

1 *[BE: I offer this as a consolidated alternative to the two Recreation sections (2.9 and 7) of ear-*  
2 *lier MP drafts, including the current mark-up. It's shorter and (hopefully) more easily under-*  
3 *stood and applied than what we've been struggling with. Its primary aim is to give the ACFC a*  
4 *rational and practical way to reconcile the potential conflicts in the Easement between protect-*  
5 *ing the ACF's ecological integrity while still providing meaningful recreational opportunities,*  
6 *new and old, throughout the forest.*

7  
8 *As with the changes I proposed to the Ecological Resources section, it quickly gets to manage-*  
9 *ment objectives and action items. Anyone needing more information on its background and log-*  
10 *ics can easily find it in the appendix.*

11  
12 *Thanks!]*

## 13 14 **Recreation**

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16 Outdoor recreation has long been and remains a highly valued tradition throughout the Andrews  
17 Community Forest. By blending thoughtfully designed trails with strong ecological stewardship,  
18 the ACF can enable hikers, bikers and many other community residents to enjoy the benefits of  
19 recreation and nature in the ACF with little or no detriment to forest health

20  
21 **Objective:** Continue offering a wide range of recreational opportunities for hikers, bikers,  
22 hunters, walkers, runners, nature observers, skiers, snowshoers and others.

### 23 24 **Actions:**

- 25 ● Design and maintain trails to provide a variety of experiences for users of diverse  
26 interests and abilities.
- 27 ● Base trail proposals on a determination of how the community's needs for them compare  
28 with their economic, ecological and social costs.
- 29 ● Collaborate with the Richmond Trails Committee, Richmond Conservation Commission,  
30 the County Forester and other experts in the development and management of sustainable  
31 trails.
- 32 ● Protect the integrity of the ACF's most ecologically rich and productive areas while  
33 expanding recreational opportunities closest to the parking lot and town population  
34 centers.
- 35 ● Minimize cost, ecological and other impacts by utilizing the existing forest road and skid  
36 trail network for appropriate recreational activities.
- 37 ● Maintain a trailhead kiosk with up-to-date maps; usage rules and guidelines; and  
38 information about wildlife, cultural heritage, hunting safety and etiquette. Make this  
39 information accessible through the ACFC web page as well.

- 40 • Use Indigenous names for trails, as vetted by Abenaki tribal citizens and language ex-  
41 perts, and update signage accordingly. Display a short Land Acknowledgment at all en-  
42 trances and on maps:  
43 *“The Andrews Community Forest is located within Ndakinna, the unceded homeland of*  
44 *the Western Abenaki People, who have a unique connection to this land and have been*  
45 *its traditional stewards.”*  
46 • Obtain advance Selectboard and Vermont Land Trust approval for all costs associated  
47 with trail development.  
48 • Implement seasonal and weather-related closures in designated areas to protect deer  
49 yards, nesting/breeding sites, mast stands, wildlife connectivity routes and fragile soils.  
50 • Seek long-term connectivity options to neighboring properties offering high recreational  
51 potential through trail agreements, conservation easements or land acquisitions.  
52

53 **Objective:** Expand mountain bike access to the ACF.

54  
55 **Actions:**

- 56 • Collaborate with the Richmond Trails Committee and volunteer groups and individuals to  
57 build, improve, monitor and/or maintain mountain biking trails in appropriate areas.  
58 • Include routes for beginning and more experienced bikers.  
59 • Emphasize construction of singletrack mountain bike trails to enhance visitor safety and  
60 enjoyment.  
61 • Design trails to offer riders a variety of experiences, from flowy singletracks for  
62 beginners to technical features for experienced riders.  
63

64 **Objective:** Ensure the sustainability of ACF recreational trails – ecologically, economically and  
65 culturally.

66  
67 **Actions:**

- 68 • Follow the principles of the [\*The Vermont Town Forest Trail Design Guide\*](#):  
69 ○ Avoid sensitive ecological areas and critical habitats.  
70 ○ Develop trails in areas already influenced by human activity.  
71 ○ Provide buffers to protect sensitive ecological and hydrologic systems.  
72 ○ Use natural infiltration and best practices for stormwater management.  
73 ○ Ensure ongoing stewardship of trails and surrounding natural systems.  
74 ○ Design, build, and maintain trails sustainably.  
75 ○ Decommission and restore unsustainable trail corridors.  
76 • Expedite new trail development by favoring routes on existing forest roads and skid  
77 trails, avoiding regulatory protections for steep slopes, wetlands and other sensitive areas.

