

NH Strategic and Capital Investment Plans
Public Meeting – Portsmouth, NH
July 24, 2008

Public Attendees (approx. 21):

State reps (5); Park Advisory Committee (2); Hampton Beach users; equestrians; Chair, Hampton Beach Area Commission; Dover Open Lands Committee, plus others who use parks for kayaking, hiking, xskiing, birding

Issues (bracketed notes are team comments):

1. Want to retain natural beauty of parks (spoken by someone who has visited ½ of the state parks)
2. Pawtuckaway lacks parking for horse trailers
3. Horse riders often have to go out of state to ride, due to lack of parking at NH state parks
4. Equestrians need a well-drained field or gravel lot for parking – nothing fancier. Best to separate horse parking from cars for safety reasons, ie., put horses in a far corner
5. The peace and quiet of parks is very important
6. Pleased that the state historic sites have “broken off,” since they have a different focus than recreational parks
7. Safe trails for bicycling are needed
8. Every state park is a gem – as a group, they offer immense diversity
9. Critical to preserve the environment – concerned that a private-public partnership (PPP) might change that
10. Our state parks reflect on us as a state – critical to preserve what we have
11. Don’t let NH become like CT
12. Be cautious about PPP, since the private sector fails as often as the public. Better to focus on sufficient funding
13. Parking at Hampton Beach is a major issue
14. NH needs sustainable growth, rather than no growth
15. Development patterns have bisected horse trails that once existed. We lack 5-20 mile loops, such as Bear Brook offers
16. Bear Brook and Pawtuckaway are great for hiking
17. Some of the state park camping facilities offer “peaceful isolation” not found elsewhere – not jammed together
18. Seacoast chapter of Audubon offers well-attended bird trips to Odiorne and Pawtuckaway
19. Odiorne offers terrific variety within the park
20. Off hours, even Hampton Beach is quiet and lovely – and it’s free at that time! Many walkers, horse riders and skiers use it early in the morning
21. People need to have a “spiritual” place to connect with nature and be awed by one’s surroundings

22. The Bear Brook 4-H camp provides a “unique” experience, due to the low-key, rustic nature of the buildings and surroundings. Speaker was hopeful that experience will continue into the future.
23. Rhododendron state park is especially lovely – a visit made there 60 years ago is still remembered!
24. Etiquette signs erected by National Parks(?) about multi-use of trails are well-designed and effective. Might be a prototype for state parks
25. Would use the park system more, if more was known about them. My knowledge is limited to what is nearby. It would be helpful if the park maps could offer a brief description of the offerings at each park.
26. As I grow older, I frequently bring my guests to the historic sites. “I love NH and want to show off our heritage.” Guests are thrilled with their visits to the sites.
27. Open space/nature offers the option of being alone or sharing it with others, even with strangers. A park can bring people together in the most unexpected way and cause them to share observations and experiences.
28. Hampton Beach is too crowded, and people abuse it (drinking, building fires, bringing dogs, using profanity cited). Mutilating some of the natural resources, such as starfish, clams, etc. also mentioned – depriving future generations.
29. Misuse varies depending on the type of park and can occur due to simple ignorance of what’s appropriate behavior.
30. Need for funding for trash collection and recycling at Hampton Beach. Carry-in/carry-out system is not working.
31. Use positive messages to change this behavior. When “Our park is clean because you care” sign was installed in the rest rooms, it dramatically affected what went into the trash cans
32. Parents need to educate children about how to take care of the environment. Or the park needs to issue clear directives. Use visual cues, positive message, catchy graphics/photos. Provide information on how much trash is generated if people don’t cooperate.
33. [Three differing opinions on how to address trash followed]:
 - a. Monitoring or setting fines do not work
 - b. Try not picking it up, so people would see the direct consequences of their poor behavior
 - c. Educate people to picking up after oneself is the right thing to do. Educate children as a means to get to the adults.
34. Should the parks have a “load limit” to avoid over-use?
35. ATVs and their noise are very distracting to others
36. [Judith Spang, state rep]: Her constituents want snowmobiles and ATVs out of the parks and who decided the state policy that all uses should be allowed. Motorized uses bother everyone else. How did ATV and snowmobile users get to the point that they convinced the state to allow them full access? Recognizes a distinction between allowing motorized vehicles in northern parks, where the economy relies on such use, but finds them less appropriate in the southern parks. Also, ATV users now have a dedicated park (Jericho), the 2nd largest park in the system. Just because people pay to register an ATV or snowmobile, doesn’t mean they can buy their way into full access. Drew a parallel to car registration.

