

Recreation - Earlier version A – in the packet for March 24th - "MP2\_After\_10-Mar-2025.pdf"  
[https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Andrews\\_Community\\_Forest/Meetings/2025/03/d2\\_MP2\\_After\\_10-Mar-2025.pdf](https://www.richmondvt.gov/fileadmin/files/Andrews_Community_Forest/Meetings/2025/03/d2_MP2_After_10-Mar-2025.pdf)  
 Section 2.9 and Sections 7.2 – 7.6

## 2.9. Recreation

*Note: Brad is proposing a reworked, shortened version as a consolidated alternative to the two Recreation sections 2.9 and 7 in the document “[Recreation and Appendix 2-26-25.docx](#)”. It’s aimed at resolving many of the issues flagged in Section 7.)*

[MW Comment: 2.9 line 4 When the Forest was owned by.... Is a strange way to lead the opening paragraph of the recreation section. Please rework for concise wording with more factual information. Line 12. Parking and trails have “opened up” the forest. Please be more concise and specific.]

When the Forest was owned by the Andrews family, it was not posted and allowed hunting, walking, snowshoeing, and skiing. It was also managed for timber, leaving logging roads scattered throughout the property. Some of these roads are unsuitable for increased recreational use due to their steep grades, poor drainage, and potential for erosion. Others could be lightly maintained for continuing use as footpaths, supplementing multi- and single-use trails in appropriate areas. Other roads (the VELCO road, the Maple Wind Farm road on the eastern boundary, and parts of the former VAST trail) act as important recreational and management corridors throughout the property and remain in use.

Now, new trails and a parking area have opened up the forest to many more people and activities.

The VYCC campus, which adjoins the property to the east, has a network of trails. There is currently a former VAST trail connecting the two properties and trail networks.

Adjoining the ACF to the north is a 173-acre property currently owned by David Sunshine and Carol Jordan, which contains a multi-use trail network connecting to trails on adjoining properties and beyond, including into Jericho. Trail maps of the area are available online at various sites such as RichmondMountainTrails.com and TrailForks.com, the RTC proposed favored App. The Sunshine-Jordan property is conserved through VT Forests, Parks and Recreation. Motorized travel is not permitted there and there is no parking at the trailhead, though trails connect northwards to Jericho ([details])

## 7.2 Trail-based Recreation

*[BE: Is this needed? It could be boiled down into the sentence suggested below ... but then what do we say? The last two sentences do no more than set up a false dichotomy. I suggest simply finding a better place for the “Extensive research...” sentence below. It could be in a preamble to this section, as it applies to non-trail based recreation as well.*

### Trail-based recreation impacts on wildlife and benefits of outdoor recreation and nature

Extensive research details how human activities in a forest can have negative effects on wildlife and positive effects on human wellbeing.

*[BE: No one is proposing either of those extremes. The statement is a red herring and potentially inflammatory. In addition, the preceding paragraph only states the obvious. Alongside conservation, the*

*Easement requires us to “provide” “appropriate” recreational uses. The paragraph’s last two sentences should be cut.]*

### **Town residents’ preferences**

A 2018 survey (see 2018 Management Plan, [Appendix G](#), page 279) asked town residents to indicate their preferences for activities they would like to see allowed in the ACF. The ten most favored, in order of preference, were hiking, running, hunting, snowshoeing, skiing, bird- and wildlife-watching, picnicking, biking and dog-walking. Some Town residents identified connectivity with abutting trail systems to be an important attribute of trail design, while others were concerned that increased traffic would impact sensitive wildlife habitats. Expanding trails into the Forest’s most sensitive areas and linking them into larger, unregulated networks would tax the Town’s ability to protect the ACF’s ecological resources and to manage safety for people using more remote trails. [CR Comment: subjective.....try “could possibly tax”]

*[BE: Suggest adding the following text here as another subsection:]*

### **Trail Design Principles**

Trail development and management in the ACF are guided by the principles listed on page 4 of the [The Vermont Town Forest Trail Design Guide](#):

- Avoid sensitive ecological areas and critical habitats.
- Develop trails in areas already influenced by human activity.
- Provide buffers to protect sensitive ecological and hydrologic systems.
- Use natural infiltration and best practices for stormwater management.
- Ensure ongoing stewardship of trails and surrounding natural systems.
- Design, build, and maintain trails sustainably.
- Decommission and restore unsustainable trail corridors.