- 78 • Use current and/or additional assessments of wildlife biologists and professional trail  
79 designers to flag new routes that align with this Management Plan’s requirements.
- 80 • Improve public access while minimizing ecological impacts by:
  - 81 ○ Expanding opportunities for mountain biking and casual hiking by developing  
82 new trails south of and including the former VAST trail
  - 83 ○ Continue accommodating hikers, runners, hunters, skiers, snowshoers and other  
84 pedestrian visitors north of the former VAST trail on lightly maintained footpaths  
85 along existing forest roads and skid roads.
- 86 • Include overlays on all trail proposal maps to identify locations of sensitive natural fea-  
87 tures and 100-meter ZOIs around proposed routes.
- 88 • Allow trail ZOIs to encroach on sensitive features only when the community value of the  
89 trails can be shown to exceed their costs and risks, including those to wildlife and the  
90 ACF’s ecological functionality. Mitigate those impacts by designating as trail-free equiv-  
91 alent areas around other sensitive features.
- 92 • Incorporate engineering features in trail plans to promote sustainability, such as natural  
93 drainage systems and erosion-resistant designs.
- 94 • Reduce erosion, washout and water quality risks by avoiding trail development on slopes  
95 over 35%. For trails on slopes between 20% and 35%, and/or encroaching upon wetlands,  
96 contract with a licensed, professional engineer and/or wetlands specialist to develop de-  
97 tailed site plans and erosion controls, and seek any necessary state or local approvals.
- 98 • Follow the ACF trail and wildlife stewardship plans to maintain high levels of both user  
99 enjoyment and ecological sustainability.

100

101 **Objective:** Engage the public in the enjoyment and stewardship of ACF trails.

102

103 **Actions:**

- 104 • Organize educational events and volunteer trail workdays independently or with the  
105 Conservation Commission and/or Trails Committee.
- 106 • Establish an ACF email address for users to report maintenance needs or conflicts.
- 107 • Monitor and communicate trail conditions to the public through online tools.
- 108 • Explore options for a walking/biking connection to Richmond Village.
- 109 • Evaluate applications for trail-based events to ensure ecological compatibility and mini-  
110 mize Town liabilities.

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Appendix \_\_  
**Recreation Management**

## 116 **Community Interests and Benefits**

117 The Andrews Community Forest has long offered many recreational opportunities to town  
118 residents and visitors. That tradition continues, along with the many benefits to health and well-  
119 being that outdoor recreation and nature experiences provide.

120

121 When the Town acquired the forest, it surveyed town residents to determine their preferences for  
122 allowed activities in the ACF. The ten most favored, in order of preference, were hiking,  
123 running, hunting, snowshoeing, skiing, bird- and wildlife-watching, picnicking, biking and dog-  
124 walking. Subsequent input from Town residents identified expanded mountain biking  
125 opportunities, including connections to abutting trail systems, as important. Others were  
126 concerned how new types and intensities of trail traffic would affect existing users, human and  
127 animal alike.

128

## 129 **Legal and Policy Guidance**

130 Reflecting science, Town legal and policy documents strongly support sustainable recreation.

131 The ACF Conservation Easement establishes recreation as one of central Purposes of the forest,  
132 requiring the Town to “provide for non-motorized, non-commercial recreational, educational and  
133 other appropriate community uses.”

134

135 The Easement also requires the Town to “conserve productive forestland, wildlife habitat, bio-  
136 logical diversity, natural communities, riparian buffers, wetlands, soil productivity, water quality  
137 and native flora and fauna...and the ecological processes that sustain these natural resource val-  
138 ues....” This echoes the Richmond Town Plan, which calls for protecting “priority natural areas”  
139 and ensuring “best stewardship” of Town-owned land such as the ACF.

140

## 141 **Examining Options**

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

146 • *The ACF’s ecological role and importance.* Assessments by UVM, Arrowwood and oth-  
147 ers since the original plan was written confirm the ACF’s value for black bear, bobcat,  
148 whitetail deer, fisher and other wildlife, especially in the northern, least developed and  
149 visited areas of the forest.

