

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



The NH Department of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Parks and Recreation, is pleased to present this updated edition of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2013-2018.

Every five years our planning teams work together to determine the current state of outdoor recreation facilities and trends in New Hampshire and revise the SCORP to reflect changing demography and recreation preferences of residents and visitors.

Key to this latest report we find that New Hampshire's citizens are aging in place and looking for more recreation opportunities that are geared to walking trails, soft nature hikes, paths to share with pets, and places to stop to enjoy a view, a watershed, or a picnic. Older respondents that participated in our focus groups and surveys want to remain active as long as possible and as long as their physical strength allows. It will be important to keep this need in mind as we move forward in establishing new outdoor recreation opportunities at both the local and state levels.

The NH Division of Parks and Recreation is also intentionally moving to create and support more year-round recreation activities at NH State Parks. Traditionally the state park system has focused its efforts on the summer visitors and vacationers but more and more there is demand from the growing snow sports clientele for attractions and amenities that include zip lines, mountain coasters, winter camping cabins, pavilions with fire places, skating rinks, cross-country ski trails, and a range of other additions to the recreation opportunities available throughout the year. It is clear that people in New Hampshire want to be active outdoors as much as possible and certainly with the lengthening shoulder seasons it is more important than ever to maximize these opportunities wherever possible.

Community recreation is vitally important to the entire recreation landscape in New Hampshire. Locally based recreation opportunity that includes parks with playgrounds and picnic tables, places where dogs can romp with other dogs and dogowners can share outdoor play time, pathways that allow for walking from home to stores or community centers and back again, bicycle paths and right-of-ways for both exercise and commuting, as well as safe walking routes to schools, are integral to future planning for both transportation and recreation improvements. A strong community-based recreation program supports a strong state park system which helps build strong healthy minds and bodies for our young people, our families, and our elders.

Many studies prove the benefits of outdoor recreation to overcoming obesity, refreshing our spirits, and improving our physical strength. The greater we can expand these opportunities to our urban communities, burgeoning immigrant populations, and rural economically disadvantaged areas, the more we encourage healthy lifestyles for everyone so that our citizens can be productive and healthy throughout their lives regardless of where they live or what they earn.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been extraordinarily valuable in providing funding that has helped create and expand outdoor recreation opportunity throughout New Hampshire. Over 700 projects have been approved and more than \$40,000,000 in grant funds have been matched or exceeded by state and local contributions. Outdoor recreation is integral to the exceptional quality of life enjoyed by New Hampshire's residents and visitors. It helps to attract new business, encourages young people to remain here after college to raise their families, and is critical to attracting tourists from all over the country and around the world which supports additional economic development in our state. There is no substitute for a healthy landscape that provides a wide range of healthy options to enjoy the outdoors while also offering healthy lifestyle amenities to encourage connected and locally sustainable communities.

We are very proud of the state's partnership with the National Park Service to deploy the grant funds provided through the Land and Water Conservation Fund to continue growing outdoor recreation opportunity in New Hampshire. We expect this SCORP to provide both helpful reference information as well as identifiable measurement tools to gauge the success of the goals outlined in the plan. Thank you to all those who participated in producing this plan. We hope you will find the 2013-2018 SCORP to be a valuable guide for creating expanded outdoor recreation opportunity throughout New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George M. Bald". The signature is stylized and cursive.

George M. Bald
Commissioner