### **Naming of Trails:**

[IS comment: The suggested names in Appendix B use animal names, which do not necessarily correspond to the prevalence or habitat of the named species. Conversely, the English Language proposed names are indicative of landscape etc. features.] ACF will support the revival of the Western Abenaki language and culture by using Abenaki language for places, practices, flora, and fauna in the naming of trails, educational materials, and signage. Trails will be named to help bring Indigenous presence and language back to this landscape (rather than contribute to their erasure). Appendix B: Indigenous Recognition, Part 4, identifies suggested names that were proposed and vetted by Abenaki tribal citizens, culture keepers and language experts.

**General Regulations** *[BE: Usage regulations are likely to be updated more often than the MP. Putting them in the MP could shorten its shelf life. This and the next five sub-sections would best be published elsewhere – the ACFC web page, the kiosk, with printed maps, annotations to TrailsFork listing, etc.]*

To address the often competing interests of human and Forest health, the following regulations about recreation are proposed:

1. No access for horses and similar animals; Horses are a major vector of invasive species spread.
2. Pedestrians are allowed on all trails; Mechanized recreation only on trails identified for such use on the Trails Map; [SP Comment: Consider adding to trail signage as well.]
3. No mechanized recreation during hunting seasons, during (specified) winter months or when trails are announced as ‘closed’ via public notices;
4. Electric bikes (eBikes) are not generally allowed on the trail network, based on concerns regarding their faster speeds, safety, possible user conflict and the non-motorized provision in the Conservation Easement. Recognizing that eBikes may broaden access for individuals with physical limitations and consistent with a commitment to equity and inclusion and the ADA, any ACF visitors with mobility

disabilities who wish to use motorized personal assistive mobility devices (as permitted in the Conservation Easement, Section G) should contact the ACF Committee.

## Dogs

[IS suggests Figures: Dogs on Trail Rules

<https://infoacf.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/dogs-on-trail-rules-corvallis-2019.jpg>

<https://infoacf.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/whynodogs.jpg> ]

Dogs are permitted below the power lines, and not above them. [SP Comment: I generally agree this is the responsible thing to do, but I would offer that we make a slight adjustment— changing it from power line to VAST trail. It only slightly changed the allowed trails for dogs, and also allows for better connectivity to surrounding properties for dog owners without having a major impact on wildlife.] Dogs are to be kept on leash at all times, following the model of the Audubon Society (Huntington), in order to protect the forest wildlife. This is more stringent than the town dog ordinance, and is intended to protect wildlife and vegetation as well as other forest users. Hence no hunting with dogs. Voice control may not always be effective, and may disturb wildlife anyway because of the (loud) vocalization required. All pet waste must be carried out.

## Signage at property boundaries with trails and liaison with adjacent owners

There are three existing possibilities for trail connectivity: VYCC, Sip of Sunshine and Valley View. At each access point from adjacent properties clear signage will indicate what is and is not permitted, using text as posted at the kiosk.

## Events/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, expected numbers of participants, location and extent of the event, parking requirements, the likely ecological impact on the trails (if applicable) and on flora and fauna (for e.g., deer wintering, spring vernal pools, etc.).

## Determining trail closure times

Decisions on seasonal trail closures address the following criteria: Quality of the activity relative to the season; Minimize incompatibilities among activities for maximizing safety (for example, minimizing non-hunting uses during hunting season, establishing directionality of trails for bikers where necessary); Minimize impacts on animal habitat. Following state guidance for deer wintering closures, the trails will be closed above the power lines from December 15 - April 1 to protect habitat and desirable game species. People may still recreate across ACF in a dispersed manner (eg x-c skiing) but trails will not officially be open. Trails will be closed to bikes from hunting season through April 1st to reduce the number of visitors, and the extent of their presence disturbing deer in wintering habitat. [IS: Question: why only bikes? Would skiers be similarly disturbing?] Walking is allowed at all times with STRONG cautions to wear highly visible clothing during hunting seasons.

[BE: Comments seem appropriate to include somehow. But firm ‘rules’ seem elusive. Usage regulations are likely to be updated more often than the MP. Putting them in the MP could shorten its shelf life. This and the next five sub-sections would best be published elsewhere – the ACFC web page, the kiosk, with printed maps, annotations to TrailsFork listing, etc.]

