

## Appendix D: Recreation

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### 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. 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.

## 42 43 Examining Options

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

- 48 ● *The ACF's ecological role and importance.* Assessments by UVM, Arrowwood and others since  
49 the original plan was written confirm the ACF's value for black bear, bobcat, whitetail deer,  
50 fisher and other wildlife, especially in the northern, least developed and visited areas of the forest.
- 51 ● *Advances in recreation.* New equipment and technologies are increasing recreational demands,  
52 allowing more people to penetrate farther, faster and deeper into forests more often and with less  
53 effort. Social media and trail recreation maps direct people places only few knew about a decade  
54 ago, including rich, remote natural areas and habitats.
- 55 ● *Continuing research showing wildlife's sensitivity to trail traffic.* Recently published scientific  
56 studies and literature reviews further explain how trail traffic can fragment, degrade and destroy  
57 productive wildlife habitats within "zones of influence" extending hundreds of meters from the  
58 trails themselves.
- 59 ● *Limited space for sustainable trail development.* Even buffers of a modest 100 meters around  
60 sensitive areas would preclude trail development in nearly all of the ACF [IS: show a map?]. The  
61 steepness and wetness of the surrounding terrain is another concern [IS: refer to map below], and  
62 could subject development projects to state and local permitting requirements.
- 63 ● *The Indigenous Land Acknowledgement.* The Town of Richmond has pledged [IS: where?] [BE  
64 7-22: Good point. Presumably the SB will have ok'd the Indigenous Agreement by the time it  
65 approves MP2, or as part of that. It might be a good idea to get that language to the SB well  
66 before we bring it to the board as part of MP2.] to foster a healthy forest community by  
67 incorporating into our management practices the traditional ecological knowledge that sustained  
68 our area's forests for thousands of years.
- 69 ● *Assessments of needs.* There are a number of trails available to the public within Richmond and  
70 its neighboring towns, most on private lands.

## 71 72 Achieving Balance

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

74 The Management Plan's approach to meaningfully protecting the forest and accommodating diverse  
75 recreational and other community wishes centers on balancing ecological and recreational needs. The  
76 plan [IS: Cite sections A6 and B6] establishes two distinct management zones based on the particular  
77 topography, sensitivities and accessibility of each. This enables the Town to put equal emphasis on  
78 conserving the integrity of ACF's interior forest, and facilitating public access to the entire property by:

- 79 ● Creating two distinct management zones marked by the northern edge of the former VAST trail  
80 and the powerline corridor.
- 81 ● Designating trails in the northern zone as pedestrian only, open to hiking, hunting and other  
82 activities on footpaths, with access improved through light maintenance of select forest roads and  
83 skid trails. The remote, rugged terrain helps prevent overuse of this recognized sensitive area.  
84 Limit dogs and mountain biking to the southern zone.

- Encouraging development of new trails in the southern zone for casual hiking, mountain biking and other activities. Route 2, the ACF parking lot and existing trail and utility road connections provide convenient access to this area (and also simplify trail construction and maintenance for the Town).

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

This dual-zone strategy helps the Town meet the full suite of its legal obligations under the Conservation Easement and align with Town Plan policies. It also provides the community with an expanded range of recreational opportunities balanced with minimal impacts on its most secluded, sensitive and ecologically sensitive areas.

### Special considerations

[BE 7-22: Note the new bullet at the top of the list below. This would get us away from specifying rules in the plan that we might want to tighten or relax in the future, as experience warrants. It's still broad enough to document the considerations we should be following.]

- *Dogs*: The rules for bringing dogs into the ACF are published on the ACF Committee's web page. They draw on guidelines used at the Green Mountain Audubon Center in Huntington and other areas with special qualities and protective needs similar to the ACF's. The rules reflect wildlife's fear of even the friendliest dog as a predator, which can lead to abandoned dens, nests and habitats along with undue stress and exhaustion on the animals, and diminished chances of people being able to enjoy the sights and sounds of the ACF's wildlife.
- *Hunting*. Benefits include control of the ACF's deer population, important to restoring healthier diversities of age and species to the forest's trees and understory. Hunters and non-hunters can share the landscape at any time of year. The ACFC urges each to take safety precautions such as wearing highly visible clothing and keeping dogs leashed. Citizens of recognized Abenaki tribes may obtain free hunting licenses from the state of Vermont. See the posted guidelines for the latest requirements and advice.
- *Trapping*. Because of safety hazards to visitors, pets and bycaught animals, trapping is not permitted in the ACF.
- *Snowmobiling*. Previously the ACF contained a snowmobile trail that was part of the VAST trail network. Snowmobiling may be permitted to resume on the former VAST trail subject to a use contract ensuring compatibility with the ACF Conservation Easement and Management Plan. Motorized recreation is otherwise prohibited in the ACF.

