

“NEW DRAFT STATE PARKS TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN”

Portsmouth Session (12/1/09)

1. The \$75 million needed over the 10 year period are for capital projects to stabilize, overcome deferred maintenance, replace and newly develop needed facilities.
2. An example of the Division’s other needs, include staffing for interpretive programming.
3. The Division can “grow” the park system through new development to capture new users and new recreational interests.
4. Over time, the Division will identify all user and Friends groups. We know of 70-plus entities. Conservation groups and other new groups will be contacted through the Division’s planned “Friend-raising” efforts.
5. The Division will consider ways to more effectively capture revenues. Suggestions include car decals as season passes for access to all or specific parks which provide convenience and reduce the rigors of cash management.
6. The need for “immediate stabilization” includes repair or restoration of foundations, stairways and mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems. The Division understands the need to balance its needs with its legislative purpose, and that it must prioritize new development, and improved or additional access to the park system (“stop the bleeding, recover then pursue growth”).
7. All of the parks needs have been identified in the capital improvement database report in Appendix 18. The report lists the condition of facilities, but does not prioritize the work. Such prioritization will occur once the Strategic Plan has been adopted as the right strategy for the Division. An annual operating plan will guide annual implementation of the Strategic Plan.
8. The Division is collaborating with the national volunteer organization AmeriCorp, through the young adult-based Student Conservation Corp. SCA is housed at Bear Brook State Park and were instrumental, among other things, in the 2008 ice storm cleanup.
9. The Division does not propose the selling or disposal of state park property. The Strategic Plan looks to address the Division’s stewardship responsibilities in balance with maximizing revenue appropriately. There is no recommendation to sell the state’s ski areas.
10. The CIP report suggests transferring some park lands to the administration of Division of Forests and Lands (e.g., Annette Wayside and Pisgah). However, such properties remain under DRED jurisdiction. The Division of Forests and Lands administers approximately 384,000 acres of which 12,000 are zoned state park lands, and are under the management of the Division of Parks and Recreation.
11. The Division recognizes the need to address non-motorized trail use, and will work with the Bureau of Trails and the Statewide Trails Advisory Committee to improve collaboration.
12. The Department’s administrative rules apply to all DRED properties, whether under the administration and management of F&L or P&R.
13. The Division will set out to tell its story to generate support for needed changes, including legislation and funding. It will continue to work through the State Park System Advisory Council.
14. The Division applied for federal stimulus funds, but was not awarded. However, the Division benefited from SCA receiving funds under the temporary employment program, and SCA committed additional work crews and hours toward state park projects.

15. The terms MOU and MOA are interchangeable and both are legally binding contracts between the Division and another entity. The Division looks to developing a more consistent and accountable program, with guidelines for when an MOA is appropriate.
16. The Division is considering ways to improve revenue collection. Pay stations at trailheads and other areas were suggested.
17. The Division needs to follow up with permittees on post-event cleanup as part of its stewardship responsibilities.
18. The Division should encourage public comment on the assignment of park-specific attributes, the prioritization of park-specific projects and the classification of parks as “enterprise,” “classic,” and “natural.” The Division will seek public input as an operating plan is developed for each park.
19. Although the Division has improved revenue collection at many parks by installing new tollbooths and using “iron rangers” and self-pay stations for camping, the Division must consider whether it is an efficient use of funds in an attempt to capture the last 10% of potential revenue (there is point of diminishing returns) . It is suggested that the Division consider capturing more revenue from winter users.
20. Key legislators to address the funding and legislative efforts include the Speaker of the House, Senate President, legislative leadership, RR&D, Ways & Means, and Finance Committees. SPSAC is an advocate. A SPSAC member states that it is good business to invest in state parks. For the \$6.5M in park operations, \$45M in State revenues is generated.