## Enforcement of Trail use Policy

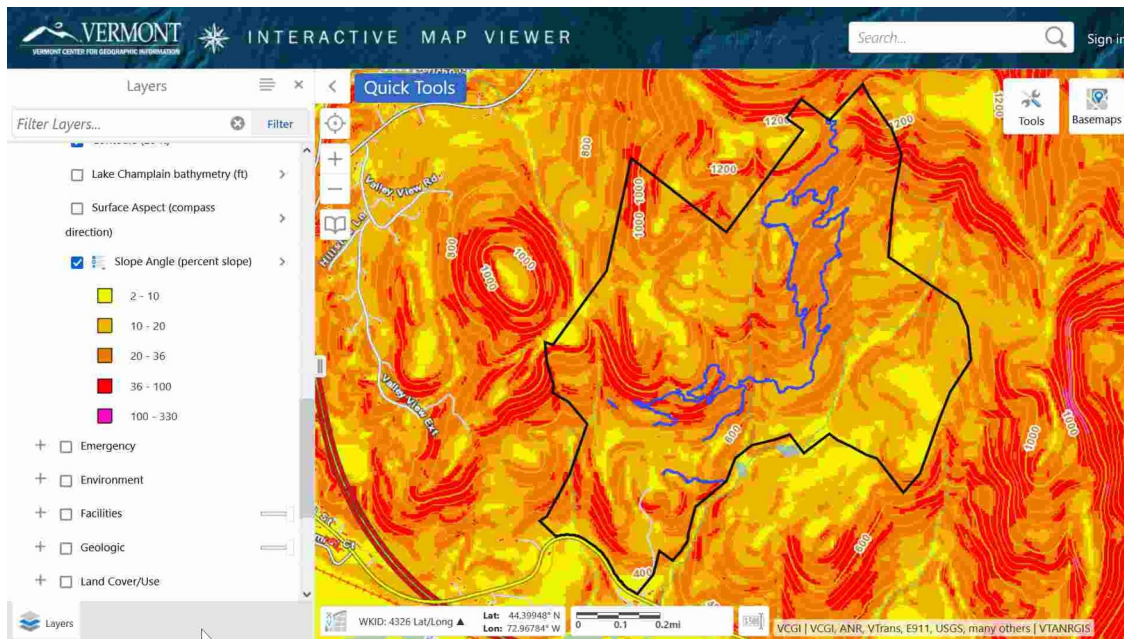
Clear signage and a map will be maintained at the kiosk and other formal access points to identify permitted uses and guidance for users and trail closure status. Public should be notified of trail closures at

the Town Website and though notices at Richmond's Front Porch Forum. Ropes will be placed across trail entrances when trails are closed seasonally or temporarily for trail maintenance such as clearing downed trees.

## 7.2.1 Process for Considering Future Trails

Proposals for new trails shall not be approved for construction until a new Trail Design Map is adopted through a full revision of the Management Plan, which is subject to public review and approval by the Selectboard, and the Easement holders. *[BE: The word "through" in the previous sentence is ambiguous as to whether the MP drives the trail design or the (problematic) opposite. We now know the Selectboard's preferences on this, too. Suggested rewording: "Proposals for new trails must comply with the latest approved update to the Management Plan. Otherwise, the Management Plan must first be fully revised, publicly reviewed and approved by the Selectboard and Easement holders."]*

In considering the appropriateness of proposing any new future trails, the Committee will (1) seek appropriate professional guidance to assist it in evaluating trail sustainability and the impact of trails on the ACF's wildlife and forested ecosystems; *[BE: ACFC members, the SB and public will need to know more. Suggest leading this list with (1) Document the need for and benefits of new trails]* (2) comply with Richmond's Zoning Regulations and Town Plan *[BE: Suggest: (3) Obtain estimates for building it and its infrastructure.]* (3); engage with the community via an open public process addressing the Town Plan and Management Plan's objectives to offer recreational opportunities while protecting the ACF's natural resources. Zoning permits for new trail construction may require a professionally prepared site plan and an engineering design plan. *[BE: I believe Tyler referred to an "Erosion and Sedimentation control plan."]*



**Figure 5:** Slopes of terrain in the ACF, with proposed trails overlaid. Richmond's Zoning Regulations identify special provisions for development on slopes greater than 20%, and greater than 35%. Map source: Vermont [Interactive Map Viewer](#).

*[BE: A map showing only slopes from 20-35% and above 35% would be more helpful. It would probably also be better if placed in the Trail Stewardship Plan, along with other maps showing ACF's landscape-,*



*community- and species-level attributes.] [IS: Not easy to make changes to this map – but it uses slope thresholds that happen to be the ones in Richmond’s Zoning.]*

Any new trail will 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. Evaluation of suitability of new trail proposals should take into account the results of monitoring of impacts of existing and prior trails. A new trail proposal should identify whether it is intended for mechanized (bike) use, and explain why, taking into account the criteria and regulations for allowing mechanized use in the Easement Page 6 (Page 6 Section IIIA “Permitted Uses of the protected Property”).

