

# **Request for Proposals**

## Andrews Community Forest Ecological Trail Planning

Issued 10/15/20 by  
Andrews Community Forest Committee  
Richmond, VT

Committee Chairperson – Wright Preston

[richmondtownforest@gmail.com](mailto:richmondtownforest@gmail.com)

## Introduction and Background

---

The Andrews Community Forest Committee (ACFC) of Richmond, VT, seeks the design and layout of an ecologically informed trail network for our recently acquired municipal forest. We are therefore issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit bids to fill this need. **Our goal with this RFP is to hire a collaborative team that includes both a professional trail designer and a qualified ecologist to design, map, and flag a multi-use, non-motorized trail network (to be constructed at a later date) that protects the forest's unique ecological attributes, wildlife habitat, and wildlife movement within and across the forest.**

The Andrews Community Forest (ACF) is a 428-acre parcel and climbs from roughly 400 feet in elevation to 1200 feet. Excepting two small meadows, the parcel is largely wooded with an abundance of hard-mast stands (predominantly oak and beech) and several patches of rare natural communities (e.g., Dry Oak Forest). Recent timber harvesting and blowdown events have created patches of early successional habitat in the west and south of the property. The parcel is at the southern end of a 70,000-acre forested swath that includes Mt. Mansfield State Forest and is therefore part of one of the state's largest, remaining unfragmented block. Indeed, the Vermont Conservation Design<sup>1</sup> prioritization considers the entire parcel to be part of a 'Highest Priority Interior Forest Block' providing critical ecological function on a statewide level. ACF is the latest addition to the long-standing 10,000-acre Chittenden County Uplands Conservation Project.

Both recreation and the protection of natural resources and habitat on ACF are important priorities for Richmond residents; some are concerned that trails and certain trail uses may negatively affect ACF's natural resources and habitat (see MP, App. G). In light of these priorities and concerns, ACFC seeks to hire a team to design an exemplary, ecologically-informed trail network that meets the desires of humans and the needs of wildlife. While price is a significant factor, other criteria will form the basis of our award decision, as more fully described in the Evaluation Factors section below. Please direct questions regarding the RFP to richmondtownforest@gmail.com

## Project Description

---

Upon acquisition of the parcel in 2018, a Trail Concept Map for ACF was developed by an Interim Planning Committee and the planning firm SE Group. The adopted Concept Map involved extensive public input and committee deliberation, and was adopted by Richmond's Selectboard as part of the MP. The Concept Map is intended as an approximate roadmap for future trails and offers trail density guidance, "pending the results of the coarse- and fine-scale ecological assessment" [MP p. 27]. Elevation/grade and preliminary indicators of sensitive areas were considered during Concept Map development, but there was no on-the-ground

---

<sup>1</sup> Sorenson, E. and R. Zaino. 2018. *Vermont Conservation Design: Maintaining and Enhancing and Ecologically Functional Landscape*. Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. Available at: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/conservation/vermont-conservation-design>

assessment. The Concept Map vision includes approximately 6-8 miles of trails (we do not currently have the underlying shapefile underlying the map), with a density of approximately 185 trail feet/acre below the powerline and approximately 61 trail feet/acre above the powerline).

The trail designer and ecologist team should use as a starting point the Concept Map, but ought to see it as just that—a *concept* that may be subject to modification pending a robust ecologist assessment. The land is under conservation easements held by Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB); the final trail design will need their final approval.

In sum, the purpose this project is as follows:

- Design, map, and flag an ecologically-informed, multi-use, non-motorized trail network to be enjoyed by walkers, hikers, runners, mountain bikers, and snowshoers. The design should maximize intact forest habitat, habitat connectivity, and trail network connectivity (details below).
- The design ought to follow the Concept Map as guidance, but not necessarily strictly adhere to it.
- The design ought to emphasize special viewpoints and significant historical/natural sites when possible and when doing so does not compromise ecological considerations.

## **Project Scope and Standards**

---

**We seek an exemplary trail network, with ecological considerations paramount in trail design. Both the trail designer and ecologist will have equal footing in this collaborative process and must follow best practices from their respective professions.**

*The successful bidding team will be responsible for these tasks:*

- Walking the land extensively.
- Conducting an ecological assessment that may include but is not limited to reviewing, synthesizing, identifying gaps, and filling the highest priority gaps in existing coarse-scaled ecological assessments, natural community and habitat sensitivity maps, and records of on-the-ground observations (e.g., by VLT staff, by VT Audubon staff, by Arrowwood Environmental, by the Field Naturalist Program, etc.). The ecologist need not replicate these existing resources, but should instead complement them with new information as need be (e.g., with winter tracking, identification of large mast trees and/or clawed trees, etc.).
- Collaboratively designing a trail network that directly reflects the findings from the above desk- and field-based ecological assessment and that considers the needs of walkers, hikers, runners, mountain bikers, and snowshoers.
- Flagging the trail network. Flagging collaboratively will ensure that any fine-scaled ecological features not captured in the efforts above will directly inform on-the-ground

routing. This should occur in the early spring during the ephemeral flush and when vernal pools are most apparent.

- Getting sign-off from necessary parties (incl. ACFC, VLT, the Richmond Selectboard).
- Offering several guided walks for the ACFC and other Richmond residents to walk the land throughout this process.
- Suggesting an approximate scope of work for a future trail construction contractor, including construction techniques for sections of the trail (i.e., some trail sections may need to be machine built, while others may be built by volunteers).
- Delivering all items specified below (see Project Deliverables).

