



MOUNT WASHINGTON OBSERVATORY

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Commissioner Jeff Rose  
New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development  
172 Pembroke Road  
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August 30, 2013

Dear Commissioner Rose,

Thank you for taking the time a couple of weeks ago to meet and discuss the renovation of the Mount Washington Museum. It was a pleasure meeting you for the first time, and I do hope you were able to learn a bit about Mount Washington Observatory and our mountaintop museum in the process.

As you are well aware, Mount Washington is the most noteworthy tourism destination in northern New England and draws more than 250,000 visitors to its rocky summit each year. The Mount Washington Museum, located within Mt. Washington State Park's Sherman Adams Visitors Center, welcomes a staggering 100,000 people each year, making it the Granite State's most visited museum.

Despite strong visitation numbers, our summit museum currently offers a grossly outdated educational experience. Its interpretive style does not meet today's museum standards, nor does it serve as an effective means to educate the public about Mount Washington's extraordinary weather, fragile alpine environment and rich history.

We are nearing the end of a capital campaign that will fund the \$825,000 renovation of this museum space, transforming it into a high-tech, interactive winter experience. The new "Extreme Mount Washington" museum will be a tremendous boost to the overall visitor experience atop Mount Washington and a new educational gem for the North Country.

At our recent meeting, NH Division of Parks Director Phil Bryce asked that I prepare a written overview of the project and formally seek permission from the State of NH so that we can make these improvements. I am happy to provide a look at the scope, timeline and impact of the project in a document that follows this cover-letter. **In that document, I formally seek your permission to move forward on a few key aspects of the project which relate to the 2009 MWO/DRED lease.**

This project has the support of hundreds of donors and foundations across the northeast. With your approval and support for this project, we can move forward on the demolition and base building work before winter sets in, preparing us for a spring 2014 grand opening. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scot Henley".

Scot Henley  
Executive Director

A person wearing a dark winter jacket, pants, and goggles is using a snowblower on a snowy mountain peak. The snowblower is blowing a large amount of snow, creating a dynamic scene. The background shows a clear blue sky and a large, snow-covered structure, likely part of the Mount Washington Museum renovation project.

# EXTREME

## MOUNT WASHINGTON

## The Renovation of the Mount Washington Museum

*Project Overview & Proposal*  
*August 30, 2013*

# The Renovation of the Mount Washington Museum

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Welcoming more than 100,000 visitors each year, the **Mount Washington Museum** is remarkably the Granite State's most visited museum. Operated by the nonprofit Mount Washington Observatory (MWO) since 1973, the museum has offered its visitors a look at the peak's human and natural history for four decades. Originally housed in MWO's former mountaintop structure, the museum was relocated to a specially-designed space within Mt. Washington State Park's Sherman Adams Building in 1980. The museum offers a passive, walk-through interpretive experience, giving visitors a look at the human and natural history of Mount Washington through relatively crude, static displays.

**In the spring of 2014, the museum will be completely reborn as "Extreme Mount Washington."** Stripped down to the studs and entirely re-imagined, the new, interactive experience will deliver the awe and wonder of a Mount Washington winter—the mountain's most extreme season that only a small handful of the peak's 250,000 annual visitors ever have a chance to witness. Through hands-on, high-tech exhibits, MWO will present a compelling sampling of the "World's Worst Weather" to Mt. Washington State Park visitors from across the nation and around the world. A capital campaign to fund the \$825,000 project is nearly complete, and the renovation of the space is scheduled to begin after the Mount Washington Museum closes for the final time on September 29, 2013.

This is the most impactful project that MWO has performed in decades. Not only will Mt. Washington State Park's interpretive experience be dramatically improved and a key element of MWO's educational mission be more effectively fulfilled, the renovation will also result in a dramatic step forward for the overall visitor experience at the summit.

## PROJECT SCOPE

The Extreme Mount Washington project could be described as little more than a substantial remodel of the museum space occupied by MWO for decades. The museum will stay within its existing 2,750 square-foot footprint and no major facility changes will be made as a result of the museum redesign beyond two key elements: the reorientation of the lowest run of stairs and the installation of a new electrical panel.

The project consists of three phases: demolition, base building and exhibit delivery/install.

- **Demolition** includes the removal of existing exhibits and artifacts, as well as the preparation of the space for new partition walls, fixtures and furnishings. According to the drawings prepared by museum designers Jeff Kennedy Associates:
  - All existing exhibit structures, casework, graphics will be removed.
  - Existing gift shop desk, fixtures and carpeting will be removed.
  - Existing partitions will be removed.
  - Lower flight of stairs and hand-rail will be removed.
  - All wood paneling on ceiling, ceiling beams and columns to be removed.
  - In most areas, wall paneling will be removed and salvaged for reuse in new museum area.
  - Safety signage and emergency lighting will be temporarily removed during renovation. (Final installation of safety signage and emergency lighting is the responsibility of MWO).
  - All stair railings will be replaced with ADA compliant railings.
  - Remove side wall of middle stairs (Cap will be salvaged for reuse on new side wall).
  - Remove replica rock work and corner structures on stair landing.

- **Base building** work includes all the steps required to modernize the look and feel of the museum space and prepare for the installation of new exhibits.
  - Construct new lower flight of stairs for continuous run of stairs to museum level. New full height side wall on inside of stairs and close area between upper and lower stairs. Provide new ADA compliant railings for entire stairs.
  - Construct new full height partition walls between museum and gift shop and at the base of the stair handrails. Other full-height partition walls will be constructed to create a storage room for retail items and under-stair storage for supplies. Finish and paint.
  - Construct drop ceiling to hide underside of upper stairs.
  - Patch wall surfaces as required, paint. Repaint doors and trim.
  - Patch wood paneling as required, paint.
  - Paint radiators.
  - Patch ceiling and beams as required, paint.
  - Install new carpet tiles throughout the space.
  
