

To: Richmond Selectboard, Conservation Commission, and Trails Committee
From: Andrews Community Forest Committee
Subject: Preliminary Draft – Updated Management Plan for Andrews Community Forest

We are sharing this preliminary draft for your review and comment before formally releasing a polished version to the public. The direction and core content of the plan are well established, and we are simply polishing for grammar and formatting. At this point, we are soliciting your feedback to ensure the final draft meets the diverse needs of the Richmond community.

This plan has been developed to build on the work of prior committees, guided by the terms of the ACF Conservation Easement, the Richmond Town Plan, and applicable zoning regulations. In addition, it reflects a substantial increase in available information, including detailed ecological assessments of the forest and a growing body of peer-reviewed research on forest health and stewardship.

Throughout the process, we have also incorporated valuable input from many community members. Of course, no plan of this scope will satisfy all interests. Nor must we choose between conservation and recreation. Instead, we offer a practical blueprint for achieving both.

At its heart, the plan matches types and levels of use to the forest's capacity to sustain those uses. Different parts of the ACF have different ecological roles and sensitivities. Different types and levels of use have different impacts. In response, we take a zoning approach to forest management, proposing to concentrate new uses where they are most effectively and easily sustained, and to limit uses where they cannot.

The plan covers much more ground as well. Highlights include:

Overall Organization

- Moves management objectives and action items to the beginning of the sections for easier access and accountability, backing them up with appendix detail and linked references

Governance

- Aligns with the Richmond Town Plan, ACF Conservation Easement, and local regulations, reinforced by current, peer-reviewed science

Cultural History

- Recognizes the enduring stewardship of Indigenous peoples and their continued relevance, as well as the generosity of the Andrews family

Ecology

- Defines the forest's role within the larger landscape, the ACF's distinct natural communities and their importance to specific species
- Uses current science to identify areas that can sustain increased use—and those that cannot—based on ecological sensitivity

Recreation

- Maintains public access while establishing clear, science-based limits on where and how recreational development occurs
- Directs higher-impact activities to areas that can sustain them with minimal long-term damage, while limiting or redirects use where ecological functions are most at risk

Forestry and Agriculture

- Maintains ecological forestry practices that enhance tree species and age diversity
- Updates information on right-of-way agreements with the neighboring farm

Education

- Expands opportunities for schools and community members to learn about forest ecology and stewardship

We look forward to your input. Your feedback will help ensure that this plan reflects inclusive community values and interests while safeguarding the ACF's functions as a vital, irreplaceable public resource. By working together, we can all make ACF management a model for responsible, sustainable forest stewardship.

Sincerely,

The Andrews Community Forest Committee