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Concord Session (12/2/09)

1. The Division will develop a program and a process to collaborate with host communities. A volunteer coordinator position has been approved and is currently being developed to act as liaison between the Division and its partners, including host communities and Friends Groups. The Division looks toward developing a more consistent program, and improved process for special use permits.
2. Statutes related to the Division may be found on the General Court website: <http://gencourt.state.nh.us/> Most of the Division’s statutes are located in RSA Title XIX, Public Recreation: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/NHTOC/NHTOC-XIX.htm> as well as Chapter 12-A, DRED: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/NHTOC/NHTOC-I-12-A.htm> Chapter Laws related to the Division and not codified in statute (RSA) can be viewed at the State Library, or any other repository that possesses Chapter Law books.
3. From a member of the NH Horse Council: Several of her questions will be submitted in writing. Many of their members travel out of NH to ride. There is little return for horse riders from the Division and Bureau of Trails. More parks need to be open to equestrian use and the historical use of horses. Equestrians are a potential volunteer resource. Youths are another resource to tap in to through jobs and schools. Consider the collection of fees from all user groups. For example, a portion of membership fees can go to State Parks. And attendees mentioned that RTP grants are available for non-motorized trail projects.
4. Lake Francis staff and Regional Supervisor Sandy Young were commended. However, the low lake level (seasonal draw down as flood control measure) is damaging both vehicles (tires) and boats when putting in or taking out. He has talked to F&G. Water levels impact visitation. Could there be better inter-agency coordination (lake level conducive to recreational use while still accommodating water draw-down prior to freezing?)
5. The Division needs better advertising of its campgrounds, including promoting visitation during less busy days.
6. The Division needs to review the Strategic Plan documents and appendices for accuracy, consistency, and formatting.
7. The date for releasing the final Strategic Plan is January 4, 2010.
8. The 6 million visits generating \$500M to the NH economy is important to the Division’s story. Non-fee areas can be better addressed.
9. The Division’s identifies “enterprise” parks are those parks that have facilities and amenities that drive high visitation and generate accompanying revenue. The Division will consider strategies of its offerings within the competitive marketplace; the return on time, money and effort; and retail operations. There are challenges regarding user conflicts and balancing development with user experience. Also with establishing the user mindset (e.g., recycling).
10. The Division will look at improving its tracing of visitation, and identify potential under-represented users and how to efficiently capture additional and new users.
11. The kiosks at Bear Brook State Park are much better. Year-round camping and parking pay & display programs should be considered.

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Peterborough Session (12/7/09)

1. The capital monies for this biennium include the Hampton Beach Redevelopment project.
2. The plan mentions 9,000 acres as state park lands, but Pisgah State Park has over 13,000 acres. All DRED reservations are under the authority of the Division of Forest & Lands. The 9,000 acres zoned as state parks is done so for tax purposes, and are under the operational management of Parks.
3. Non-motorized recreation is equally valued. The perception may be that the Bureau of Trails and the Statewide Trails Advisory Council is driven by motorized trail use. Those trails within state parks account for less than 2% of the Bureau of Trail’s responsibility.
4. The State Park System Advisory Council will be key in discussing the funding issue for the Division. Political support will be needed. The economic impact of State Parks is truly amazing.
5. The Pisgah Steering Committee is developing the Pisgah Management Plan. When will the Division’s Annual Operating Plan be ready? Draft plan by February 1st for 2010. The goal is to have the Division’s Annual Operating Plans ready each November for operations of the following year.
6. The Division has been talking to different states about innovate funding strategies. All states are struggling with park funding, but NH is the only completely self-funded operational park system.
7. If the funding dilemma isn’t addressed, the Division will continue with its operational and legislative initiatives. The solution is a three part effort of funding, operations and legislation. The Division needs to educate its audience, look at incremental revenues, and use innovative marketing and capital improvements to gain market share.
8. The average operating deficit is 3% of revenue, but capital needs are daunting. Capital needs should be kept separate from other expenses. Yes, it is also important to note that the Division must put its earned revenues first toward the “carry forward” loss of \$1.8M, and that it Division has had chronic deficits under the self-funding model. The \$1.8M “carry forward” is owed back to the General Fund.
9. Only half the parks charge user fees. There are 35 parks with toll booths and with the use of self-pay stations we have been able to capture close to 90% of revenues. The point of diminishing returns makes capturing the last 10% a potential inefficient use of (labor) funds.
10. Should we take Sunapee ski area back? The Sunapee lease revenues go to Cannon’s capital improvements. Also, Mount Sunapee Resort has made great improvements at Sunapee.
11. For immediate changes at an “enterprise” park, the Division would look to innovative ideas, such as non-traditional activities and interpreters. If programs were subcontracted out, the Division would have checklists in place.
12. Knowing that there are fiscal restraints and Annette Wayside doesn’t generate revenue, the Rindge Conservation Commission could be consulted on a biodiversity study of the Wayside. They recently had great success in such efforts, which generated interest and funding support for conservation lands in town.
13. There is no enforcement of ATV use at Pisgah. Enforcement is primarily done through Fish & Game. The Bureau of Trails is no longer pursuing the enforcement training for the staff due to the cost of the formal enforcement training now required by law.

