

## **Andrews Community Forest Committee submission for the Richmond Town Report, for the year 2025.**

In 2025 the Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC) focused primarily, but not exclusively, on revisions of the 2018 Management Plan, including planning for existing and new trails. As this is a Town-owned forest, our work is based on key governing documents: the Forest's Conservation Easement that emphasizes both conservation and human access, as well as the Town Plan and Zoning regulations. The Committee functions according to rules that govern all Town committees, with the result that substantial discussions and all decisions are made during our public meetings. The work of the Committee is accessible at the Town website page, including the agendas of and minutes of our monthly meetings with their attached 'packet' materials.

Work on the Management Plan revision has accelerated in 2025 with 19 meetings, now each 2 ½ hours long. A huge amount of material about the Forest and its management has now been collected, written and documented, reflecting the challenges of accommodating conservation and protection of the Forest's animal and plant species as well as human desires for recreation, hunting and forestry. The draft has continued to be shaped by public input, expert advice, ecological considerations and educational objectives, and formalizing processes for making trail planning flexible and adaptable. The draft will be subject to revision by a formal review process by the ACFC and public, and by other Town committees and the Selectboard.

In addition to work at the public meetings, other Committee work has included:

- Work parties for maintenance of existing trails and assistance with trail maintenance by trail users, and installing a sign-in sheet at the kiosk
- A site visit with VT state District Wetlands Ecologist Tina Heath regarding existing trails in two wetland areas
- A site visit with the Chittenden County Forester Brandon Benedict to familiarize him with the property and to check in on the health of the forest (including but not limited to past timber harvests and patch cuts)
- Identifying information about the ACF trails available online, and establishing mechanisms to monitor and control its accuracy
- Providing information to Richmond's Town Plan 2026 Steering Committee
- Worked with the Town's Zoning Administration to clarify provisions for developing new trails
- Using state Agency of Natural Resources and other sources to generate maps for planning new trails and other purposes
- Continued to work with VELCO regarding the powerline corridor, access to it and some safety concerns
- Formalizing a process for approving new trail designs, and identifying Forest regions that will be priorities for future trail development, based on considerations of ecology, habitat and terrain and using of state guidance in its "Vermont Conservation Design"
- Considering the parameters for sourcing outside help with editing the revised Management Plan.
- Coordinating with Maple Wind Farm and Richmond Mountain Trails regarding new public multiuse trails have been established adjacent to the ACF and their connection via the former VAST trail.
- Clarifying the location of the ACF boundary and resolving discrepancies in Vermont state maps ('Tax Map' etc.)

The Committee is thankful for the always helpful assistance of the Town Manager Josh Arneson and Assistant Duncan Wardwell, as well as others in the Town Offices and Select Board members. We get

help from the Conservation Commission and the Trails Committee, as well as many Townspeople who take time to attend our meetings or write to our email address or to the Front Porch Forum to offer their insights.

These volunteer members of the ACFC have served in 2025: James Cochran, Cecilia Danks, Brad Elliott, Sonya Mastersen, Julian Portilla, Sam Pratt, Wright Preston, Chase Rosenberg, Ian Stokes, Melissa Wolaver and Dan Wolson, representing a spectrum of citizens of Richmond. The Committee continues to welcome members of the public who have attended meetings to provide important information and perspectives.