150 • *Advances in recreation.* New equipment and technologies are increasing recreational de-  
151 mands, allowing more people to penetrate farther, faster and deeper into forests more of-  
152 ten and with less effort. Social media and trail recreation maps direct people places only  
153 few knew about a decade ago, including rich, remote natural areas and habitats.

154 • *Continuing research showing wildlife’s sensitivity to trail traffic.* Recently published sci-

155 entific studies and literature reviews further explain how trail traffic can fragment, de-  
156 grade and destroy productive wildlife habitats within “zones of influence” extending hun-  
157 dreds of meters from the trails themselves.

- 158 • *Limited space for sustainable trail development.* Even buffers of a modest 100 meters  
159 around sensitive areas would preclude trail development nearly all of the ACF. The steep-  
160 ness and wetness of the surrounding terrain is another concern, and could subject devel-  
161 opment projects to state and local permitting requirements.
- 162 • *The Indigenous Land Acknowledgement.* The Town of Richmond has pledged to foster a  
163 healthy forest community by incorporating into our management practices the Traditional  
164 Ecological Knowledge that sustained our area’s forests for thousands of years.
- 165 • *Assessments of needs.* Though it’s difficult to get an exact count, more than 100 miles of  
166 trails available to the public can now be identified within Richmond and its neighboring  
167 towns, most on private lands. Some are primarily for hikers or bikers; others serve a mix.  
168

### 169 **Achieving Balance**

170 The Management Plan’s solution to both protecting the forest and accommodating recreation and  
171 diverse community wishes centers on dividing the forest into two recreational zones reflecting its  
172 topography and traditional uses. It puts equal emphasis on conservation of the interior forest ar-  
173 eas of the property, and facilitating public access:

- 174 • North of the former VAST trail, the forest remains open to hiking, hunting and other ac-  
175 tivities on footpaths along select, lightly maintained forest roads and skid trails. The  
176 rugged terrain helps prevent overuse.
- 177 • South of and including the former VAST trail, the Management Plan encourages devel-  
178 opment of new trails for casual hiking, mountain biking and other activities. Route 2, the  
179 ACF parking lot and existing trail and utility road connections provide convenient access  
180 to this area (and also simplify trail construction and maintenance for the Town).  
181

182 Trails in the south include shorter loops from the parking area to ensure the property is accessible  
183 and inviting to people of all ages and abilities, including families with young children and older  
184 people. They can also accommodate visits by school groups.  
185

186 This dual-zone strategy helps the Town meet its legal and policy obligations. It also provides the  
187 community with an expanded range of recreational opportunities balanced with minimal impacts  
188 on its most secluded, sensitive and ecologically areas.  
189

### 190 **Special considerations**

- 191 • *Hunting.* Hunters from throughout the area use the ACF, and the ACFC allows and  
192 encourages the practice. Its benefits include control of the ACF’s deer population,  
193 important to restoring healthier diversities of age and species to the forest’s trees and

194 understory. Hunters and non-hunters can share the landscape at any time of year. The  
195 ACFC urges each to take safety precautions such as wearing highly visible clothing and  
196 keeping dogs leashed. See the posted guidelines for the latest requirements and advice.  
197 • *Trapping*. Because of safety hazards to visitors, pets and bycaught animals, trapping is  
198 not permitted in the ACF.  
199 • *Snowmobiling*. Snowmobiling may be permitted to resume on the former VAST trail  
200 subject to a use contract ensuring compatibility with the ACF Conservation Easement and  
201 Management Plan.  
202

### 203 **Potential Recreation Partnerships**

- 204 • Richmond Trails Committee
- 205 • Richmond Conservation Commission
- 206 • Chittenden County Forester
- 207 • UVM Community Forest Program
- 208 • Western Abenaki Tribes and Richmond Racial Equity
- 209 • Maple Wind Farm
- 210 • VYCC
- 211 • Richmond Land Trust
- 212 • Richmond Mountain Trails/Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA)
- 213 • Scouts
- 214 • Community Senior Center

### 216 **Trail Development and Stewardship**

217 *[Insert Trail Stewardship Plan]*

218