



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION
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January 31, 2023

The Honorable James Gray
and the Senate Finance Committee
State House, Rm 103
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

RE: SB 122-FN-A relative to construction of a public pier on Hampton Beach and making an appropriation therefor.

Dear Chair Gray and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources ("Department"), Division of Parks and Recreation ("Division") regarding SB 122 relative to construction of a public pier on Hampton Beach and making an appropriation therefor. We acknowledge the work of the bill sponsors and the Hampton Beach Area Commission ("HBAC").

Pursuant to RSA 216-J:1, the HBAC is established to assist the Town of Hampton and the State in the long-range planning for the Hampton Beach area by the implementation of the Hampton Beach master plan, including capital improvements and proposed land use developments. The HBAC conducted a feasibility and impact study for the construction of a pier on Hampton Beach, under Chapter 181, Laws of 2022 (SB346). The [Feasibility Study](#) was conducted by GEI Consultants Inc. and published on November 1, 2022 ("Study").

The primary purpose of the study "is to consider the feasibility of constructing a new pier on Hampton Beach for general public, ADA, mobility impaired and elderly access to the water over the beach, and to provide for passive recreational uses (fishing, viewing, etc.)" (see Study, p.1). The Study considered three locations for the construction of a new pier within Hampton Beach State Park and GEI conducted its assessment. The Study concluded in its Executive Summary:

"Continued implementation of a new pier at Hampton Beach will require further discussion regarding ownership/partnership interests and responsibilities to move the project forward through planning, funding, design development and permitting, construction and long operations / maintenance. This process is anticipated to take several years and involve various levels of participation from the State Legislature, State Agencies (DNCR, State Parks, Port Authority, DOT, DES), the Hampton Beach Area Commission, The Hampton Village District, Rockingham County, the Town of Hampton and other individual / group stakeholder interests" (see Study, p. 2).

The Division supports improvements across the park system to improve accessibility to the outdoors. Specifically at Hampton Beach State Park, the state has improved accessibility through the \$14.5 million redevelopment project in 2012, beach accessibility mats, and a beach wheelchair service.

While the State Park system is operationally self-funded, we rely on capital appropriations to support major improvements in reinvestment in the State's natural, cultural and recreation resources left to our continued stewardship. Over the last five biennium, the Division has requested \$58,837,500 of capital funds and received \$26,837,840 in capital support through state funds. Over the next three biennium, the Division has identified and requested \$115,478,150 for capital improvements. Hampton Beach State Park is one of the few parks that generates more revenue than expense, which supports other parts of the park system that are not self-supporting. While Hampton Beach is operationally self-sufficient, portions of its revenue are also contributing to fund the cost of the seawalls owned by the state which serve little to no recreational value and will continue to be a liability for the Division.

A pier may provide for an additional attraction that could increase visitation. However, as outlined in the feasibility study, further discussion is needed regarding ownership and partnership interests and responsibilities to move the project forward.

Whoever would be responsible for managing the pier would likely want to understand any ongoing operating costs, including repair and maintenance over the lifespan of the pier, in order to plan for future replacement and the revenue sources to support those costs. This is particularly important given the impact that winter storms have on structures along the seacoast. The Study states:

“Under current effective FEMA 100-Year flood predictions, the majority of the Hampton Beach area would be inundated, including most of the access roads to other parts of the Town of Hampton, and neighboring Hampton Falls, North Hampton and Seabrook. These current risks, along with potential increased flood risks from relative sea level rise and/or increased frequency and severity of coastal storms are something that has been studied extensively in the area and should remain a key consideration for future implementation of a new pier, in light of flood risks to the entire Hampton Beach area” (emphasis added, see Study, p. 61).

“Additionally, project stakeholders should continue to consider the implementation of the pier in light of the predicted coastal risks to the entire community. While the pier will be designed to accommodate a level of protection from coastal environmental risk factors and their predicted future changes, this level of risk protection may likely be above the potential risks to other parts of the Hampton Beach community, including existing beach facilities, adjacent properties, and access roads to and from Hampton Beach to points inland” (emphasis added, see Study, p. 69).

Even today, the Division is working through the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to access FEMA funds to help recover costs of seacoast storm damage that occurred on December 22-25, 2022. The cost of the damage along NH's seacoast is still being assessed. Under similar circumstances, the Portsmouth Herald reported that the Town of Ogunquit, ME, experienced extensive flood damage at Perkins Cove pier where the pier was "lifted up and torn from its pilings." The estimated cost of repair is \$285,000 (Portsmouth Herald, Jan. 12, 2023).

The feasibility study provided for a chapter titled *Comparable Pier Research*. While these comparisons provide some detail with respect to programmatic use, construction costs, ownership, and other factors, they also illustrate the unique challenges associated with piers that should be thoroughly considered before a pier is constructed. "In addition to the PAC input regarding a new pier at Hampton Beach, there was input from some of the PAC members questioning the need for a new pier at Hampton Beach." Additionally, other locations along the seacoast outside of Hampton Beach State Park were not assessed as they were outside of the legislative scope of the feasibility study.

In consideration of the multi-year process needed for this project, the appropriation of \$22 million for the biennium ending June 30, 2025, for the purposes of the Hampton Beach Pier construction will likely need to be extended beyond June 30, 2025.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 122. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Wilson
Director

C: Sarah L. Stewart, Commissioner, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

BJW/tfl-013123



[Link to Feasibility Study Hampton Beach New Pier](#)