*The successful bidder will abide by the following standards:*

- The final design jointly generated by the trail designer and ecologist team should reflect and protect ACF's unique ecological attributes and wildlife habitat and movement within and across ACF. Specifically, the trail design should maximize the amount of undisturbed interior forest habitat while supporting two types of connectivity:
  - Interior forest *habitat connectivity* both within the parcel and to the broader Chittenden County Uplands landscape (a stated priority in the MP and, more broadly, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' Conservation Design guidance<sup>2</sup>);
  - *Trail network connectivity* (an objective of the 2018 Town Plan) to the Sip of Sunshine network to the north and the VYCC network to the east.
- To the extent possible, existing trails (e.g., VAST trails) should be leveraged, as should habitat edges where generalist species—versus habitat specialists—are likely to be less sensitive to trail impacts. While the ACFC wants to support the public in appreciating special viewpoints and the unique historical and ecological attributes of ACF, people need not be funneled to and through highly sensitive areas.
- Particular attention ought to be paid to the habitat and movement corridors of particularly sensitive species, those that require large interior forest blocks, or those that are otherwise represented in the broader Chittenden County Uplands landscape (e.g., bobcat, bear, mustelids).
- Final trail design must consider the broader corridor of influence that the trail may have on wildlife. The MP advises that a 200 foot buffer be maintained between any trails and sensitive natural resources; other guidance advises a 400 foot buffer on either side of a trail be maintained to minimize adverse effects to wildlife<sup>3</sup>. The MP acknowledges that even 200 feet may be aspirational and not always possible to achieve.
- The design must abide by the MP and terms set forth in the conservation easement held by VLT and VHCB.

---

<sup>2</sup> Sorenson, E. and R. Zaino. 2018. *Vermont Conservation Design: Maintaining and Enhancing and Ecologically Functional Landscape*. Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. Available at: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/conservation/vermont-conservation-design>

<sup>3</sup> New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. 2019. *Trails for People and Wildlife: A Guide to Planning Trails that allow People to Enjoy Nature and Wildlife to Thrive*. Available at: <https://wildlife.state.nh.us/trails/>

## Project Deliverables

---

*The trail designer and ecologist team will deliver the following:*

- Design of an ecologically-informed trail network, including spatial data (e.g., .gpx file) and maps of the final design.
- Flagged route per the design.
- Scope of work for trail construction contractors (to be hired at a later date), including construction techniques for sections of the trail (i.e., some trail sections may need to be machine built, while others may be built by volunteers).
- Detailed description of trail design methods and ecological assessment findings (with raw data), including specific explanations as to how the design *and* flagged route strongly take into account the unique ecological attributes and wildlife of ACF – from both a coarse-filter (landscape-scale) and fine-filter perspective.
- Poster to be affixed to the kiosks explaining the process by which this ecologically-informed trail design unfolded.
- Photos that may be included in signage.

## Timeline

---

*The RFP and project timeline is as follows:*

RFP Issuance	10/15/20
Deadline for questions emailed to ACFC	11/1/20
Compiled questions answered by ACFC	11/7/20
Bidders submit intent to bid	11/15/20
Proposals due	12/15/20
Contract Award / Notification to Unsuccessful Bidders	1/15/21
Project Completion*	6/1/21

*\* Bidders may propose a date earlier or later and will be evaluated accordingly.*

## Submission Guidelines and Proposal Requirements

---

*The following submission guidelines and requirements apply to this RFP.*

- 1) We request joint RFPs from teams comprised of a trail designer and ecologist. *It is our preference that the trail designer and the ecologist will subsequently enter into separate contracts with the town, but we will entertain all strong proposals, including those that indicate a desire to hold a single contract with the town.*

- 2) Only qualified individuals or firms with relevant prior experience should submit proposals in response to this RFP.
- 3) Bidders who plan to submit a proposal should email their intent to the Committee Chairperson at richmondtownforest@gmail.com no later than 11/15/20.
- 4) Questions may be emailed to Committee Chairperson at richmondtownforest@gmail.com from 10/15-11/1/20. Compiled questions and answers will be emailed to RFP recipients.
- 5) Bidders must **list projects** that are similar to this project as part of their response, including **professional references** for each. **Examples or documentation of past work** should be provided as well.
- 6) Bidders must provide an **overview of the proposed project** as well as provide a proposed project schedule and milestones, as applicable.
- 7) The proposal should indicate the **overall fixed price** for the project.
- 8) If the bidder has a standard set of **terms and conditions**, they must be submitted with the proposal. All terms and conditions will be subject to negotiation.

## Evaluation Factors

---

*Submitted proposals will be evaluated based on the following factors.*

- 1) Responsiveness to the requirements set forth in this RFP
- 2) Clear vision for and commitment to equal-footing collaboration between the trail designer and ecologist, including how both will complement and enhance one another's work.
- 3) Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively
- 4) Credentials (e.g., advanced degree in ecology)
- 5) Relevant past performance/experience within this region.
- 6) Samples of work
- 7) Cost

## Connecting trail designers and ecologists

---

To help trail designers and ecologists connect with one another, we've created a spreadsheet by which interested individuals may share their contact information. The spreadsheet is at <http://bit.ly/ACFtrail> and the form for entering information is at [http://bit.ly/ACFtrail\\_form](http://bit.ly/ACFtrail_form).