37. ATV and snowmobile users should pay the parks entry fees
38. Fumes and hikers, etc. don't co-mingle. There should be certain days designated for ATVs and snowmobiles
39. Could ATVs and snowmobiles be isolated into certain parks, as California does?
40. DRED has an obligation to be democratic – to provide for the “little guy” and not just the “loud, organized group.”
41. Many trash problems are caused by lack of facilities. People want to do the right thing – need to assist them in executing that.
42. When the budget at DRED is trimmed, manpower is trimmed at Hampton Beach. If more fees were extracted from ATVs and snowmobiles, it could go into the park system and improve all of them
43. As we undergo strategic planning, we need to understand the core values of each state park. Economic decisions need to be informed by the values of the park, rather than the value of the park determined by economic issues.
44. Need to close the back entrances of parks to avoid gate jumpers
45. Trails should be funded from sources other than ATVs and snowmobiles, as their voices are now too powerful
46. Coordinate with bed & breakfast and inns that are near trails, to ensure trail connectivity – use English system as a model
47. Trail bureau shouldn't be beholden to one constituency group – actually a conflict of interest
48. State should be funding its parks, since they are directly tied to tourism, a key part of the state's economy
49. PPP are appropriate, on a selected basis, with stringent standards. Could help parks in trouble. Private sector is capable of doing things sensitively. (Recent bridge replacement in Hampton cited as an example)
50. Hampton Beach is a flagship park. Needs staffing and capital improvements plan, as the investment will help all parks with the subsequent increase in revenue.
51. Friends Groups need to be established and/or encouraged throughout the system – they're the parks' best friends. [Johanna clarified that there are already many and they are indeed much valued]
52. DRED should work with equestrian group(s), a growing and enthusiastic group willing to pay for park usage
53. Why credit friends groups and their projects on the website for each park?
54. In essence, friends groups already function as PPP.
55. Friends groups need a “community organizer” to help them wade through state bureaucracy. (Example cited when Fort Stark Brigade, after raising \$12,000 to renovate Fort Stark, was charged \$100 special permit fee by DRED. Ben explained the fee request was a mistake and apologized for the mishap.)
56. Get corporate partners to help with the historic sites. Be “shameless” in hitting them up.
57. PPP can get out of hand. If any such partnerships are made, MOA needs to be very tight.
58. Cannon Mt. should not be privatized. Its unique, old-time mountain flavor (“can smell the wood smoke”) should not be changed. With the new managerial plan and manager in place, let's give it a try to turn a profit.

59. Campground reservation system is terrible – example of a PPP gone wrong.
60. Some of the leases with partners, such as at Odiorne, need to be reviewed. Should Science Center members get free membership to the park? [Same situation at Weeks]
61. Odiorne has a boat launch that charges a fee, but there is no staff to collect it
62. Promote which parks are on bird trail, as it will increase visitation.
63. Improve the maps of state parks to show all the amenities offered at a park.
64. Do an integrated mapping system to show how one could bike/walk between parks.
65. Get park information into AAA offices outside New Hampshire (all other states in New England are represented)
66. Need to partner with the community. Team up with garden clubs, rotary, etc. Celebrate the work of volunteers.
67. Create plaques for non-extant sites as a means to impart history
68. Ideas to generate additional revenue:
 - a. Introduce license plates for the parks, perhaps four different ones to represent the four geographic areas. Use terrific graphics that depict the state park(s).
 - b. Rent parks out for weddings, events, etc. Do not undercharge: Odiorne SP charges \$750 for a wedding, while the Seacoast Science Center charges \$5,000.
 - c. Establish an “Adopt a Park” program and enlist volunteers to assist with maintenance
 - d. Sell products at parks
 - e. Encourage earmarked donations for a specific program at a specific park
 - f. Using the IRS model, introduce a provision on the NH Dividends tax return for a check-off box to donate \$1 toward the parks

Received in writing from Tom Pearson (Rye) immediate following the meeting:

1. Adopt a section of the park: individuals, businesses and community groups would adopt a section of the park which they would maintain.
2. Revenue raising: (a) Weddings and other outside events – A section of the southern part of the park would be landscaped for tents for weddings and other events; (b) License plates – A license plate with a coastal picture would be authorized for OPSP