

## Appendix D Recreation

### Community Interests and Benefits

The Andrews Community Forest has long offered many recreational opportunities to town residents and visitors. That tradition continues, along with the many benefits to health and well-being that outdoor recreation and nature experiences provide.

When the Town acquired the forest, it surveyed town residents to determine their preferences for allowed activities 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. (IS: See [Visioning Process Results \(2017\) in 2018 ACF Management Plan, page 279](#)). Subsequent input from Town residents identified expanded mountain biking opportunities, including connections to abutting trail systems, as important. Others were concerned how new types and intensities of trail traffic would affect existing users, human and animal alike.

### Legal and Policy Guidance

Reflecting science, Town legal and policy documents strongly support sustainable recreation. The ACF Conservation Easement establishes recreation as one of its central Purposes, requiring the Town to “provide for non-motorized, non-commercial recreational, educational and other appropriate community uses.”

The Easement also requires the Town to “conserve productive forestland, wildlife habitat, biological diversity, natural communities, riparian buffers, wetlands, soil productivity, water quality and native flora and fauna...and the ecological processes that sustain these natural resource values...” This echoes the Richmond Town Plan, which calls for protecting “priority natural areas” and ensuring “best stewardship” of Town-owned land such as the ACF. As noted elsewhere in this plan, the ecological importance and sensitivity of the ACF’s natural features and contributions are well-documented in assessments by the Vermont Land Trust, Audubon Vermont, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, UVM Field Naturalist Program, UVM Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative, Arrowwood Environmental, and others.

### Examining Options

As part of its due diligence, the ACF Committee reviewed proposals for building several miles of new trails and associated bridges and boardwalks, some to connect the forest to trail systems on adjoining private land and to networks beyond. The Committee considered factors that had changed or come to light since the original, 2018 Management Plan was written, among them:

- *The ACF’s ecological role and importance.* Assessments by UVM, Arrowwood and others since the original plan was written confirm the ACF’s value for black bear, bobcat, whitetail deer, fisher and other wildlife, especially in the northern, least developed and visited areas of the forest.
- *Advances in recreation.* New equipment and technologies are increasing recreational demands, allowing more people to penetrate farther, faster and deeper into forests more often and with less effort. Social media and trail recreation maps direct people places only few knew about a decade ago, including rich, remote natural areas and habitats.

- 43 • *Continuing research showing wildlife’s sensitivity to trail traffic.* Recently published scientific  
44 studies and literature reviews further explain how trail traffic can fragment, degrade and destroy  
45 productive wildlife habitats within “zones of influence” extending hundreds of meters from the  
46 trails themselves.
- 47 • *Limited space for sustainable trail development.* Even buffers of a modest 100 meters around  
48 sensitive areas would preclude trail development nearly all of the ACF [IS: show a map?]. The  
49 steepness and wetness of the surrounding terrain is another concern [IS: show a map?], and could  
50 subject development projects to state and local permitting requirements.
- 51 • *The Indigenous Land Acknowledgement.* The Town of Richmond has pledged [IS: where?] to  
52 foster a healthy forest community by incorporating into our management practices the Traditional  
53 Ecological Knowledge that sustained our area’s forests for thousands of years.
- 54 • *Assessments of needs.* More than 100 miles of multi-use trails are available to the public within  
55 Richmond and its neighboring towns, most on private lands [IS: Insert or cite Table I made].  
56 ~~Some are primarily for hikers or bikers; others serve a mix.~~ [IS: Are any not multi-use?]

57  
58 **Achieving Balance**

59 [CR: I do not agree with this.....needs discussion and vote..this is Chase]

60 The Management Plan’s approach to meaningfully protecting the forest and accommodating diverse  
61 recreational and other community wishes centers on balancing ecological and recreational needs. The  
62 plan [IS: Cite sections A6 and B6] creates two recreational management zones based on the particular  
63 topography, sensitivity and accessibility of each. It puts equal emphasis on conserving the integrity of  
64 ACF’s interior forest, and facilitating public access to the entire property :

- 65 • North of the former VAST trail, the forest remains open to hiking, hunting and other activities on  
66 footpaths, with access improved through light maintenance of select forest roads and skid trails.  
67 The remote, rugged terrain helps prevent overuse of this recognized sensitive area..
- 68 • South of and including the former VAST trail, the Management Plan encourages development of  
69 new trails for casual hiking, mountain biking and other activities. Route 2, the ACF parking lot  
70 and existing trail and utility road connections provide convenient access to this area (and also  
71 simplify trail construction and maintenance for the Town).

