

August 16, 2023

ACF CMP subcommittee recommendations on the tasks we were assigned

Recommendation on monitoring

Monitoring efforts should be designed and implemented periodically. Monitoring should include such elements as counting visits, doing periodic surveys of plants and animals and to establish baselines and then monitor changes over time.

We suggest getting guidance from Judy Rosovsky and/or Jon Kart, on methods to monitor plants and animals through participatory methodologies. provided by Judy Rosovsky. Works for the state as an insect biology. And/or Jon Kart.

To the extent possible, methods should build on the baseline established by the Arrowwood studies that have already defined some sensitive areas both in terms of plants and places.

In the monitoring efforts, we should seek a balance between cost and efficiency. Perhaps engaging in an annual or twice annual survey.

(We propose using the conservation fund for getting a professionally developed monitoring plan and recommendations.)

Recommendation on including further language about the human benefits of recreation

Given the current length of the management plan document, we recommend putting the references we have found on the topics of trail based recreation, mental and physical health should be included at the end of the management plan in a “references and resources” section.

Recommendation on non-mechanized recreation

While the easement states that hiking is allowed, it also states (section III, permitted uses) that “mechanized recreation such as mountain biking...may be permitted in the discretion of the Grantors.” We interpret this to mean that the ACF can designate trails for non-mechanized use. We believe that it would be a meaningful contribution to the quality of the recreation experience to have trails for non-mechanized use.

This brings up the question of what criteria to use when designating a trail multi-use or non-mechanized. We believe the committee should seek a blend of recreational opportunities in the forest. In the case of non-mechanized use trails, there should be trails that provide easy to moderate walking for 45 to 60 minutes. We believe this would be adequate for school trips, families with young children or older relatives.

Trails of any sort should take into account sensitive habitat and ecological concerns.

Recommendation on dogs

Following the model of the Audubon [Society \(Huntington\)](#), in order to protect the forest wildlife, we suggest establishing rules that require dogs to be leashed below the power lines and prohibit dogs ~~on~~ ~~the upper trails,~~ above the power lines.

Recommendations on connectivity

There are three existing possibilities for trail connectivity: VYCC, Sip of Sunshine and Valley View. Each has their own site-specific issues that need to be addressed (agreements with land owners, zoning regulations, and other easements).

There are other adjacent lands whose owners have made clear to the committee their wish to avoid ACF traffic on their land (such as PRELCO/Preston).

For each case, there should be clear signage about what is and is not permitted and, where necessary, ~~barriers~~ signage established between ACF and land belonging to others.

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JP will check w Breck Knauft of VYCC to figure out conservation easements and MPs.

Ian will be in touch with David Sunshine.

Recommendations on events and permitting

People and organizations wishing to hold events in the ACF should apply to the ACF at least two ACF meetings in advance of the event date. (See Easement, Events p7, section J)

Fees may be determined in proportion to and in accordance with cost of the events.

Approval of events will be determined by the ACFC according to criteria including but not limited to: Appropriateness of use per the objectives of the MP and the easement, density of the event, parking, ecological impact on the trails (for eg, deer wintering, spring vernal pools, etc.).

Recommendation on indigenous land, people and practices

Reserve a portion of the kiosk to share history of Abenaki use of the land.

Look for opportunities to host educational programs provided by people who can speak knowledgeably about Abenaki uses and care of the land (for example, hosting authors such as Frederick Mathew Wiseman for a book club, perhaps in conjunction with the Conservation Commission, UVM, VYCC, others?).

Recommendations governing new trails

New proposals for trails should be brought before the committee. The committee will evaluate the appropriateness of the trail based on an ecological review that is consistent with the easement and guided by the most current best practices (should they evolve further guidance than is provided by the easement).

Evaluation of suitability of new trail proposals should take into account the results of monitoring of impacts of prior trails.

Recommendation with alignment of regulations

CMP has been in contact with town zoning officials. We received the following email from Keith Osborne:

RE DRB and zoning board approvals:

- “When there is a plan to expand, ACF should contact Richmond Planning and Zoning to ensure the regulations are followed and there is actually a need for DRB approval.”

RE “development” per the town plan:

Town plan: “Restrict development on steep slopes between 20% and 35%, cliffs, and ridgelines over 900ft in elevation, and prohibit all structural development (including renewable energy generation facilities and distribution/transmission infrastructure) on slopes greater than 35% , in order to maintain habitat connectors and mitigate erosion.”

Would this apply to trails and accompanying structures such as bridges in the Andrews Community Forest? **This would apply to trails in general and would include any structures such as bridges. Concerning trails, any new trails developed on slopes greater than 20% will require engineered plans for "adequate" erosion controls per the RZR, SECTION 6.11. Any development in the ACF requires DRB approval as an aside. Trails that currently exist can be maintained in-situ but if there are any changes, that would be considered an update to the approved site plan and would require DRB approval. Although not specific to your question, ACF would have no authority over transmission lines or renewable energy facilities on easements.**

The second question is in reference to hierarchy of guiding documents. Andrews Community Forest has management plan which is superseded and guided by the Conservation Easement. Would the Richmond Town Plan be the top guiding document, or is the Richmond Town Plan superseded by the Conservation Easement on the Andrews Community Forest? **Any and all Town Plans are "guidance/vision" documents and have no legal bearing on zoning or other legal documents. Their purpose is to**

guide, not regulate. Conservation Plans are legal documents and do have a bearing on zoning and specifically regulate. Following the TP guidance is required, to the best of one's ability, and if you are developing the management plan with both the TP and the conservation easement in mind, you should be golden. There really is no hierarchy here, especially if the "Plan" considers both the TP and easement language; said plan would be the ultimate guiding document, the one stop shopping scenario. After all, that's the point!

Recommendations on night usage

Except where otherwise noted in the plan (seasonal trail closures in certain areas, or exceptions for hunting, for example), the ACF is open year-round to the public from dawn to dusk.

Other exceptions with prior approval of the AFC.

Recommendations on parking

No new car parking shall be designated without ACFC approval. Maintaining low parking capacity is a passive way of controlling density of use.

Bike parking should be ~~made available~~installed.

Recommendation on naming: ACF Management plan: planet, people and plants

Structural revision to plan to make easier to read – **CMP**

Soon, we will need to include the unified recommendations from the subcommittees into the MP. It would be helpful to have someone hired to include our suggestions and common recommendations. When they do, we could ask them to review the entire MP for clarity and organization and to make recommendations for structural changes.