possible to move them away from the ravine and other ecologically sensitive areas like deer yards.

d) It would be of greater benefit to the town to have trails that connect from the town center to the forest. The proposed connections to SOS are steep and as such are not likely to have wide appeal.

23) 10.6 Trail design map – add existing logging trails to this map and use them instead of creating new trails. Establishing connectivity between existing trails is part of the trail concept (bullet 1).

a) "Avoid sensitive {natural features} areas whenever possible and give give an appropriate buffer to natural resources sensitive areas, as guided delineated by professional ecologists" – substituting "areas" for natural features" would remove protection from natural features such as cool rock formations, unusual but not RTE plants, etc. I do not support removing this protection.

24) 10.7 You might, based on your current experience, want to include a conflict resolution process or check-ins or something to avoid the situation that arose. I realize that Arrowwood and Sinuosity did finally agree on a trail design, but we all should have realized that with that much conflict in the trail's creation there was sure to be conflict to follow.

25) 10.9 You might want to add some of the bike groups or the RCC or birders or hunting groups to your potential recreation partners.

26) 10.11 Monitor – "Engage recreational groups annually (VAST, Trails Committee, Richmond Mountain Trails, hunters) on a regular basis to obtain feedback about user group coordinator coordination and conflicts." - You might want to include RCC and some hiking or birding groups on this one. Get some different voices in there. And you need to explain how you

are going to monitor wildlife and impact. There are many easy ways to monitor for impact and wildlife and doing so is both an educational opportunity and a citizen science opportunity. Monitoring the impact of these proposed trails on wildlife is critical to fending off criticism. If the ACFC does not have the expertise or time to do so the RCC could take on this task. It would have been beneficial to the ACFC to have helped allay public concerns about impact by initiating monitoring activities to collect some baseline data. The Conservation Reserve Fund or others funding sources are available and supportive of monitoring efforts.