

September 9, 2022

Richmond Conservation Commission
c/o Judy Rosovsky, Chair
via email

Re: Conservation Reserve Fund Application for Fine-scale Review of Proposed Trail Network

Dear Commissioners,

As you are aware, the Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC) is finalizing a proposed trail network for the Andrews Community Forest (ACF). The network was jointly designed by trail experts at Sinuosity and by ecologists at Arrowwood Environmental. Following an extensive period of public feedback and careful consideration of the parameters set forth in the Management Plan (MP), the ACFC removed one trail from the consultants' design (see appended map). The removal of the Ridgetop Trail better safeguards both the wildlife corridor that follows the ravine running up the center of ACF as well as a dry oak stand adjacent to that ravine. The ACFC is confident that the proposed network achieves a primary objective set forth in the MP (p. 24)—*“Provide a plan for recreation trails with minimal impact on natural resources”*—while abiding by the five attributes underpinning *“The Trail Concept”* (p. 27). Indeed, by consolidating the footprint of trails, by avoiding crossing the ravine deeper in the forest and near an expansive vernal pool, by leveraging existing human disturbances (e.g., skid trails), and by navigating the considerable terrain constraints and ecological features via field-based assessment (versus un-groundtruthed computer mapping), the proposed network minimizes ecological impacts to a greater degree than the original Concept Map.

Proceeding with the proposed route now requires a fine-scaled review of the flagged route, as described in the MP (p. 27): *“Arrowwood, or another professional ecologist, will walk the flagged route and a 50 foot buffer on either side to determine whether there are any fine-scale features (rare, threatened, or endangered species) that would be adversely impacted by trail development in that particular location. If there are, Arrowwood (or another professional ecologist) will propose a suitable re-route.”* During the initial design, Arrowwood already closely reviewed the precise trail route in the field, iteratively modifying the route with Sinuosity as needed. However, they did so in the late winter/early spring, at a time when many ecological features and species may not be apparent. The ACFC is therefore re-engaging with Arrowwood to conduct the requisite fine-scale review in late summer/early fall to ensure that features only now apparent are identified. They have estimated \$3,500 to conduct this *“review of wetlands, streams and a rare plant inventory for a swath approximately 50’ either side of the proposed trail line,”* as described in their email correspondence with us.

The Richmond Conservation Commission was instrumental in securing this town forest several years ago and more recently in supporting the initial trail design process. We now seek additional support to carry out this important next step in pursuing an ecological sensitive trail network.

The fine-scaled review of the proposed trail network on the ACF meets multiple Conservation Reserve Fund criteria:

- *Contributes toward the protection of natural resource in and of importance to Richmond.*
- *Yields a clear, sustainable benefit to Richmond residents in the form of preserving scenic and environmental values (e.g., beauty, shade, habitat).*
- *Is directed at threatened resources.*
- *Preserves biodiversity.*

The ACFC requests that the Richmond Conservation Commission grant us Conservation Reserve Funding, of an amount not to exceed \$3,500, to carry out this fine-scale review of the proposed trail network to ensure its ecological impact is minimized.

We appreciate your consideration, and please let us know if you have any questions.

Jim Monahan, Andrews Community Forest Committee



Caitlin Littlefield, Andrews Community Forest Committee