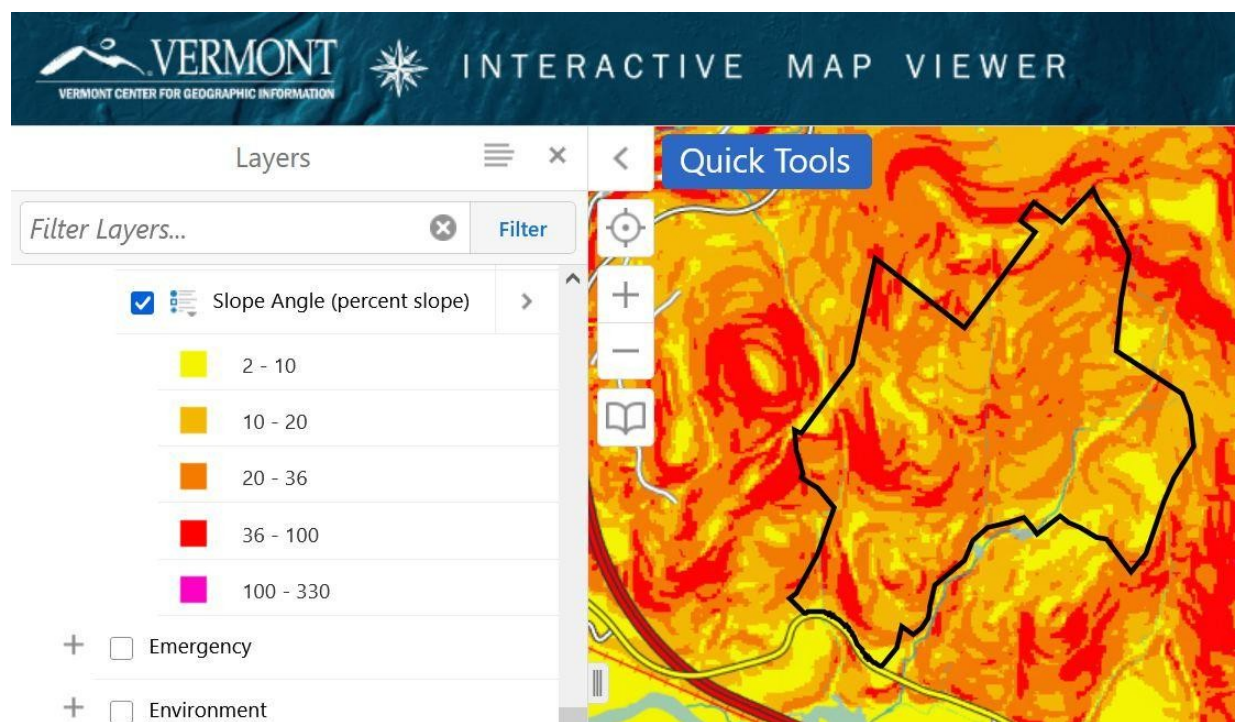
### Process for Considering Future Trails

[IS: Check for duplication/ consistency with Section B6]

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

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

[BE 7-22: Suggest eliminating lines 110-122 above, as these points should already be covered in B6. However, the slope and soil maps shown in B6 and also below could be kept to the Appendix alone as a reference for trail placement. They could be introduced as follows: “Section \_\_ of the Management Plan details parameters to ensure protection of sensitive areas and wildlife, and promote responsible trail building. The following maps of the ACF’s steepest slopes and fragile soils will help achieve that goal.”



**Figure \_\_:** Slopes of terrain in the ACF. Richmond’s Zoning Regulations identify special provisions for development on slopes greater than 20%, and greater than 35%.  
Source: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