72  
73 Trails in the south include shorter loops from the parking area to ensure the property is accessible and  
74 inviting to people of all ages and abilities, including families with young children and older people. They  
75 can also accommodate visits by school groups.

76  
77 This dual-zone strategy helps the Town meet its legal [IS: specify which legal and policy obligations] and  
78 policy obligations. It also provides the community with an expanded range of recreational opportunities  
79 balanced with minimal impacts on its most secluded, sensitive and ecologically sensitive areas.

80  
81 **Special considerations**

- 82 • *Hunting.* [IS: check for consistency with B6] Hunters from throughout the area use the ACF, and  
83 the ACFC allows and encourages the practice. Its benefits include control of the ACF’s deer  
84 population, important to restoring healthier diversities of age and species to the forest’s trees and

85 understory. Hunters and non-hunters can share the landscape at any time of year. The ACFC  
86 urges each to take safety precautions such as wearing highly visible clothing and keeping dogs  
87 leashed. See the posted guidelines for the latest requirements and advice. *[BE: In our guidelines,*  
88 *we might want to go a step beyond State reg by prohibiting hounding and coyote hunting.]*  
89 • *Trapping.* Because of safety hazards to visitors, pets and bycaught animals, trapping is not  
90 permitted in the ACF.  
91 • *Snowmobiling.* Snowmobiling may be permitted to resume on the former VAST trail subject to a  
92 use contract ensuring compatibility with the ACF Conservation Easement and Management Plan.  
93 Motorized recreation is otherwise prohibited in the ACF.

94

95 **Process for Considering Future Trails** [IS: Check for duplication/ consistency with Section B6]

96 Proposals to the Selectboard and easement holder for new trails must conform with this or subsequent  
97 ACF Management Plans and:

- 98 • Document the needs and benefits of the new trail for specified users (hikers, runners, mountain  
99 bikers, skiers, etc.)
- 100 • Map the proposed trail route in relation to nearby sensitive features, 100-meter envelopes around  
101 them and slope and soil suitability for the types of anticipated usage.
- 102 • Obtain cost estimates for trail and infrastructure assessments, design, permitting and  
103 management, including compliance with the ACF Trail Stewardship Plan.
- 104 • Engage with the Conservation Commission, Trails Committee and the public to address the  
105 proposals compatibility with the Conservation Easement, Town Plan and Management Plan.
- 106 • Conform with the Trail Stewardship Plan.
- 107 • Obtain Selectboard and easement holder approvals along with any required State or Town  
108 permits.

109



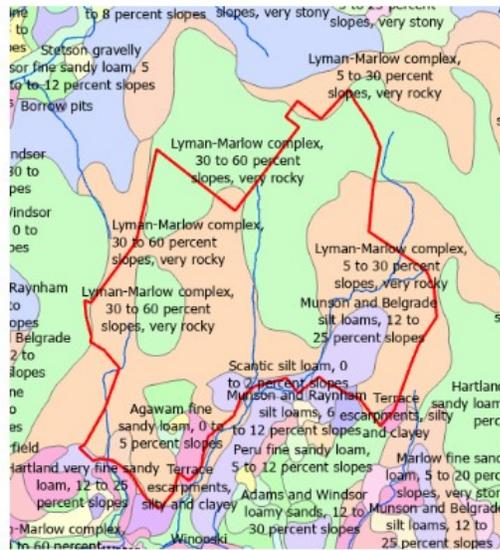


Figure \_\_: Soil types in the ACF

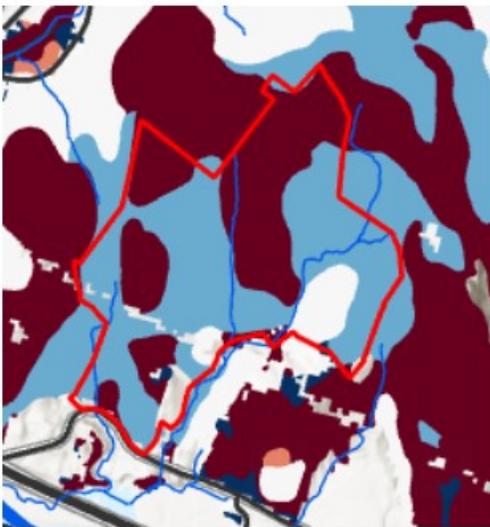


Figure \_\_: Soil suitability for trail construction in the ACF. (Sources for Fig. 6-8: UVM Forest Ecological Management Cooperative)

110

111 **Process for Constructing Approved Trails** [BE: Might we cover this in the TSP?]

