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2 **Appendix D: Recreation**

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15 **Community Interests and Benefits**

16 The Andrews Community Forest has long offered many recreational opportunities to town residents and
17 visitors. That tradition continues, ~~along with the [IS: and outdoor recreation has been shown to have~~
18 ~~many benefits to mental and physical health and well-being [Avitt 2021, Beyer 2014] that outdoor~~
19 ~~recreation and nature experiences provide, as well as to societal community cohesion [Weinstein, N~~
20 ~~2015].~~

21 When the Town acquired the forest, it surveyed town residents to determine their preferences for allowed
22 activities in the ACF. The ten most favored, in order of preference, were hiking, running, hunting,
23 snowshoeing, skiing, bird- and wildlife-watching, picnicking, biking and dog-walking. ~~(IS: See Visioning~~
24 ~~Process Results (2017) in 2018 ACF Management Plan, page 279)~~. Subsequent input from Town
25 residents identified expanded mountain biking opportunities, including connections to abutting trail
26 systems, as important. Others were concerned how new types and intensities of trail traffic would affect
27 existing users, human and animal alike.

29 **Legal and Policy Guidance**

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

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

44

45 **Examining Options**

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

- 50 ● *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.
- 51 ● *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.
- 52 ● *Continuing research showing wildlife's sensitivity to trail traffic.* Recently published scientific
 studies and literature reviews further explain how trail traffic can fragment, degrade and destroy
 productive wildlife habitats within “zones of influence” extending hundreds of meters from the
 trails themselves.
- 53 ● *Limited space for sustainable trail development.* Even buffers of a modest 100 meters around
 sensitive areas would preclude trail development in nearly all of the ACF [IS: show a map?]. The
 steepness and wetness of the surrounding terrain is another concern [IS: refer to map below], and
 could subject development projects to state and local permitting requirements.
- 54 ● *The Indigenous Land Acknowledgement.* The Town of Richmond has pledged [IS: where?] [BE
 7-22: Good point. Presumably the SB will have ok'd the Indigenous Agreement by the time it
 approves MP2, or as part of that. It might be a good idea to get that language to the SB well
 before we bring it to the board as part of MP2.] to foster a healthy forest community by
 incorporating into our management practices the traditional ecological knowledge that sustained
 our area's forests for thousands of years.
- 55 ● *Assessments of needs.* There are a number of trails available to the public within Richmond and
 its neighboring towns, most on private lands.

73

74 **Achieving Balance**

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

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

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

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

91
92 Trails in the south include shorter loops from the parking area to ensure the property is accessible and
93 inviting to people of all ages and abilities, including families with young children and older people. They
94 can also accommodate visits by school groups.

95
96 This dual-zone strategy helps the Town meet the full suite of its legal obligations under the Conservation
97 Easement and align with Town Plan policies. It also provides the community with an expanded range of
98 recreational opportunities balanced with minimal impacts on its most secluded, sensitive and ecologically
99 sensitive areas.

100
101 **Special considerations**

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

106 ● *Dogs*: The rules for bringing dogs into the ACF are published on the ACF Committee's web
107 page. They draw on guidelines used at the Green Mountain Audubon Center in Huntington and
108 other areas with special qualities and protective needs similar to the ACF's. The rules reflect
109 wildlife's fear of even the friendliest dog as a predator, which can lead to abandoned dens, nests
110 and habitats along with undue stress and exhaustion on the animals, and diminished chances of
111 people being able to enjoy the sights and sounds of the ACF's wildlife.

112 ● *Hunting*. Benefits include control of the ACF's deer population, important to restoring healthier
113 diversities of age and species to the forest's trees and understory. Hunters and non-hunters can
114 share the landscape at any time of year. The ACFC urges each to take safety precautions such as
115 wearing highly visible clothing and keeping dogs leashed. Citizens of recognized Abenaki tribes
116 may obtain free hunting licenses from the state of Vermont. See the posted guidelines for the
117 latest requirements and advice.

118 ● *Trapping*. Because of safety hazards to visitors, pets and bycaught animals, trapping is not
119 permitted in the ACF.

120 ● *Snowmobiling*. Previously the ACF contained a snowmobile trail that was part of the VAST trail
121 network. Snowmobiling may be permitted to resume on the former VAST trail subject to a use
122 contract ensuring compatibility with the ACF Conservation Easement and Management Plan.
123 Motorized recreation is otherwise prohibited in the ACF.