*[BE: The following section, though important to ACFC’s drafting of the MP and trail designs as well as to discussions of other Town boards, needn’t belong in the MP.]*

### **Some Factors to Consider in Evaluating new Trail Proposals:**

#### **In favor:**

1. The Easement cites 'connectivity' as desirable; (when compliant with the “Purposes” of the Easement)
2. Many people have expressed a desire to see a connection to the Sunshine trail network and beyond, (though many have opposed it with valid reasons, see below);
3. The trails were designed with Arrowwood's ecological expertise and were considered consistent with ecological design principles. (Arrowwood/Sinuosity [Trails Proposal](#))
4. Trails, if designated as ‘multi-use’ would accommodate people using mechanized transport, thus increasing the variety of possible recreational activities and participants.
5. Increasingly, people are recognizing the value of many forms of outdoor recreation to health and wellbeing. Additional trails in more remote sections of the Forest would add to those opportunities.

#### **Not favoring the proposed trails:**

*[BE: Another point: Arrowwood has expressed its professional misgivings about the SOS connection, explaining that the firm was required to map a such a route despite its ecological impacts.]*

*[MW Comment: The pro’s and cons list of increasing recreation do not belong in the management plan. Those are topics for a meeting, not management plan material.]*

1. The Wildlife Stewardship Plan provides a thoroughly researched and updated documentation of the ecological reasons why human presence, especially as facilitated by trails, should be minimized, especially above the power lines;
2. The terrain on which those trails are proposed is mostly steep, and some areas apparently exceed the 30% slope above which the Town Zoning regulations preclude trail development. Slope of the terrain in many other areas exceeds 20%, thus requiring a lot of financial expense and a long permitting process with no guarantee of approval.
3. Some of the proposed trails appear to be inconsistent with ecological principles documented in the Management Plan (proximity to streams, wetlands, etc., infringement on ecologically sensitive areas) where recent research has identified greater negative impacts of human presence.
4. Some Townspeople wish to reserve areas of the Forest where solitude can be enjoyed, and wildlife can be observed, or hunted. More trails would facilitate larger volumes of human traffic.
5. Unknown factors include anticipated volume and cumulative effects of trail traffic, and the possible future changes in access to the trails on adjacent properties.
6. An extensive trail network accommodating ‘mechanized travel’ would require infrastructure to accommodate steep and rugged terrain, stream crossing requiring bridges, boardwalks etc. This would require additional expenditure of efforts and resources by the Town to construct, monitor and maintain trails in a location where access and parking may limited their value relative to other already existing nearby trails.

*[BE: Suggest: No one has yet identified a compelling need for building the SOS connection that justifies its costs, ecological trade-offs and management challenges.]*

## 7.2.2 Trail Connectivity to Surrounding Properties

The conserved lands around the ACF provide opportunities for a larger, connected trail network. *[BE: Connections to neighboring lands are “opportunities” only if they meet the Easement’s Purposes and comply with the Management Plan. They also must be based on need, with gains that will exceed the costs (ecological and economic alike). Connections already exist to neighboring lands, including others not noted here.]* The former VAST trail already connects the VYCC and trail networks. Consistent with the Easement’s recreational objectives, the ACF Trail Design addresses connections to existing, mapped, public trails on properties adjoining the ACF. Any trail connections with adjacent properties will be subject to mutual agreement, including signage to be installed at boundaries to indicate land ownership and allowed uses, and the time span during which the agreement will remain in effect even if ownership of the property changes.

*[BE: As with streams, trails should perpendicularly cross the boundary to minimize traffic impacts along that boundary.]*

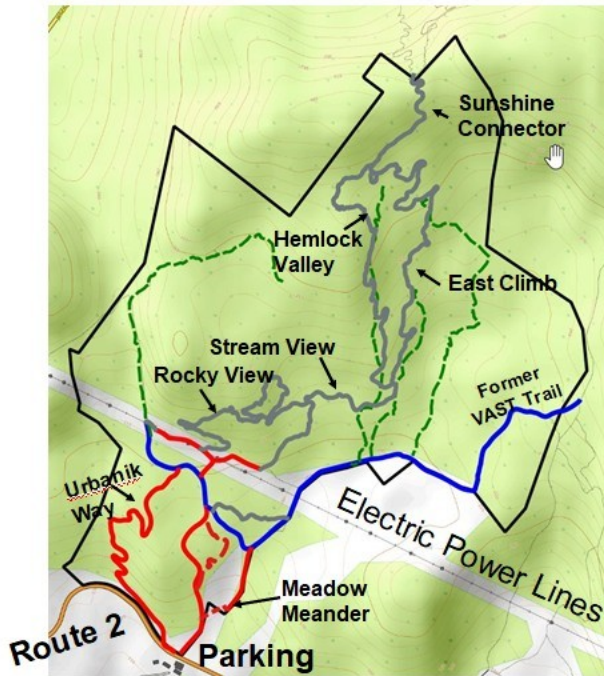
## 7.2.3 Process for Constructing Approved Trails

