



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION
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January 29, 2019

The Honorable John Cloutier
and the Public Works and Highways Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 201
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 580 relative to bonding construction projects for the department of natural and cultural resources

Dear Chairman Cloutier and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation regarding HB 580 relative bonding construction projects for the Department. **The Division requested and supports this legislation.** This request was also presented to and supported by the State Park System Advisory Committee.

The Division's 2010 Ten Year Strategic Development and Capital Improvement Plan identified \$100 million to address immediate needs and replace and redevelop needed facilities over a 10-year period. While we have made substantial progress with the support of the legislature through the generally funded capital budget, continuing to improve the condition of our park system is also a primary objective in our operating budget.

In the last two budget cycles, the Division has requested and received \$1.2 million per year in additional operations funding in the class lines (030,047,048,102, &103) in the budget for expenditures to supplement the capital budget appropriation to improve the condition of the parks system. The source of these funds is revenue from operations deposited in the parks fund under the parks' self-funded model.

For example, this past year we used operating funds to fully renovate the bathhouse at Moose Brook State Park campground, install playgrounds at Lafayette campground and Ellacoya State Park, and replace the radio system at Hampton Beach State Park, and open up new cabins at Bear Hill in Bear Brook State Park, the site of the former 4-H camp.

This legislation would allow the Division to use the operating funds to bond up to five million dollars for campground expansion and other improvements to campgrounds that would generate additional revenue. Five million dollars would allow us to complete larger projects that we could not do expending operating funds on an annual basis. The payment for the principle and interest would be from operating revenue in the parks budget. We have requested \$600,000 each year in the upcoming budget.

There would be significant oversight for the use and expenditure of these funds. The process for oversight and approval of the bonding requests is modelled on what already exists for the Cannon Mountain Capital Improvement Fund (CMCIF). The Division would seek review and recommendations

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John Cloutier, Chairman, House Public Works and Highways

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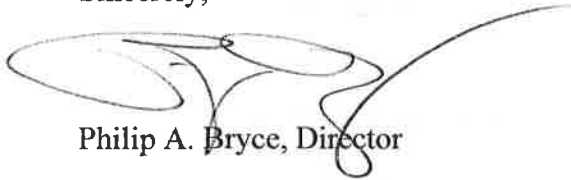
of its bonding requests from the State Park System Advisory Council. The Department would then obtain legislative approval from the joint Capital Budget Overview Committee prior to final approval from the Governor and Executive Council. This process has worked very well for the Cannon Mountain Capital Improvement Fund, established pursuant to RSA 12-A:29-b in 1998.

Campground occupancy across the park system averages about 90% on weekends during the summer. Many campgrounds are at 100% occupancy on weekends. This is a national trend. The demand for campsites is outpacing supply according to speakers this past fall at the National Association of State Parks Directors conference.

This legislation would provide additional sources of revenue to the park system to sustain it for the long term as well as meet the intent of the legislature under **RSA 216-A:1 Intent.** – “II. To continually provide such additional park areas and facilities as may be necessary to meet the recreational needs of the citizens of all regions of the state.”

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of HB 580.** Please let me know if I can answer questions or provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip A. Bryce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Philip A. Bryce, Director

Cc: Sarah L. Stewart, Commissioner