124
125 **Process for Considering Future Trails**

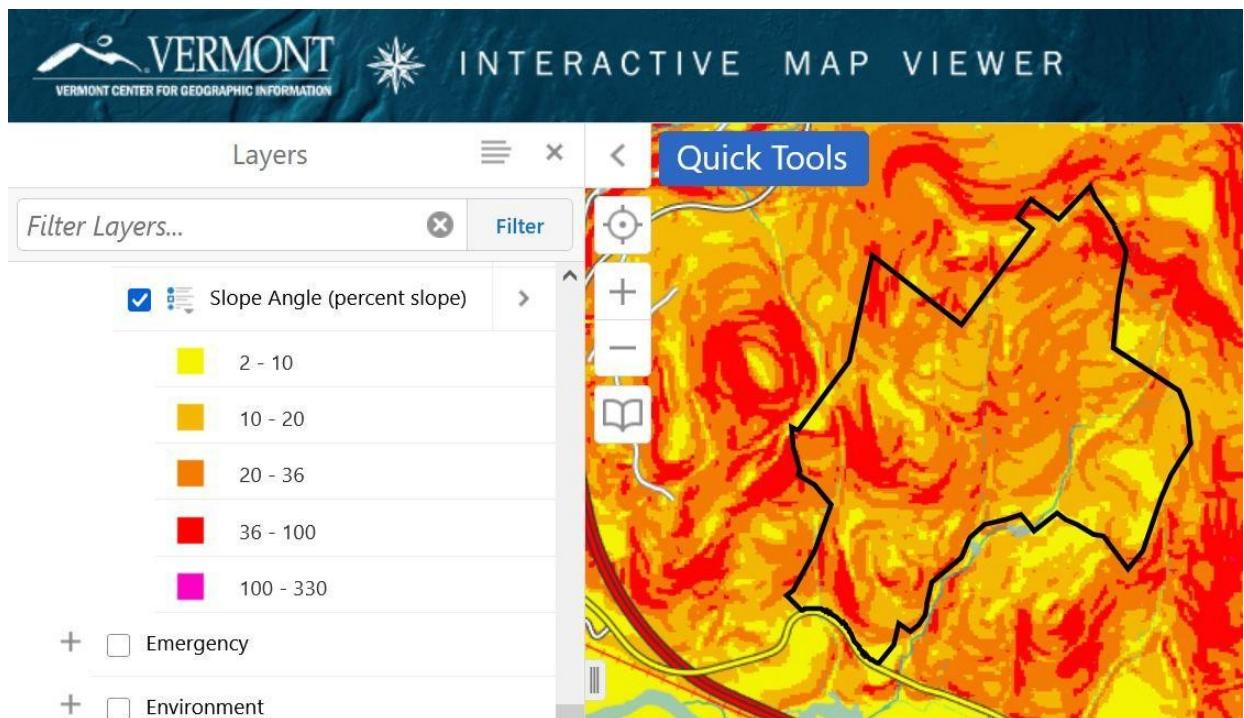
126 [IS: Check for duplication/ consistency with Section B6]

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

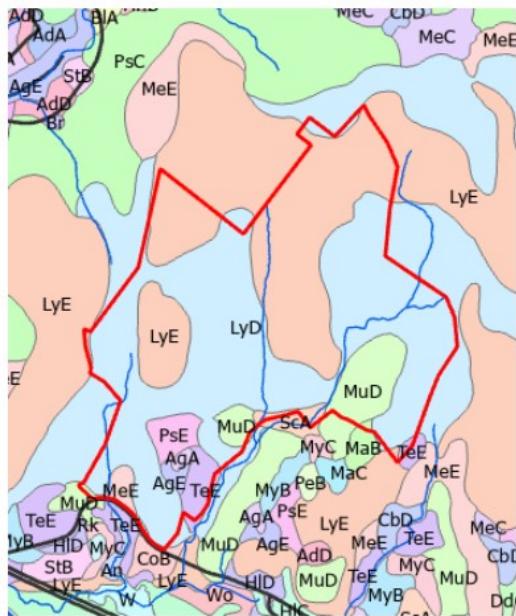
- Document the needs and benefits of the new trail for specified users (hikers, runners, mountain bikers, skiers, etc.)
- Map the proposed trail route in relation to nearby sensitive features, 100-meter envelopes around them and slope and soil suitability for the types of anticipated usage.
- Obtain 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.