- A hired professional trail designer will flag a route that, to the best of their ability, follows the route appearing in the approved Trail Design Map.
- A professional ecologist, will walk the flagged route and a 50 foot buffer on either side to determine whether there are any fine-scale features (rare, threatened, or endangered species) that would be adversely impacted by the proposed trail development. If there are, the trail designer will consult with the ecologist to identify a suitable re-route.
- The Committee may make minor adjustments to the Trail Design Map to ensure a 200’ buffer between the trail and known sensitive areas, as identified and mapped in existing ecological assessments. *[BE: Words like “may” and “minor” in the preceding sentence provide little guidance for ACFC decision-making. Further, they subordinate the entire Forest’s ecological needs to trail aspirations throughout, in conflict with the Easement and best practices. Also, the 200’ buffer is a carry-over from MPI, and short of the latest, research-based recommendations for maintaining ecological integrity and long-term, sustainable human access.]* Following Easement holder and Selectboard approval, the Committee will proceed to work with the Richmond Trails Committee, volunteer groups or individuals and/or a hired trail-builder to install trails which meet standards and designs agreed upon by the Committee and approved by the Selectboard and DRB.
- The ACFC will seek grant funding as necessary to support the design, construction, and maintenance of trails approved and included on the Trail Design Map.

## 7.2.4 Trail Design Map

*[BE Comments: Trail designs need to follow criteria contained in an approved Management Plan, thus this section is premature. Also, when the MP is approved and a trail design published, the ACF shouldn’t be shown as a blank slate. The design can’t be evaluated without a map or maps showing proposed trail routes and their appropriate zones of influence in conjunction with the ACF’s natural communities, connectivity routes, steep slopes and other sensitive features.]*

The 2018 Trail Concept Map was intended as a “roadmap to trail construction” in which the proposed trails “reflect the approximate desired location of future trails, pending the results of the coarse- and fine-scale ecological assessment”. The present Trail Design Map is an extensive development from the Concept Map, based on the [design](#) proposed in a contract with Arrowwood Environmental and Sinuosity and [subsequently modified](#) in response to public input and Zoning considerations, and recognizing to limited extent published and peer-reviewed expert findings and recommendations about trail impacts. *[BE: The latest proposed design was produced ahead of the required revision of MP2 and thus without benefit of whatever trail placement guidelines the new document will contain. Some changes made to the design reflect expert knowledge and best practices. But significant concerns remain with some of the proposed routes.]*



(Trail names from Arrowwood Proposal)  
**Red:** Existing (Urbanik Way, Access Road, Dana's, etc.)  
**Red-Dashed:** Pedestrian Only Trail  
**Gray:** Currently proposed ('Rocky View, Hemlock, East Climb, Lower traverse)  
**Green (dashed):** existing Forest Roads

The present Trail Design Map proposes an enduring, sustainable trail network that should not be expanded, to protect the natural resources within the ACF and also to honor the desires of the Andrews family and community intent documented in the Management Plan. It is intended to achieve a trail network that is consistent with minimizing ecological impacts of trail-based recreation. *[SP Comment: This map may not be accurate— we still have to determine the trail design for ACF, both in terms of zoning/development feasibility, engineering site plans, and effects on wildlife.]* [and “sustainable” shouldn’t be used without reasonable substantiation, especially given the likelihood of long-term impacts from higher volumes of trail traffic on nearby natural communities, steep slopes and other sensitive areas, and the safety and enjoyment of people using those trails.]

### General Principles and Objectives for the trails design

The plan creates a lower density of trails above the powerlines and higher density below the powerlines to place equal emphasis on conservation of the interior forest areas of the property, while still facilitating public access. *[BE: There are much more balanced ways to conserve the ACF's interior forest “while still facilitating public access” than introducing new volumes and types of traffic into it. The ZOIs of traffic on proposed trails would fragment and degrade some 80 acres of interior forest per mile. Fortunately, the ACF's sensitive and most secluded areas are in the north. We can then construct new hiking and mountain biking trails and infrastructure in the area south of and including the former VAST trail, closer to the parking lot, Rt. 2 and the village, where they will be less ecologically disruptive, more cost-effective, and more inviting to “people of all ages and abilities.”]* It provides shorter loops at a lower grade from the parking area to ensure the property is accessible and inviting to people of all ages and abilities, non-mechanized (pedestrian) trails are designated to accommodate school trips, families with young children or older people, providing easy to moderate walking for 45 to 60 minutes.