- Once the base building phase is completed, the final step is the **exhibit delivery and installation**.
  - All exhibits have already been designed and are being fabricated off-site.
  - Exhibits have been designed to be modular and able to be delivered to the Sherman Adams Building in the back of a van or pickup truck. All exhibit components must fit through the double service doors in the Sherman Adams Building, a very rigid size constraint that must be adhered to.
  - In the spring of 2014, exhibits will be delivered to the base of the Auto Road and staged in box trucks until the Auto Road opens to wheeled vehicles. During a one-to-two week period in the spring, all exhibits will be installed and the museum will be ready to open.

- A formal grand opening ceremony, with widespread publicity and regional dignitaries in attendance, will take place sometime in early June.

## **ANTICIPATED TIMELINE**

In order to perform the demolition and base building work prior to the onset of winter conditions on the mountain, the Mount Washington Museum is scheduled to close on September 29, 2013.

- Week 1: Artifact removal will take place over the week of September 30.
- Week 2: AMC construction crew arrives and begins demolition.
- Week 3: AMC construction crew and electricians begin the rough-in the existing space. Note: All electrical work will be done by licensed electricians, at MWO expense.
- Week 4: Rough-in continues.
- Week 5: Finish work begins.
- Week 6: Finish work continues.
- Week 7: Final finish work and carpet installation.
- The demolition and and base building phases will be fully completed in November, and the newly-remodeled museum will remain dormant until new exhibits are delivered and installed in May of 2014.

## **IMPACT OF DEMOLITION/BASE BUILDING WORK ON MT. WASHINGTON STATE PARK**

Our goal throughout this renovation project is to have as little an impact on Mt. Washington State Park as possible. MWO personnel will be in regular contact with Mt. Washington State Park to ensure that all stakeholders are informed and that all concerns are addressed. Open communication will be a fundamental

element of the project's success, and MWO is committed to performing this renovation in the true spirit of partnership.

Given the nature of the remote location and the space constraints of the Sherman Adams Building, there will be some construction-related impacts over the duration of the project.

- A heavy-duty, steel-topped dumpster will be sited at a mutually-agreed upon location at the summit, where demolition debris will be deposited. The dumpster will be removed and emptied periodically.
- Debris will be removed through agreed-upon egresses, including the “hiker pack room” and other exits.
- The museum will close for the season on the evening of September 29, 2013, approximately three weeks prior to the end of the summer season.
  - In a typical year, the museum opens earlier in the season than Mt. Washington State Park's concessions and stays open for several weeks beyond the Park's seasonal closing date, allowing for early- and late-season Cog Railway patrons to enjoy an interpretive experience. However, due to the logistical challenges of a mountaintop project and the mid-October onset of winter conditions, we have elected to be conservative and close early.
  - In place of a museum experience, MWO education staff are developing some temporary interpretive displays and considering the addition of some special education programming either at the top of the museum stairway or in the MWO conference room.
- After the Sherman Adams Building closes to the public, MWO may inquire about temporary storage/staging of construction supplies (lumber, drywall, etc.) in a mutually-agreed upon location within the Sherman Adams Building. All supplies will be removed in a timely manner and the space will be cleaned appropriately.

## PERMISSIONS

As discussed in a recent project meeting with representatives from MWO and the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development, fundraising for this renovation project is nearly complete and MWO's Board of Trustees have given it the "green light" to proceed. **As such, MWO is hereby seeking official permission from the State that will enable all aspects of the project to move forward, beginning this fall.**

DRED Architect Tom Mansfield has been quite helpful in providing feedback and insight, and has verbally offered his support for the project. With this proposal to DRED Commissioner Jeff Rose, we hope to obtain official DRED permission on three key items:

- **We request permission to close the outdated Mount Washington Museum on September 29, 2013.** The 2009 MWO/State of New Hampshire lease agreement states that the museum must be open when State Park concession stands are open. However, the complex logistics of this mountaintop project require MWO to err on the conservative side. All artifacts and demolition debris must be removed from the summit and all base building supplies must be transported up to the summit prior to the onset of winter. Closing the museum earlier than usual ensures that supplies can be transported up and down the mountain safely.
- **We request permission to remove the lower landing and final run of stairs leading to the existing museum space, and replace them with a straight run of stairs.** This essentially removes the 90-degree turn found in the lower segment of the existing museum stairway. This change will allow for a better flow of traffic through the museum, and the new stairway makes reaching emergency exits on the lower level of the Sherman Adams Building easier. New staircase railings are being designed to be ADA compliant,

replacing current railings, which are out of compliance. Removal of lower landing meets State of NH requirements for ceiling height.

- **We request permission to remove the main electrical panel for the museum, relocate it to a mutually-agreed upon location, and install a larger panel.** All electrical work will be done by licensed electricians, at MWO expense. The larger 200-watt electrical panel has been chosen primarily for the number of breakers needed, not necessarily for additional consumption.

MWO has been working with DRED Architect Tom Mansfield to set a meeting with the state Fire Marshall so that plans can be reviewed and a walk-through of the space can be performed. The goal is to ensure that the remodeled museum space will comply with existing health and safety requirements. Once the meeting takes place and his recommendations are made, we will then take appropriate action.

## **KEY PERSONNEL**

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