

Summary of Comments for Mount Washington Management Plan

Ubiquitous Theme: Uniqueness

Vision/Mission Statements

The Master Plan should ensure that:

- Mount Washington State Park continues to be a must-see destination for visitors to the region.
- The Summit will be managed such that all partners are successful.
- The alpine environment of the Summit and surrounding landscape is restored, protected, and preserved.
- Goals, objectives, and tactics are set forth in detail.
- Summit infrastructure systems incorporate the quality and capacity needed, to the maximum extent possible:
 - To provide all summit visitors with the opportunity to observe and experience the environment; and,
 - To maintain the quality of the summit environment in perpetuity in consideration of the number of people and vehicles that will visit the Summit.
- A high quality mountain experience that respects the Mountain's uniqueness is maintained.
- There is recognition that the Summit and State Park are iconic and emblematic of the Granite State.
- The Mountain's flora and fauna, its facilities, and its history are recognized.
- There is a coordinated approach to addressing the capacities of buildings, of sewage, waste, energy, and water systems, and of transportation modes to accommodate the full number of visitors expected or permitted.
- There is more recognition of and public understanding that the summit is comprised of State property and facilities and that the summit is cared for, managed by, and maintained by the N.H. State Park system.

Process:

General:

The Commission should create a process whereby:

- The general public as well as Commission members are involved in all master planning.
- All partners contribute to success and ultimate outcomes.
- The cooperating partners on the summit recognize their interdependence but respect their independence.

- Members trust and respect each other.
- The communal support that each organization gives to each other in times of need continues (partners will support each other).
- The culture of helping one another out, especially amongst operational staff on the summit and on the mountain, is maintained and carried on as it exists today.
- Additional items not envisioned in 1971 are considered.
- The value and the critical scientific research of Observatory and the AMC are recognized and maintained.
- Creative thinking and respect for rights of all parties are encouraged.
- Members recognize that when all Summit entities work together, all will benefit.

Specific:

As part of the process, the Commission should:

- Review the RSA and all changes since the Commission was formed.
- Establish a sub-group that helps coordinate the communications of the entities on the summit to the public/visitors
- Conduct a thorough, scientific environmental analysis of current summit conditions to be used as a baseline to judge future master plans and only then consider building enhancements, replacements, expansions.
- Set a schedule and deliverable structure for the final Master Plan.
- Set a budget for related expenses, if needed.
- Determine which prior recommendations were completed (determine which prior recommendations have yet to be done/completed/or partially completed) (Review all aspects of the original master plan with regard to data gathered and each topic and recommendations and determine any actions needed to update them or complete recommendations).
- Update the capital improvement plan for the next 10 years.
- Review prior data on summit use.
- Review capacity proposed for the Sherman Adams Building.
- Review recommendations for summit operations.
- Review recommendations for fees.
- Review all leases.
- Review prior recommendations to protect flora and fauna.
- Engage an acceptable facilitator to guide the Commission through the process.

- Create an on-going dispute resolution mechanism (resolve disputes between various summit entities [State Park, Cog Railway, Auto Road, Observatory, Communications, Hikers] so that all can operate together seamlessly and effectively).
- Determine carrying capacity of the summit infrastructure and number of visitors to ensure alpine environment is not over-stressed.
- Conduct a study examining whether concession/gift shop space is being utilized to full potential with overall goal of improving quality and presentation.
- Conduct study regarding charging a fee to enter the Sherman Adams Building that would include fee amount, how/where visitors are notified about the fee, educating visitor on purpose of fee/how it will be utilized, and efficient/professional method(s) for charging the fee.
- Conduct a study to determine full market value of any State property being utilized by any party that is not allowed by deeded rights.
- Ensure that summit stakeholders are heard on all contracts to be made inside the Summit circle.
- Collaborate with other high-traffic parks/tourism sites to establish effective messages and information for visitor management.
- Ensure that the Commission return to the authority intended at its inception.

Substantive Outcome

As a result of the planning process, the Master Plan should:

General:

Capital Improvements:

- Establish a clearer path forward for the future of the Yankee Building and the important systems it supports.
- Utilize Capital Budget Process and ARPA funding.
- Ensure that waste management systems are designed, sized, and operated to meet the long-term rather than short term goals and minimize environmental degradation.
- Ensure that Summit structures incorporate protective and energy efficient features with designs that reduce intrusion on summit experience and environment.
- Ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, and consistent with the presentation of historic settings, Summit facilities and infrastructure incorporate energy and resource efficient technologies, which would be upgraded, consistent with these principles, to accommodate technical advances.
- Provide for an up to date communications and maintenance facility
- Balance historic and modern facilities.

- Ensure that the Summit is accessible and inclusive (include quality information and access for the diversity of visitors) (ensure that public facilities would, after a public process of research and investigation, identify and considerately incorporate features sensitive to any significance of Mount Washington's Summit to indigenous people) (ensure that it increases visitor experience, outdoor accessibility and inclusion, operations sustainability, and natural resource values) (consistent with sustainability principles, Summit facilities and offerings would be accessible to all visitors, including the use of technology or designs to improve access to natural features and historic or scenic elements for all persons, including those with physical or intellectual disabilities).
- Create an additional hiking trail network with signage to keep visitors on the trail, entertained, and dispersed.