Trails avoid sensitive areas [SP Comment: Based on the current proposed trail design map, they do not avoid sensitive areas/EPZs.] [BE: Because of its ZOIs, trail traffic would still degrade the ecological functions and integrity of dry oak forests, riparian areas, wildlife wintering areas, mast stands, seeps and other sensitive areas.] (EPZs, etc) and give an appropriate buffer to sensitive areas, as determined by professional ecologists and with reference to the Conservation Easement. [BE: The Easement's EPZ's are not necessarily aimed at protecting habitat. The 50' riparian area EPZ's for example, seem geared toward protecting water quality and not wildlife habitat and connectivity. Dry oak EPZs – of critical and increasing value for feeding many species – are not buffered at all.] To reduce impacts by avoiding sensitive areas, 'buffer' widths; are specified as "300-foot" to reflect current ecological science. [JP: 1. the arrowwood proposals do avoid EPZs. The zone of influence may incur but the trails themselves do not. [Except for the large primary and secondary buffers around the two identified vernal pools, the EPZ buffers range from zero feet protecting the dry oak areas to 50 feet along streams. Those widths are far below what is needed to shield wildlife using those features from nearby human disturbances. VLT's aim seems to be protecting oaks from being trampled or cut, and the streams from being filled with sediment, not for the reasons wildlife need these areas.] 2. 300 foot ZOI is a good measure but should be conditional language, "wherever possible" or "trails should be routed to ensure minimum impact on habitat by taking a 300ft ZOI wherever possible." [The Easement doesn't say, "Conserve productive forestland, wildlife habitat, etc." "wherever possible." Nor does it say "Provide for non-motorized, non-commercial recreation...." "wherever possible." Elevating one Easement purpose over another upsets the balance the Easement wants us to provide. (Plus, vague subjective stipulations like "should" and "wherever possible" weaken policy documents, leaving them open to contentious, political and, over time, inconsistent interpretations.)] [JP: Meredith's document is not a policy handbook that lays out strict guidelines. [Correct, and if we followed it out the window in an area as small and packed with sensitive features as the ACF the case could be made for banning all trails. That's why we need clear, consistent, well-balanced guidelines. And not just to maintain the ACF's ecological health but also to avoid ambiguity and Committee struggles in making sound decisions on new trail proposals.] Let's not forget that the document also says that motorized traffic is less impactful than non-motorized traffic (because it moves through more quickly). By that logic we should allow only e-bikes and motor bikes. Yet I don't think any of us would prefer that. So we need to make rational decisions about the area that reflect considered compromises. β] [Meredith and other researchers qualify that observation by noting that, as with e-bikes and motor bikes, "mountain biking often covers more ground than foot travel and thus may accumulate a greater effect."] [IS: motorized bikes: moot as the Easement precludes them]

### Existing roads and trails

1. Except where they coincide with the proposed trail network, existing logging roads and skid trails will not be maintained as trails and will not be shown on ACF trail maps (although during future forest management activities, they may be maintained by the forester and logger). [BE: The Zoning Administrator recommends against this closing existing trails due to the permitting requirement new trail construction elsewhere would force onto the ACFC. This measure would also strip away the value hikers, hunters, skiers, birders and others find in the ACF's network of forest roads, And it would require the Town to assume the yet-to-be-presented costs and risks of building trails in steep, remote areas]

2. Dana's Climb to be renamed as Camel's Hump View [SP Comment: This isn't consistent with the choice to use Abenaki names for the trails.] and is to be pedestrian only.

3. Urbanik Way should be re-routed to start higher in the parking lot to bypass persistently wet ground, scramble up rock, and a section passing very close to Rt 2.

### Modifications to Arrowwood Proposal:

[BE: As welcome as specific modifications will eventually be, first we need a completed MP2 to base



*them on. Otherwise, and as the next three comments show, the concerns behind them are being arbitrarily applied, outside of any consistent management guidelines.]*

- The proposed East Climb and Hemlock Valley trails will be rerouted to avoid wet areas and rare/sensitive plants, per [Arrowwood fine-scale review](#) late summer 2022.
- The proposed Ridgetop trail was removed from the proposal, as it tracks closely to the ravine that serves as a key wildlife corridor. *[BE: For the same reason, Stream View needs to be re-routed away from its parallel route along that same corridor.]*
- The proposed central path between Cascade Trail and Rocky View *[SP Comment: Hemlock Valley and Rocky View are problematic due to being in hemlock natural communities, and too close to ledges.]* was removed from the plan; instead, the two should be connected where they are closest to one another towards the southern end. Rocky View and Cascade are pedestrian only (Stream View *[BE: Stream View still appears to run parallel and too close to the central corridor and its riparian area. (Again, maps of trail proposals need to show not just the routes but also their ZOIs and the ACF's sensitive areas.)*], which is one access point for those two trails, will have both pedestrian and non-pedestrian traffic). **Note – potential slope problem in that area.**
- The Roadside Trail was removed from the proposed network as it is redundant, paralleling the road, and would pass through persistently wet areas making trail construction “tricky” per Arrowwood and Sinuosity [report](#), requiring bridges, ramps, puncheon, etc.

