



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT of RESOURCES and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION

172 Pembroke Road P.O. Box 1856 Concord, New Hampshire 03302-1856  
PHONE: (603) 271-3556 FAX: (603) 271-3553 E-MAIL: nhparks@dred.state.nh.us  
WEB: www.nhstateparks.org

April 9, 2013

The Honorable Shannon Chandley, Chairman  
House Resources Recreation and Development Committee  
Legislative Office Building Room 305  
Concord, NH 03301

**Re: SB 190 relative to admission fees for certain persons at state parks and historical sites.**

Dear Chairman Chandley and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 190 that changes the State Park admission fee for certain members of the public at state parks and historic sites by creating a Granite Parks Pass for NH Seniors and eliminating the discount coupon books. The Division strongly supports the introduction of SB 190 because it provides an opportunity for the legislature to review existing statutory free access to parks, free access that in some instances was created in statute prior to the adoption of the self-funding model for the parks system.

Other than those established by statute, fees for access to and use of the state park system are approved in a fee package by the Fiscal Committee. Included in the fee package is free access for members of the General Court and Governor and Council. This legislation would now eliminate this discount as well.

The Division of Parks and Recreation is operationally self-funded. In 1991, the State Park Fund was established. The House Appropriations Committee report that recommended passage wrote: *This bill establishes the New Hampshire state park and ski areas as an enterprise-type self-funded, accountable business entity to provide improved park and ski recreation facilities and services to New Hampshire citizens and tourists alike.* Also, pursuant to RSA 216-A:3-g:

- *Fees are established ... "so as 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."*
- *"Fees for the use of park areas shall be designed to recover a reasonable portion of budget expenses consistent with the purposes of RSA 216-A:1 and 216-A:3. The general court does not intend that all park facilities be self-supporting."*
- *"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."*

Both the free admission and the discount coupons were enacted prior to the establishment of the State Park Fund. Seniors was enacted in 1973 and the discount coupon books were enacted in 1977.

April 9, 2013

Chairman Chandley, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee

Page 2

Current law requires Parks to provide day use coupons that reflect a 20% discount off its usual rates. This broad based discount coupon program is inconsistent with *responding to market conditions* and this legislative requirement also carries great administrative burden.

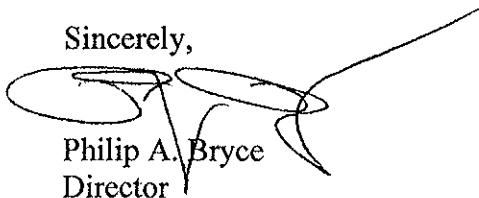
The Division estimates that the value of the current free access provided to NH Seniors is \$320,000. Attached is a table with details of this calculation by park. We estimate that the proposed Granite Pass would generate approximately the same amount of revenue assuming 65% of the number of NH seniors purchase the pass for \$20.00, 20% visit state parks and pay the normal fee, and 15% do not attend the park or are current repeat users. To put this dollar amount in perspective, \$300,000 is the cost of operating 4 or 5 of our medium size parks.

The Division's 2010 Ten-Year Strategic Development and Capital Improvement Plan identified \$28.5 million in deferred maintenance over five years and \$71 million to replace or redevelop needed facilities over the ten year plan. In addition, we are just coming off a \$2.6 million deficit so, in recent years, we have been unable to open some parks, even if they are revenue generating, and have been able to provide only limited, if any, support to non-revenue generating parks. The review of our statutory fee discounts is part of a larger effort to understand and control costs, look for new opportunities to generate revenue and to work with third parties to assist in the stewardship of our park system.

We recognize that while the state park system is driven to generate revenue to support its operations it also has a higher goal of achieving a larger public good. As such, we have supported providing free access to parks as a way for the State to recognize certain groups, such as members of the active military. However, we also believe it is time to bring the remaining discounts up to date in the context of the self-funding model, the needs of the Park system, and achieving that larger public good.

I am available to answer any questions you may have on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation.

Sincerely,



Philip A. Bryce  
Director

PAB/mlc.04092013

C: Jeffrey J. Rose, Commissioner

4/9/2013

## NH Division of Parks and Recreation

Value of Senior AccessNon Uphill 2012

<u>Park</u>	<u>Adult Admission</u>	<u>NH Resident 65+</u>	<u>Value of Free Access</u>
Bear Brook	\$4.00	415	\$1,660
Cannon 12/13 Midweek Lift	\$48.00	1,601	\$76,848
Cannon 12/13 Midweek Pass	\$485.00	103	\$49,955
Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway	\$15.00	1,521	\$22,815
Flume Gorge	\$15.00	1,069	\$16,035
Cannon Mountain RV Park		0	\$0
Clough	\$4.00	130	\$520
Coleman	\$4.00	0	\$0
Crawford Notch	\$4.00	0	\$0
Deer Mountain	\$4.00	0	\$0
Echo Lake	\$4.00	246	\$984
Echo Lake Beach	\$4.00	0	\$0
Ellacoya	\$5.00	532	\$2,660
Franklin Pierce	\$4.00	0	\$0
Frost Farm	\$4.00	493	\$1,972
Greenfield	\$4.00	367	\$1,468
Hampton Beach South	\$15.00	1,060	\$15,900
Jericho	\$4.00	0	\$0
Kingston	\$4.00	173	\$692
Lafayette Place Campground	\$4.00	0	\$0
Lake Francis	\$4.00	0	\$0
Milan Hill	\$4.00	0	\$0
Miller	\$4.00	453	\$1,812
Mollidgewock	\$4.00	0	\$0
Monadnock- Gilson Pond	\$5.00	21	\$105
Monadnock HQ	\$5.00	161	\$805
Monadnock- Old Toll Road	\$5.00	137	\$685
Moose Brook	\$4.00	0	\$0
Odiorne Point	\$4.00	537	\$2,148
Pawtuckaway	\$5.00	864	\$4,320
Pillsbury	\$4.00	87	\$348
Rhododendron	\$4.00	0	\$0
Rollins	\$4.00	448	\$1,792
Rye Harbor	\$4.00	96	\$384
Silver Lake	\$4.00	274	\$1,096
Sunapee	\$5.00	1,692	\$8,460
Umbagog	\$4.00	0	\$0
Wadleigh	\$4.00	0	\$0
Wallis Sands	\$15.00	6,313	\$94,695
Weeks	\$4.00	187	\$748
Wellington	\$4.00	824	\$3,296
Wentworth	\$4.00	478	\$1,912
Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion	\$4.00	50	\$200
White Lake	\$5.00	897	\$4,485
Winslow	\$4.00	401	\$1,604
Grand Total:		21,630	\$320,404

