

Andrews Community Forest Committee

Monday, August 18th, 2025 - 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Location: Richmond Town Center Meeting Conf Rm C, 3rd Floor, 203 Bridge Street

Present: Jim Cochran, Bradford Elliott, Sonya Mastersen, Julian Portilla, Wright Preston, Sam Pratt, Dan Wolfson (all in-person)

Minutes: Sam Pratt

Note: The audio for the Zoom meeting was apparently turned off or muted during the stream.

6:00 - Committee business

6:15 - Revisions of Management Plan

The committee proceeded with edits on the Recreation section, B6_Recreation_08-18-2025.pdf. Changes to the plan were made live with all members reaching consensus on each change before moving on.

There was discussion about the forest monitoring plan, which doesn't exist yet and will live outside the management plan itself. Sam mentioned he was planning on working on a more formal plan in Sep/Oct and to seek professional guidance from experts in the community (RCC, VT Fish and Wildlife, etc). Hope would be to finish the plan by the end of the year, and seek Conservation Reserve Funding for the expense of cameras, audio traps, and a firm to do initial setup and training.

Around 6:40, consensus could not be reached for the following point: *"Designate trails in the northern zone as pedestrian only. Limit dogs and mountain bikers to the southern zone."*

Julian brought up that he did not think that the bullet represented reasonable compromise or the will of the town and suggested that only dogs should be limited; bikers should not be excluded from the northern zone.

Wright suggested that we amend the point with additional text that clarifies that we may revisit the decision in the future, once more data is collected (via the monitoring plan).

There was much discussion on this point from both sides.

Arguments for removing the bike restriction:

- Excluding bikes is likely to be contentious and frustrate members of the community
- Trail closures would give wildlife seasonal periods without traffic
- Foot traffic is slower and may be more likely to disrupt wildlife than bikes, so excluding bikes is unnecessarily discriminatory

- Bike traffic will be limited by parking in the ACF lot and won't increase trail use by much

Arguments to keep the bike restriction:

- Bike users may favor more disruptive forms of trail use, moving faster and further
- Allowing foot traffic in the northern zone is a compromise from leaving the zone untouched/as a preserve
- Adding bike traffic on top of foot traffic will only increase volume and therefore
- Other routes may be possible with neighboring landowner permission, which would leave the majority of the northern zone undisturbed for wildlife
- Removing the bike restriction does not specify or limit the number of bike trails; it could be one or many

Ultimately it was determined the committee could not proceed without a vote. At 6:55, a motion was made by Wright and seconded by Brad to amend the existing point. After brief discussion, the motion was rescinded. More discussion followed.

At 7:10, a motion was made by Julian, seconded by Jim to:

Remove the language "Designate trails in the northern zone as pedestrian only. Limit dogs and mountain bikers to the southern zone." from the recreation section, and replace it with "Use restrictions in the northern zone are greater than in the southern zone, especially regarding dogs and bicycles. ACFC will review trail proposals per the Trail Development Parameters."

Votes in favor: Julian, Jim, Sonya

Votes against: Brad, Sam, Wright, Dan

Motion failed.

At 7:23, a motion was made by Sonya, seconded by Dan to:

Leave the text in question ("Designate trails in the northern zone as pedestrian only. Limit dogs and mountain bikers to the southern zone."), and append "Re-evaluate designations as usage data are collected and organized regarding mountain bikes, and amend the management plan accordingly."

Votes in favor: Sonya, Dan, Jim, Brad, Sam, Wright

Votes against: Julian

Motion passed. The management plan was updated to reflect this decision.

The committee finished work on the main section of the recreation section, and moved on to 6.1.2 Trail Development Parameters. It was determined that a "wetlands" section was warranted, as the parameters include riparian areas and vernal pools, but no guidance on wetlands. Because wetlands have slightly different needs than other sensitive areas, a new section was added. The committee was in the midst of discussing this section when time ran out.

Jim brought up that the committee continually starts some of these sections from the top and suggested a placeholder be added to speed up work in the next meeting, and to prevent further comment and discussion on sections that have been visited already.

6:45 - Business for Upcoming Meetings

- Election of chairperson(s) for next meeting (Aug 25th)
 - Sam will run meeting
 - Ian will be back and do the agenda (in coordination with Sam)
- Any additional topics for agenda? No
- Is there a need for additional meetings to meet the management plan deadline? Yes, the committee decided it will likely need more time to complete the management plan in September. The committee decided to add a meeting on 8/8, and extend the next three meetings by a half hour. The next three meetings are:
 - 08/25, 6:00-8:30pm
 - 09/08, 6:00-8:30pm
 - 09/22, 6:00-8:30pm

8:00 Closure