#### **Pedestrian-only Trails:**

1. All Existing Forest Roads and the (renamed) Dana’ will be designated as pedestrian-only.

#### **Trail-free zones**

Other than proposed trails, current connection to VYCC trails, and where present-day VAST trail connects, all other areas of the forest are designated as trail-free. **Refer to Wildlife Stewardship Plan?** *[BE: This presumes that the miles of proposed trails throughout the ACF comply with the Easement, Town Plan, Zoning, best practices, etc., which isn’t the case. Plus the existing network of forest roads and trails would need to be closed to hikers, hunters, etc. to make the ACF “trail-free.” A better solution would be to designate the more sensitive north as “new trail-free” and develop new hiking and biking trails in the more accessible south.]*

### **7.2.5 Trail Monitoring, Maintenance, etc.**

*[BE: This would benefit from an opening statement describing the purpose, such as: “The Adaptive Management concept described on page \_\_, as well as the Town’s overall stewardship of the forest and its recreational facilities, depend on regular, consistent tracking of trail usage, trail and infrastructure conditions, impacts on ecological processes, and the need, progress and costs of maintenance projects. Benchmarks and trigger points should be established to guide usage of the data as its gathered. The Trail Stewardship Plan details steps needed to achieve this.”]*

Trail users will be encouraged to notify the ACFC of any observed problems requiring attention (downed trees, erosion, invasive plants, etc.) via the email address listed at the Town website. The ACFC member who is the Richmond Trails Committee representative will be a designated as responsible for monitoring trail conditions, coordinating maintenance and repairs, and publicizing trails’ status.

**Monitoring of trail traffic** [SP Comment: Should we consider adding a visitor sign in log?] [JP: Absolutely, doing so is consistent with all of our goals (conservation, recreation, education, etc)] [BE: We definitely need to provide for some kind of monitoring. But it can't be seen as a replacement for avoiding sensitive areas in the first place. Otherwise, we could find ourselves endlessly closing trails and opening new ones, which would not only be costly but ineffective in an area as small as the ACF.) and status should include counting or estimating the number of visits, making periodic surveys of plants (including invasives) and animal populations, and inspecting for trail erosion. The plan should establish baselines and then monitor changes over time. [BE: Baselines, yes, but how to establish them? We might just set some parameters for a Trail Stewardship Plan here and wrestle with the baseline question there (and possibly in the Wildlife Stewardship Plan as well). Results of monitoring shall be reported annually at a meeting of the ACFC. Management actions shall be adjusted according to the results of the monitoring plan per the adaptive management model in **Figure 3**. Monitoring should start with sensitive areas identified by the [Arrowwood report](#) recommendations, and the 2019 [Field Naturalist Report](#) and employ game cameras, [BE: audio traps,] observations by volunteers, and forest monitoring coordination.

### **Invasive species management**

Seasonal visual inspection for invasive species will be conducted by ACFC and removal / mitigation will be planned accordingly. Guidance shall be sought from the Conservation Commission, local experts such as Jon Kart (Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife Department) and others on monitoring methods and control measures for identified invasive species. [BE: *We should ask the County Forester to take a lead role in this, especially given the critical importance given to this topic in the Forestry Management Plan. (Assuming the updated Forestry MP picks that up from the original one.)*]

### **Monitoring impact of human presence in forest**

[BE: *The title seems overly broad, as the methods suggested seem to focus only on soil impacts. Again, data will be meaningless unless there are benchmarks and standards relating to trail carrying capacity for ecological protections, user safety, user enjoyment, etc., all of which should be covered in trail proposals. We will never perfect this but should at least come up with a justifiable approach. The difficulties in doing this correctly AND practically are another reason for simply avoiding the construction of new trails in the north as mitigation for increasing trails and traffic in the less sensitive south.*]

Quantitative and qualitative data collected will be reviewed regularly and guide the Committee in prioritizing trail maintenance and upgrades. Trail user counters will be installed at base of each trail, and counts retrieved periodically. A non-arbitrary decision-tree will be established to guide actions when certain numbers of users are on trails. Methodology:

1. National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project (2016): A simple method for extrapolating from sample monitoring to estimate longer term traffic volume. <https://bikepeddocumentation.org>

2. SE Group (2017) Monitoring Traffic on Hinesburg Town Forest (2017)

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uUC0Vwym\\_BjyvSnyVy58z4Qp40p6ElBT/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uUC0Vwym_BjyvSnyVy58z4Qp40p6ElBT/view)

3. Monitoring traffic on Johnnie Brook Trail <https://infoacf.files.wordpress.com/2023/04/jbt-kh.pdf>

Seasonal visual inspection of trails for erosion and maintenance requirements will be conducted by the ACFC. Trail maintenance will be planned seasonally and as needed and will be coordinated with the Trails Committee to supervise work and to recruit volunteers. The ACFC member who is the Richmond Trails Committee (RTC) member will liaise between ACFC and the RTC and other groups.

