

September 8th, 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 ([including invasives](#)) and animals, [and inspecting for erosion](#). [The plan should establish baselines and then monitor changes over time. Management actions should be adjusted according to the results of the monitoring plan per the adaptive management model in fig 1 pp 9-10 of the revised MP.](#)

We suggest getting guidance from Judy Rosovsky and/or Jon Kart on [monitoring methods to guide an expert hired to create the plan for the ACFC.](#)

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. [Recommendations from the Field Naturalist Report from 2019 on monitoring areas, game cameras, citizen science and forest monitoring coordination \(p22-24 and appendix V\) should be taken into consideration.](#)

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

Recommendation on including further language about the human benefits of recreation [and the impact of human recreation on the ecosystem and animal habitats](#)

[We propose including the following text into a pre-amble of the MP or in sections 9 "Wildlife Habitat" or 10 "Recreation"](#)

[The management of ACF needs to consider many competing interests and stakeholder groups including recreation, conservation, education, agriculture, forestry and cultural heritage. The ACF presents excellent opportunities to meet the primary goals for each stakeholder group. While the health and wellness benefits of recreation in nature are well-documented^{1,2}, human recreation will have an impact on the forest ecosystem^{3,4} \(insert references\). Therefore, the rules stated in this management plan](#)

¹ [Bever K., Kaltenbach A., Szabo A., Bogar S., Nieto F.J., Maleciji K. Exposure to neighborhood green space and mental health: Evidence from the survey of the health of Wisconsin. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 2014; 11: 453-3472](#)

² [Netta Weinstein and others, Seeing Community for the Trees: The Links among Contact with Natural Environments, Community Cohesion, and Crime, BioScience, Volume 65, Issue 12, 01 December 2015, Pages 1141–1153, https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biv151](#)

³ https://www.backcountryhunters.org/trail_based_recreation_and_its_impacts_on_wildlife

Commented [IAFS1]: For sources see <https://infoacf.wordpress.com/literature-and-science/#Monitoring>

Commented [IAFS2]: Keep this topic title as was identified by NN: "Add description of trail-based recreation / wildlife / ecology research / design integration + something related benefits of outdoor recreation and nature exposure". (And shorten to "Trail-based recreation impacts on wildlife and benefits of outdoor recreation and nature exposure.")
Our report should include a short summary of trail-based recreation effects and known 'zones of influence' affecting different species as identified at the RCC event, and/or from published literature "3,4 and insert [other] references"

Commented [IAFS3]: For sources see <https://infoacf.wordpress.com/literature-and-science/#Effects> and Conservation Commission panel discussion on balancing conservation and trail-based recreation. (March 15th, 2023 Video by MMCTV: <https://ia601606.us.archive.org/11/items/richmond-conservation-trails-panel-03152023/RichmondConservationTrailsPanel03152023.mp4>)

should seek to maximize all stakeholder goals while seeking to minimize and mitigate the impacts of human presence in the forest.

The monitoring plan should seek to capture those balances and the interrelated impacts of activities. The results should be taken into account for adjusting management actions according to the adaptive management scheme on pp9-10 of the revised MP.

Recommendation on non-mechanized recreation

Consistent with easement section III.A. (Page 5 "Restricted Uses of the Protected Property") 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 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, 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.

⁴ California Fish and Wildlife Journal, Special Issue, effects of non-consumptive recreation on Wildlife in California, 2020

Commented [IAFS4]: Concerning the vague and non-specific language "Therefore, the rules stated in this management plan should seek to maximize all stakeholder goals while seeking to minimize and mitigate the impacts of human presence in the forest. The monitoring plan should seek to capture those balances and the interrelated impacts of activities. The results should be taken into account for adjusting management actions according to the adaptive management scheme on pp9-10 of the revised MP."

The Comment was: This kind of language has been criticized as overly vague (if the goals are conflicting). Also, it's been pointed out that the Easement identifies protection first; human access second. So it's a challenge. This may call for specifying e.g. those parts of the Forest that shall remain free of trails, in addition to the localized ecological protection zones.

Should be replaced with:
The Easement (Page 6, III Permitted Uses of the protected Property, Paragraph A) specifies that: mechanized recreation such as mountain biking and by animals capable of transporting humans (including, but not limited to, horses) may be permitted in the discretion of Grantors if such uses are regulated in the Management Plans and are consistent with the Purposes of this Grant and are consistent with Section(s) V, VI and VII, identifying constraints within the Riparian Buffer Zone, [rare and uncommon natural communities] Ecological Protection Zone and Vernal Pool Ecological Protection Zone.

So the following regulations about non-pedestrian recreation are proposed:

1. No access for horses and similar animals;
2. Mechanized recreation only on trails identified for such use on the Trails Map;
3. No mechanized recreation during (specified) winter months or when trails are announced as 'closed' via public notices;
4. Other?

Commented [IAFS5]: Should read "Recommendation on non-mechanized and mechanized recreation"

Commented [IAFS6]: Ian met with DS and identified practices and policies that should be known to both parties:

Motorized travel;
Parking;
Hunting;
Day-time/night-time access;
Seasonal access limitations;
Dogs;
Trail closing policies

Also:
Implications of secondary connectivity (trails on parcels beyond the adjacent land).
Trail Management (by RTC, RMT, others?)

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?).

[Continue to seeks advice from authorities including Indigenous peoples' Chiefs, organizations such as Richmond Racial Justice, and individuals with links to or knowledge of indigenous culture.](#)

[Review names of trails and places and rename to reflect Abenaki heritage.](#)

Commented [IAFS7]: This is already in the March 2023 draft MP, and noted in the Stewardship Plan

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 [criteria established in](#) most current best practices (should they [include](#) 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 [existing and](#) prior trails.

[Here we should identify criteria for approving new trails: Avoid impacting ecologically sensitive areas \(via buffers and Zones of Influence\); avoid duplication of trail routes and high density of trails; avoid trail routes liable to erosion; other criteria? Also, specify the criteria and regulations for allowing mechanized use and the \(per Easement Page 6 \(Page 6 Section IIIA "Permitted Uses of the protected Property"\).](#)

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 [to protect foraging, reproduction etc of at-risk species](#), 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 [ACFC](#)

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 installed.

Recommendation on naming: ACF Management plan: planet, people, other species 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.

Determining trail closure times

Future decisions on seasonal trail closures should consider the following criteria:

1. Quality of the activity relative to the season.
2. Minimize incompatibilities among activities for maximizing safety (for example, minimizing non-hunting uses during hunting season, establishing directionality of trails for bikers where necessary, for example).
3. Minimize impacts on animal habitat (Deer wintering may call for special closures in winter and spring, for example)

We propose closure of the upper trails to bikes from hunting season through April 1st (to minimize disturbance of deer wintering habitat) . Walking is allowed at all times with STRONG cautions to wear highly visible clothing during hunting season.

Commented [IAFS8]: It has been noted (by Cecilia) that there was extended discussion of closing (hunting season only?) in the development of the MP (2018). Apparently it was considered impractical or undesirable?" Has anything changed ?

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