- 112 ● A hired professional trail designer will flag a route that, to the best of their ability, follows the
- 113 route appearing in the approved Trail Design Map.
- 114 ● A professional ecologist, will walk the flagged route and a 50-foot buffer on either side to
- 115 determine whether there are any fine-scale features (rare, threatened, or endangered species) that
- 116 would be adversely impacted by the proposed trail development. If there are, the trail designer
- 117 will consult with the ecologist to identify a suitable re-route.

- 118 ● The Committee may make minor adjustments to the Trail Design Map to ensure protections of
- 119 known sensitive areas, as identified and mapped in existing ecological assessments.
- 120 ● Following Easement holder and Selectboard approval, the Committee will work with the
- 121 Richmond Trails Committee, volunteer groups or individuals and/or a hired trail-builder to install
- 122 trails which meet standards and designs agreed upon by the Committee and approved by the
- 123 Selectboard and DRB.
- 124 ● The ACFC will seek grant funding as necessary to support the design, construction, and
- 125 maintenance of trails approved and included on the Trail Design Map.

126

127 **Potential Recreation Partnerships**

- 128 ● Richmond Trails Committee
- 129 ● Richmond Conservation Commission
- 130 ● Chittenden County Forester
- 131 ● UVM Community Forest Program
- 132 ● Western Abenaki Tribes and Richmond Racial Equity
- 133 ● Maple Wind Farm
- 134 ● VYCC
- 135 ● Richmond Land Trust
- 136 ● Richmond Mountain Trails/Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA)
- 137 ● Scouts
- 138 ● Community Senior Center

139

140 *[BE: The following (drafted by ChatGPT) might be better placed in the TSP, where it could be more*

141 *easily modified as changing situations warrant)]*

142 **Trail Maintenance Commitment Agreement**

143

144 This Trail Maintenance Commitment Agreement ("Agreement") is made and entered into as of the

145 \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20, by and between:

146 **Town or Richmond**, the owner of the Andrews Community Forest located at [Address or Legal

147 Description] (Granting Landowner); and

148 **Landowner 2:** [Name] ("Receiving Landowner"), the owner of the property located at [Address or

149 Legal Description].

150

151 WHEREAS, the Granting Landowner maintains a trail on their property and wishes to connect it to a

152 trail on the Receiving Landowner's property;

153 WHEREAS, the Receiving Landowner agrees to maintain the trail on their property to ensure its

154 continued usability and connectivity with the Granting Landowner's trail; NOW, THEREFORE, in

155 consideration of the mutual promises contained herein, the parties agree as follows:

156 **Trail Maintenance Commitment**

157 a. The Receiving Landowner commits to maintaining the portion of the trail located on their property

158 in a reasonable condition suitable for continued use by pedestrians, cyclists, and other agreed-upon

159 users.

b. Maintenance shall include, but is not limited to, clearing debris, repairing erosion, and ensuring safe passage along the trail.

1. **Access and Use**

a. The trail shall remain open for public or private use as determined by the Receiving Landowner.

b. The Granting Landowner shall not be responsible for any maintenance, liability, or costs associated with the Receiving Landowner's trail portion.

2. **Duration and Modification**

a. This Agreement shall remain in effect unless terminated by mutual written consent of both parties.

b. Any modifications must be in writing and signed by both parties.

3. **Indemnification and Liability**

a. Each party agrees to hold the other harmless from claims arising from their respective trail maintenance obligations.

b. The Receiving Landowner assumes responsibility for injuries or damages occurring on their portion of the trail.

4. **Governing Law** This Agreement shall be governed and interpreted under the laws of the State of Vermont.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Agreement as of the date first written above.

**Granting Landowner:**

---

[Name]

[Date]

**Receiving Landowner:**

---

[Name]

[Date]

**Trail Development and Stewardship**

*[Insert link to Trail Stewardship Plan]*