



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION
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January 21, 2020

The Honorable Suzanne Smith
and the Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 305
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 1394, relative to fees for park use.

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1394, relative to fees for park use. The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation (the Division) is opposed to this bill as it would have a substantial negative impact on the State Park Fund and revenue; it is inconsistent with standard operating policies of the campground industry; and it creates inequity between park users.

This bill would allow campers who have checked out and vacated their campsite, to continue using the day-use facilities, parking areas and beaches until the park closes, without additional charge. Currently, campers have access to day use facilities, including lake and beach access, at the same park where they have a reserved campsite. Access to the day use facilities is granted as part of the campsite fee and is valid during the camper's entire stay from check in at 1 p.m. to check out at 11 a.m. However, we recognize that this policy has not been applied uniformly across the park system in the past, creating confusion with visitors who camp at more than one park. We are providing additional staff training to improve uniformity.

The state park fee statutes were established "*...to provide the department with the ability to maximize revenues and to adjust fees according to market conditions and trends as is the common practice in private industry.*" This bill conflicts with the statutory intent of RSA 216-A:3-g, "*Fees for the use of campgrounds and ski lifts shall be comparable with the fees for use of similar privately owned facilities. The operation of all enterprise functions within the park system, including ski lifts, food service, retail facilities, campgrounds, and other concession activities, shall be as profitable as possible, within the purposes of the park system.*"

Our policy after check out is similar to what we found to be current campground industry standards. Our research included checking with KOA and other private campgrounds, and speaking with the NH Campground Owners Association. What we found as common practice was for privately owned campgrounds to terminate access to onsite facilities by guests upon check out, or to require returning guests to pay the standard admission or facility fees, as space allows.

We believe that this bill is unfair to the day use public. The cost of a standard campsite is \$25 per day. Day use fees for two adults and two children at a beach park would total \$14. This means that we would be collecting only \$9 instead of \$25 for the campsite. For purposes of scale,

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we have estimated that the total annual value of allowing campers to use the parks after check out is \$570,000. The loss of revenue is compounded when RV's and vehicles with trailers take up more than one parking space and displacing a vehicle of day use visitors.

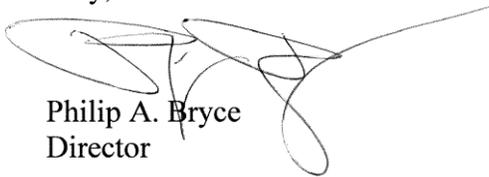
Please refer to my testimony on HB 1273 regarding access for military dependents for the larger context related to impacts of revenue to the state park fund, and the condition and operation of the park system that would result from additional lost revenue.

We believe that this issue would be more appropriately addressed by the agency through the fee package in consultation with the State Park Advisory Council (SPAC) who is charged with advising the director on issues related to the operation and development of the park system, and to review existing statutes relating to the state park system and recommend to the general court any changes needed to improve efficiency in the operation (RSA 216-A:3-kk). We would therefore commit to bringing this issue before SPAC to determine if there is a way of addressing this further. In addition, we will work to ensure our policies are applied appropriately across the park system.

We urge you to please consider fully the impact on visitors, revenue, and the consistency of this legislation with existing statutes and New Hampshire's self-funding model for the state park system.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please let me know if we can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Philip A. Bryce
Director

C: Sarah L. Stewart, Commissioner

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