



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of RESOURCES and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE of the COMMISSIONER

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January 31, 2013

The Honorable Benjamin Lefebvre, Chairman
and House Fish and Game & Marine Resources Committee
NH State House, Room 307
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 256-FN, an act relative to funding for the fish and game search and rescue fund.

Dear Chairman Lefebvre and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Department of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Parks & Recreation in support of the House Bill 256-FN.

This bill attempts to address the need for increased funding for search and rescue operations carried out by the Fish and Game Department, who has the primary responsibility for such operations. As a tourism-based state, New Hampshire must do what it can to ensure that the public that are invited to enjoy our vast outdoor recreational opportunities can do so in as safe an environment as possible. The Division of Parks and Recreation participates in search and rescue operations on State Park properties, such as at Mount Monadnock, and assists with rescues when requested upon Mount Washington. State agencies and volunteer search and rescue organizations are a vital part of the mix for supporting the Fish and Game Department.

The Division and Bureau of Trails has long been involved in search and rescue issues, and, along with others, has growing concerns about the source of funding. Currently, search and rescue revenues are generated by motorized trail users and certain licensed sportsmen in NH, however these users account for only 14% of the needed rescue services.

In late 2011, the Bureau of Trails participated in an ad-hoc committee tasked with addressing the funding needs of search and rescue. Additionally, the Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (referenced in RSA 216-F) met and voted to forward its findings to legislature in 2011. Both committees recommended the mandatory payment by all individuals that utilize search and rescue services, and the sale of a "hiker card," whose proceeds will be applied toward the search and rescue fund. These initiatives are included in HB 256.

January 31, 2013

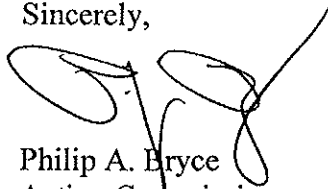
Benjamin Lefebvre, Chairman, Fish and Game & Marine Resources Committee

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The Division supports these initiatives that will provide equitable funding sources for vital search and rescue services, without diverting funds from other dedicated sources or increasing the contributions of outdoor recreational enthusiasts already paying into the program.

Chris Gamache, Bureau of Trails Chief, is available to answer questions that you may have regarding our testimony. Thank you for your considering our support for HB 256.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip A. Bryce". The signature is stylized with large loops and a long, sweeping tail that extends upwards and to the right.

Philip A. Bryce
Acting Commissioner

PAB/CG/tt1012913