Operation and Maintenance:

- Ensure that the Mount Washington State Park is a fiscally sustainable operation, not only able to continue covering operating expenses, but such that revenues will be available for larger, costlier maintenance and improvement projects, which are typically now and previously funded through Capital Improvement funding (ensure financial viability of Mount Washington State Park).
- Ensure that the summit has in place a system of charges that equitably spreads the costs of maintaining and upgrading Summit infrastructure features among Summit visitors and those entities using the Summit because of its elevation, rather than purposes related to the natural environment or history of Mount Washington.
- Ensure that the summit is a model of sustainable tourism/land management.
- Ensure that the summit environment and experience are maintained.
- Account for the fact that park operations are providing financial support to the rest of the parks in the state park system.
- Clarify and solidify pre-existing rights of all summit entities.
- Plan for maintenance upgrades for other summit structures.
- Ensure a good experience for hikers (hikers generally appreciate the services offered at the Summit and understand that when only a short distance from the Summit they return to the rugged above tree-line experience of the Presidentials).
- Ensure that of all trails on the Summit are improved and maintained and have new signage.
- Ensure that management promotes the desired experiences including iconic views.
- Create a unique visitor experience.
- Manage the Summit to ensure sustainability and account for carrying capacity.
- Provide for scientific research and monitoring to enhance understanding.
- Create a bigger presence for the Museum.

Education/Outreach:

- Result in information, education, access features, and trail maintenance that promotes protection of the fragile alpine environment
- Educate visitors about the unique scientific, botanical, and geological aspects of the summit.
- Establish a joint communications package of some kind that gives consistent signage/info to visitors all around the region.

Environment:

- Ensure that Summit management “does no harm.”
- Investigate and address damage to and deterioration of the environment.
- Adopt a high standard to minimize additional structures and negative environmental consequences of existing and future Summit structures and actions, balancing historic depiction and ongoing needs.
- Require management to conserve resources taking advantage of opportunities to do things like reclaim water or creatively manage sewage need.

Specific:

Capital Improvements:

- Allow no expansions, renovations, significant changes, or master planning to summit operations until planning is complete.
- Require that building footprints remain the same or are reduced in order to improve viewscape (summit facilities remain no larger than current footprint).
- Require that the number of towers be reduced and/or relocate aspects of the Yankee Building off the Summit as much as possible.
- Require burial of fuel tanks.
- Ensure adequate bathroom facilities and amenities for visitors (more rest room facilities).
- Ensure that, if attendance continues at present day levels, or grows, added or new indoor space will be available to enhance the visitor experience.
- Ensure that the New Yankee Building includes classrooms for educational lectures/demonstrations.
- Require paving of gravel locations to entrance and observation deck.
- Ensure that complete water and sewer upgrades are completed.
- Ensure that local facilities that help support the daily State Park Summit operations are closer to the mountain than Moose Brook State Park.
- Require removal of abandoned items (those not offering historic value), removal of construction debris, and cleanup of the old generator building foundation.

- Require repair of tiles on the observation deck, repair of cracked cement, repair of roof leaks, and a coat of fresh paint.
- Ensure cleanup of the Sherman Adams Building and the Summit generally.
- Require restoration of damaged vegetation.
- Require cleanup of contaminated groundwater and soils on and around the Summit.

Operation and Maintenance:

- Provide for winter access.
- Require the Sherman Adams Building to be open year-round with longer hours (8AM – 7 PM).
- Require a ground lease with a third party to construct and operate a Telecommunications Facility.
- Ensure the enhanced protection for the fragile alpine ecosystem at the summit through pathways, trails, and signage.
- Cap the number of visitors during peak times through a reservation system.
- Encourage a summit Stakeholders’ agreement to financially support Summit betterment projects.
- Establish Commission funding for administrative support separate from any one of the cooperating partners on the summit.

Education/Outreach:

- Provide for the creation of display boxes of growing rare flora indigenous to the alpine climate to educate about the importance of protecting the Summit.
- Encourage guided educational tours along new Summit trail network and use of classrooms.
- Result in the creation of a Mount Washington Summit Adventure Experience App (*See Pikes Peak App*).
- Ensure that educational and historical audio, video, and pictorial presentations are included in the aforementioned App.
- Encourage creation of a Nature Gallery as the base to the Summit hosts a very diverse population of plants, animals, and insects.
- Create a Summit Challenge – (e.g. “Visit all ____ locations on the Summit to collect badges...”).
- Create a program called “Summiteers” to be a weather-related experience sponsored by MWOBS initiating visitors with wind tunnel simulation that would include a photo op (charge/donation for initiation to benefit MWOBS).
- Create a system called My Summit Photos where people can save and share pictures on all social media platforms (create hashtags & filters) thereby allowing our visitors themselves to promote N.H. and the Summit adventure experience.

- Collaboratively create and aggressively promote the Summit Adventure Experience App.
- Create a Donate Now link for the Mount Washington State Park.
- Create updated and more modern informational displays within the Sherman Adams Building that provide visitors with better knowledge and understanding about the overall uniqueness of and history of Mount Washington.
- Create coordinated educational programs/visits for school and other groups that showcase information on history of the Summit, climate, environment, and conservation work.
- Create or maintain world-class Mount Washington Observatory weather research facilities, indoor/outdoor laboratory, and testing space.

Safety:

- Provide for adequate safety/rescue measures.
- Promote hiker safety education for all season hiking.
- Ensure access of Summit services to hikers.
- Maintain public access to the summit which is one of only two summits of N.H.'s 48 Four Thousand Foot Summits with non-hiker access (Cannon is the other) as many people cannot hike to the summit of Mount Washington so the Auto Road and Cog Railway are integral to allowing people from around the globe to have access to this wonderful place in a safe and wholesome manner.

Environment:

- Encourage net zero emissions.
- Require that the visitor center become LEED certified or equivalent with an emphasis on renewable energy sources.
- Preclude future deterioration of environmental conditions.

Conclusion:

- Ensure that the next Commission master plan for the summit of Mount Washington is complete and approved by the Governor and Executive Council (The Commission's vision must lead to goals, objectives, and tactics for a 10-year master plan).