14. Page 47 talks about “Natural Parks,” and reducing costs and decreasing capacity there. Response: The table is a brainstorming exercise. Each individual park would be evaluated independently when classified. Appropriate management options would be considered based upon the classification assigned and the specific characteristics of the property.
15. The Friends Group model and resulting MOA would be standardized, but the final MOA would include additional unique components based upon the specific capability of the Friends Group and unique features and benefits of the park..
16. It would be great to have a State Parks pass that was a window sticker.
17. The Marketing Plan for the Division will address specific programming designed to reach different groups and markets, for example the “Live Free and Die Healthy” and “No Child Left Inside” campaigns. We currently have similar programs like the Great Park Pursuit and Discover the Power of Parks.
18. The comments received from the initial draft in June were summarized for efficient posting on the web – all original comments may be viewed at the Division’s office. A hard copy of the current draft plan is available at the State Library in Concord. Also, a hard copy of the plan can be obtained by calling the Division (a copying fee will apply).
19. Friends Groups should be provided training and have access to the Volunteer Coordinator when hired.

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Lancaster Session (12/8/09)

1. The demographics that came out of the study are interesting, especially regarding the growth in usage. These projections can be used regionally.
2. The bar graph regarding the Park Fund net income, 1991-2009 shown in the PowerPoint presentation is much more effective visually than the line graph shown in the written plan.
3. State Parks should not be a money maker. It's not just about the revenue, it's about the stewardship. Look at other ways to make money.
4. Franconia Notch Parkway needs major rehabilitation, which NH Department of Transportation is looking into as part of their long-term CIP.
5. The Town of Dalton is looking into working with the Division at Forest Lake State Park.
6. This is a much better plan than the one released in June. There is some concern about missing or outdated information. The Division is working to put the information in final form.
7. Recommendation is to have a parking pass program, similar to what the White Mountain National Forest uses.
8. Better signage is needed for people to use the Iron Rangers. They need to know why their donation is important. The plan has no emphasis on trails. The Division will work with the Statewide Trails Advisory Council. Look into hiring young people; the US Government is looking at 21st century Civilian Conservation Corp program.
9. The Division did not receive any stimulus money directly, but did receive more Student Conservation Association (SCA) assistance. SCA was able to provide more work crews to help with the ice storm clean up.
10. None of the parks have been classified as an “Enterprise”, “Classic” or “Natural” park yet. Classifying parks is a concept in the strategic plan, and the Division seeks feedback on this operational model. The idea is to improve efficiencies at “enterprise” parks whose revenues can be used to more adequately cover expenses at those parks without revenue.
11. This is a thorough and honest analysis to return the park system to what the public expects it to be. There is forward thinking on funding and management in this plan. We applaud the improvements at Milan Hill State Park. We support the plan and are willing to form or participate in a Friends of Milan Hill.
12. The Division has 76 affiliates, including Friends Groups. The Division will work to develop an infrastructure and process for such groups and to develop MOA's with them. There is approval for a Volunteer Coordinator and that person would work to achieve this goal.
13. Forest Lake Association would be a great mechanism for a new Friends group and will work with the Division and the Town of Dalton.
14. Franconia Notch State Park has over 650 advocates, and they would make great volunteers. The Division needs to report out on its charitable contributions and comps. Developing a Parks Foundation is a great idea. State Parks and tourism is an essential economic driver for the North Country.

15. Concerned about the multi-use trails in Franconia Notch, specifically regarding user conflicts between snowmobilers and other trail users.
16. The State agencies need more inter-agency collaboration to pool resources.
17. Advocacy for state parks is important. Sunsetting committees, such as the Cannon Mountain Advisory Commission and Mount Washington Commission, regardless of an agency's recommendation, is the wrong direction.
18. Logging to preserve scenic views, such as at the Frankenstein Trestle in Crawford Notch State Park, should be looked at.
19. Donations can be accepted and allocated for specific parks, regardless of the amount.
20. We appreciate the Division coming to Lancaster to hold its public session.