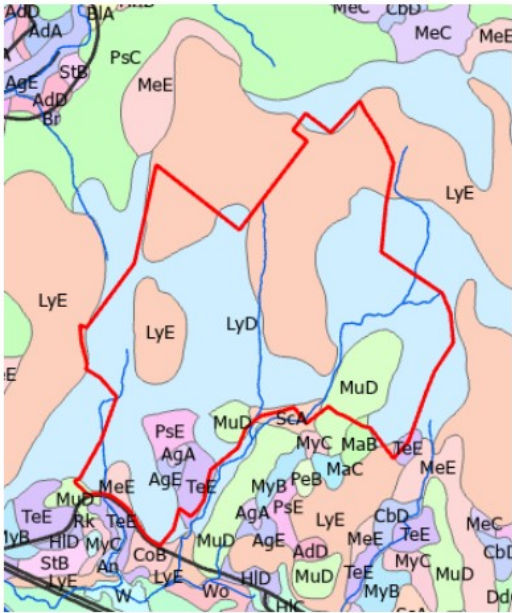
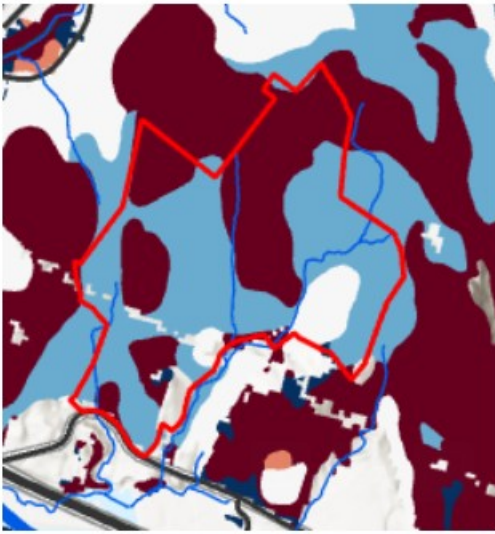


Figure \_\_: Soil distribution in the ACF [IS: Source: UVM Forest Ecological Management Cooperative)]



Figure \_\_: Soil types in the ACF [IS: Source: UVM Forest Ecological Management Cooperative)]





155  
156 **Figure \_\_: Soil suitability for trail construction in the ACF. (Sources: UVM Forest Ecological**  
157 **Management Cooperative)**

158  
159 **Process for Constructing Approved Trails**

160 *[BE: Might we cover this in B6?][IS: Yes, check for duplication in B6]*

- 161 ● A hired professional trail designer will flag a route that, to the best of their ability, follows the
- 162 route appearing in the approved Trail Design Map.
- 163 ● A professional ecologist, will walk the flagged route and a 50-foot buffer on either side to
- 164 determine whether there are any fine-scale features (rare, threatened, or endangered species) that
- 165 would be adversely impacted by the proposed trail development. If there are, the trail designer
- 166 will consult with the ecologist to identify a suitable re-route.
- 167 ● The Committee may make minor adjustments to the Trail Design Map to ensure protections of
- 168 known sensitive areas, as identified and mapped in existing ecological assessments.
- 169 ● Following Easement holder and Selectboard approval, the Committee will work with the
- 170 Richmond Trails Committee, volunteer groups or individuals and/or a hired trail-builder to install
- 171 trails which meet standards and designs agreed upon by the Committee and approved by the
- 172 Selectboard and DRB.
- 173 ● The ACFC will seek grant funding as necessary to support the design, construction, and
- 174 maintenance of trails approved and included on the Trail Design Map.

176 **Potential Recreation Partnerships**

177 *[IS: Move to B6, for consistency with other sections in the MP?]*

- 178 ● Richmond Trails Committee
- 179 ● Richmond Conservation Commission
- 180 ● Chittenden County Forester
- 181 ● UVM Community Forest Program
- 182 ● Western Abenaki Tribes and Richmond Racial Equity

- 183 ● Maple Wind Farm
- 184 ● VYCC
- 185 ● Richmond Land Trust
- 186 ● Richmond Mountain Trails/Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA)
- 187 ● Scouts
- 188 ● Community Senior Center

189

190 *[BE: The following (drafted by ChatGPT) might be better placed in the B6, where it could be more*

191 *easily modified as changing situations warrant)] [BE 7-22: I now think that this, too, could be a*

192 *generalized action item in B6, to allow for easier modifications as experience warrants. That action*

193 *item might read: “Before connecting to trails on neighboring properties, obtain an agreement signed*

194 *by both parties to maintain the trail for its intended uses unless both parties agree to discontinue it.”*

195

## 196 **Trail Maintenance Commitment Agreement**

197

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

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

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

201 Description] (Granting Landowner); and

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

203 Description].

204

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

206 on the Receiving Landowner's property;

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

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

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

### 210 **Trail Maintenance Commitment**

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

212 reasonable condition suitable for continued use by pedestrians, cyclists, and other agreed-upon users.

213 b. Maintenance shall include, but is not limited to, clearing debris, repairing erosion, and ensuring safe

214 passage along the trail.

### 215 **Access and Use**

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

217 b. The Granting Landowner shall not be responsible for any maintenance, liability, or costs associated

218 with the Receiving Landowner's trail portion.

### 219 **Duration and Modification**

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

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

### 222 **Indemnification and Liability**

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

224 obligations.

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

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

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

230 **Granting Landowner:**

231  
232 [Name]

233 [Date]

234 **Receiving Landowner:**

235  
236 [Name]

237 [Date]

238

239

240 **Trail Development and Stewardship**

241 *[Insert link to Trail Stewardship Plan]* **[IS This means Section B6?]**

242