141 **[BE 7-22: Suggest eliminating lines 110-122 above, as these points should already be covered in B6. 142 However, the slope and soil maps shown in B6 and also below could be kept to the Appendix alone as a 143 reference for trail placement. They could be introduced as follows: “Section ___ of the Management Plan 144 details parameters to ensure protection of sensitive areas and wildlife, and promote responsible trail 145 building. The following maps of the ACF’s steepest slopes and fragile soils will help achieve that goal.”**



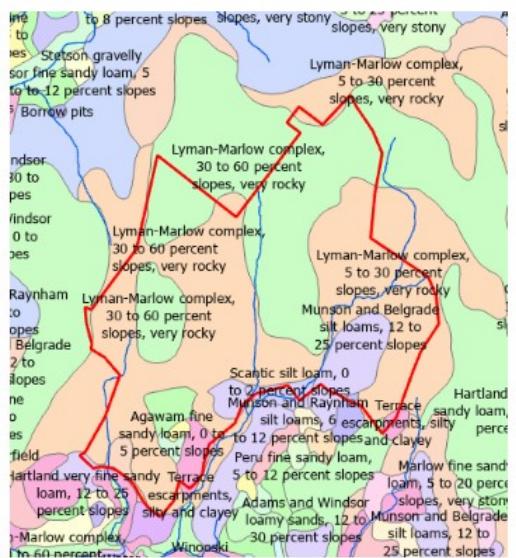
146 **Figure ___: Slopes of terrain in the ACF. Richmond’s Zoning Regulations identify special provisions for 147 development on slopes greater than 20%, and greater than 35%. 148**
 149 *Source: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.*



150

151 **Figure __: Soil distribution in the ACF [IS: Source: UVM Forest Ecological Management
152 Cooperative)]**

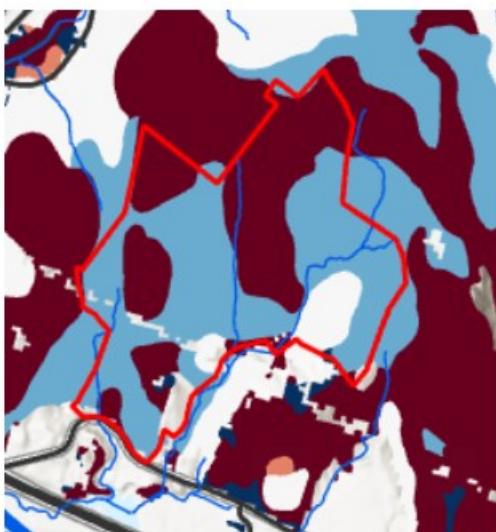
153



154

155 **Figure __: Soil types in the ACF [IS: Source: UVM Forest Ecological Management Cooperative)]**

156



157

158 **Figure __: Soil suitability for trail construction in the ACF. (Sources: UVM Forest Ecological**
159 **Management Cooperative)**

160

161 **Process for Constructing Approved Trails**

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

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

177

178 **Potential Recreation Partnerships**

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

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

17
18

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

191
192 *[BE: The following (drafted by ChatGPT) might be better placed in the B6, where it could be more
193 easily modified as changing situations warrant] [BE 7-22: I now think that this, too, could be a
194 generalized action item in B6, to allow for easier modifications as experience warrants. That action
195 item might read: "Before connecting to trails on neighboring properties, obtain an agreement signed
196 by both parties to maintain the trail for its intended uses unless both parties agree to discontinue it."*
197

198 **Trail Maintenance Commitment Agreement**

199
200 This Trail Maintenance Commitment Agreement ("Agreement") is made and entered into as of the _____
201 day of _____, 20____, by and between:

202 **Town or Richmond**, the owner of the Andrews Community Forest located at [Address or Legal
203 Description] (Granting Landowner); and
204 **Landowner 2: [Name]** ("Receiving Landowner"), the owner of the property located at [Address or Legal
205 Description].

206
207 WHEREAS, the Granting Landowner maintains a trail on their property and wishes to connect it to a trail
208 on the Receiving Landowner's property;

209 WHEREAS, the Receiving Landowner agrees to maintain the trail on their property to ensure its
210 continued usability and connectivity with the Granting Landowner's trail; NOW, THEREFORE, in
211 consideration of the mutual promises contained herein, the parties agree as follows:

212 **Trail Maintenance Commitment**

213 a. The Receiving Landowner commits to maintaining the portion of the trail located on their property in a
214 reasonable condition suitable for continued use by pedestrians, cyclists, and other agreed-upon users.
215 b. Maintenance shall include, but is not limited to, clearing debris, repairing erosion, and ensuring safe
216 passage along the trail.

217 **Access and Use**

218 a. The trail shall remain open for public or private use as determined by the Receiving Landowner.
219 b. The Granting Landowner shall not be responsible for any maintenance, liability, or costs associated
220 with the Receiving Landowner's trail portion.

221 **Duration and Modification**

222 a. This Agreement shall remain in effect unless terminated by mutual written consent of both parties.
223 b. Any modifications must be in writing and signed by both parties.

224 **Indemnification and Liability**

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

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

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

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

232 **Granting Landowner:**

233

234 [Name]

235 [Date]

236 **Receiving Landowner:**

237

238 [Name]

239 [Date]

240

241

242 **Trail Development and Stewardship**

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

244