### 7.3 Snowmobiling

Previously the ACF contained a snowmobile trail that was part of the VAST trail network. Snowmobiling will be permitted in the ACF if and when VAST seeks to establish such trails and subject to a use contract ensuring compatibility with the Management Plan's goals and objectives.

### 7.4 Hunting

Many people want to hunt in the ACF. Hunting is allowed on the property in accordance with all State and federal laws and allowable uses. As of 2021, citizens of recognized Abenaki tribes may obtain free hunting licenses from the state of Vermont. The ACFC will emphasize education about hunting season safety for both hunters and non-hunters. Trapping will not be permitted on the Town Forest because of the safety hazard it presents to visitors and their pets who may be traveling both on and off trail.

### 7.5 Potential Recreation Partnerships

*[BE: Add Richmond Conservation Commission, County Forester, Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, UVM Community Forest Program]*

- Richmond Trails Committee
- Western Abenaki Tribes and Richmond Racial Equity
- Maple Wind Farm
- VYCC
- Richmond Land Trust
- Richmond Mountain Trails/Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA)
- Scouts
- Community Senior Center

### 7.6 Recreation Management Objectives and Actions

*[BE: Would this be better ahead of the preceding text, or much of it anyway?]*

**Objective 1:** Develop and promote a community forest that accommodates a wide variety of recreation opportunities (hunting, hiking, skiing, mountain biking etc.) subject to the provisions of the Conservation Easement and this Management Plan as it may be revised from time to time.

**Actions:**

- Maintain existing trails and design build new trails in conformity with the **ACF Trail Design Map** and provisions in this Management Plan *[BE: Another appearance of the cart in front of the horse. Though this may not be the intent, it implies a **pre-existing** "Trail Design Map," which blocks us from basing such a map on expert-derived, agreed-upon criteria clearly spelled out in the Management Plan. To do otherwise counters Selectboard wishes, opens the way to arbitrarily applied rules, and inconsistent, ineffective management of the property over time.]*
- Choose trail names that bring Indigenous presence and language back to this landscape and create signage accordingly. Consult Appendix B, Part 4 for suggested names that were proposed and vetted by Abenaki tribal citizens, culture keepers and language experts.
- Maintain a trailhead kiosk at the parking lot with information about wildlife and natural resources, hunting seasons, hunting safety, trail etiquette, agricultural uses of the property, allowed user groups, property ownership, cultural and ecological information, etc.
- Include the short version of the Land Acknowledgment at all signed entrances, on kiosks and on maps stating: "The Andrews Community Forest is located within Ndakinna, the unceded

homeland of the Western Abenaki People, who have a unique connection to this land and have been its traditional stewards.” (See Appendix B, Part 1.)

- Install a bike rack at the East Main Street entrance to the Community Forest
- Work with neighboring landowners to address any changes in landownership and allowed uses.

**Objective:** Manage the recreation infrastructure in a way that best honors the needs of the forest and its users.

**Actions:**

- Work with the Trails Committee to organize, advertise, and facilitate routine maintenance, acute maintenance, and trail work days and recruit volunteers.
- Establish the ACFC email address as the means for trail users to communicate any need for trail maintenance (downed trees, erosion, etc.) or user conflicts.
- Maintain a process to monitor and communicate trail conditions to the public.
- Monitor impacts of recreational use on natural resources and adapt management strategies accordingly: *[BE: Suggest beginning this point with “Establish benchmarks and management action points, and monitor impacts....”]*
- Explore possibilities for creating a walking/biking connection from the ACF to Richmond Village.
- Evaluate applications for hosting trail-based events and races on forest trails if ecological monitoring indicates an ability to do so without negative impacts to forest ecosystems and trail infrastructure. *[BE: We needn’t limit this to “trail-based events and races” as many forms of recreation take place off trails. Suggest just saying “organized activities in the ACF.” (Of course, we should also be sure to build trails “without negative impacts to forest ecosystems.”)]*
- Employ current best practices on balancing the needs of both habitat and recreational users.