**Draft Strategic Plan Comments
 Nov/Dec 2009**

#	Park	Comment
1		Questions about SPACS role in the future
2	Pisgah	Why aren't you using current data, contact info is wrong for FOP
3		plan should require user fee to cover all the cost incurred, including search and rescue
4		likes plan
5		need more parks, not less. Tax funds should support parks. Revenue from Mt Sunapee should go to all parks and not just Cannon.
6		fee sticker program suggested
7		Don't get rid of parks and land.
8	Clough	Wants to lease Clough to develop it
9		Likes plan. Specific comments to specific pages
10	Pisgah	Supports funding from legislature, volunteer groups are important
11		Lease the Cannon ski area, keep the summer tram operations
12		Need clarification on what funding from legislature will support. Need more trails and support for them.
13		General comments on presentation and some recommendations for clarification
14	Bedell	Historically important land to the Koasek Abenaki, would like to work with Division
15	Forest Lake	Community may want to help support park, important to the area
16	Tarleton/Bedell	Former legislator - need to find innovative solutions, if F&G has majority interest then transfer, if Piermont wants Tarleton, then transfer, just be sure everyone has access.
17		Attended Concord session - Who did the economic impact study, what do you mean by a vibrant park, what occurred to create revenue in the green years, what are the operating plans? Equestrian, no mention of horse in any publication. All trail users should pay fees. against motorized use, especially in winter.
18		Keep equestrians in mind. Equestrian industry bring in millions of dollars into the state.
19		Editorial comments to plan & other observations
20	Sunapee	Parks need improvement, Sunapee campground is a disgrace. NH Parks in comparison are expensive, check out VT parks.
21		Volunteers - glad to see there is a change in direction on use and support. In favor of parking pass system, must do outreach.
22		Would like to see more in the plan about snowmobile trails in the parks.
23	Pawtuckaway	Equestrian - want to ride at Pawtuckaway but need parking.
24		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations
25		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations
26		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations
27		Equestrian - supports affordable day use fees and season pass fees, keep parks quiet (non-motorized) for the quiet, keep parks accessible for equestrians. Maudsley State Park (MA) as an example of a horse friendly park. Website not easy to determine where to park.
28		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations
29		Horses need to be included in state park planning.
30		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations
31		Likes new plan, would like to see info on carbon credits & law enforcement
32		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations
33		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations. Equal access to trails for moto & non-moto.
34		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations. Equal access to trails for moto & non-moto.

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 Nov/Dec 2009**

#	Park	Comment
35		Opposes site review document in plan. Friends group list is incomplete. Proposed classifications aren't defined (suggestions in letter). Survey says most visitors earn over \$50,000, need to keep affordable and not charge what people can pay. Should have variable rates for off-season when less services are available.
36		Equestrian - wants more trails and access
37		Equestrian - support NH Horse Council recommendations. Iron ranger is more cost effective than human at low use area, Maudsley has a pay station. Need to utilize friends groups and volunteers. Keep parks non-motorized like MA. Wants Pawtuckaway more horse friendly.
38		Reconsider self-funding model. Fund and embrace development and access of non-motorized equestrian trails on state managed lands. Define the Division's role, mission and responsibility for non-motorized trails. Should not require a user group to volunteer to assure access. Transfer Pisgah to F&L. And lots more specific management recommendations.
39	Wadleigh	Support friends groups and fill volunteer coordinator position.
40		Who will conduct further inventories? What is the likelihood for changes in funding system and what happens if it doesn't? Who is responsible to tackle conflicting legislation? Support Volunteer Coordinator position. When will annual work plans be available.
41	Pisgah	Natural Parks - ban all motorized vehicles.
42		Inconsistencies on # of parks and other things (see letter). Establish volunteer coordinator position.
43		Request equine interests be included in plan.
44		Supports changing funding model. Suggests including specific strategy for enhancing and promoting recreational offerings to family and children. AMC partners more than illustrated in table.
45		Equestrian - wants more trails and access
46	Franconia Notch	Support plan and its recommendations & strategies. Need to look at new partnership agreements.
47		Support improving interpretation and increasing accessibility of historic sites. Support enhancing existing partnerships and new partnerships. Where do the historic sites fit in the park classification, Natural Parks?
48	Fort Stark	Report from the Fort Stark Brigade
49		Some specific comment to pages regarding terminology and information.