



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of RESOURCES and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
172 Pembroke Road · P.O. Box 1856 · Concord, New Hampshire 03302-1856

March 15, 2017

The Honorable Sharon Carson, Chairman
and the Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee
New Hampshire State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 101
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 488 an act establishing a state parks advisory council

Dear Chairman Carson and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Department of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Parks and Recreation (the Division) thank you for the opportunity to **testify in full support of House Bill 488, an act establishing a state parks advisory council** (the Council). This bill would reinstate the State Park Advisory Council that was sunset by Chapter Law on June 30, 2016 (Ch. 256:2, Laws of 2011).

The Council was originally created in 2007 under SB 74 (Ch. 359, Laws of 2007) at the request of the Commission to Study the State Park System. Its purpose is to provide advice to the Division on the operation and development of the state park system, including on issues related to capital appropriations, leases and long-term agreements, and cultivating Friends Groups and volunteers. The Council's work is also guided by the Division's 2010 Ten-Year Strategic Development and Capital Improvement Plan. A brief history of the Council is provided in the attachment.

Council members provide important feedback on the Division's operations and policies including legislation, lease agreements, marketing, branding, staff uniforms, parks conditions, capital budget and improvement projects, signage and the general experience we provide. While the Division often reaches directly out to the public for feedback, the Council, as a subset of the general public, plays an extraordinarily valuable role in providing ongoing feedback.

The support and advice of the Council is one of the many factors that helped the State Park system get back on its feet. Participation in Council meeting and activities is excellent. In particular, the active participation of legislative members has served as an essential link between the Division and legislature.

We urge you to please support HB 488 to re-establish the state parks advisory council. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please let me know if we can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip A. Bryce".

Philip A. Bryce
Director

Enclosure

C: Jeffrey J. Rose, Commissioner

A Brief History of the State Park Advisory Council (the Council)

The origin of the Council starts with **SB 5, 2005 Session (Ch. 276, Laws of 2005)** that was passed in the NH State Legislature creating a commission to study the parks system:

“AN ACT establishing a commission to study the state park system.

“This bill establishes a commission to study the mission of the state park system and the division of parks and recreation, department of resources and economic development, including the continued efficacy of self-funding the state park system, the leasing of public lands and property to private interests and the circumstances under which such leasing is permissible, and the development of a long-term capital improvements plan for the state park system.”

As part of its final report, the Study Commission recommended the following:

Finding #5: Oversight and Advice

Recommendation 5.2 (page 8)

“A statewide advisory council consisting of both public and private members should be established as an extension of the study commission established in SB5. The council will provide advice to the Director of Parks, as well as act as an advocate for the park system going forward. The immediate responsibility of this advisory committee should be to help explain the recommendations in this report to the Legislature, general public, and key stakeholder groups.”

SB74-FN, 2007 Session (Ch. 359, Laws of 2007) enacted the Study Commission’s Findings:

“AN ACT relative to the operation and administration of the state park system.

“This bill establishes a bureau of historic sites in the division of parks and recreation, revises the state park system development plan, requires an audit of the division of parks and recreation, and establishes a state park system advisory council and legislative oversight committee (emphasis added).

“This bill is a request of the commission to study the state park system established by 2005, 276.”

Ch. 359:5 would repeal the advisory council effective June 30, 2010.

SB313, 2010 Session (Ch. 374, Laws of 2010) extended the Council repeal date:

“AN ACT extending the repeal date of the state park system advisory council, relative to field purchases and transfers of funds for the state park system and the bureau of trails, and imposing fees for the use of Jericho Mountain state park.

Ch. 374:1 amended Ch. 359:5 to revise the repeal date to June 30, 2012.

HB131, 2011 Session (Ch. 256, Laws of 2011) extended the Council repeal date:

“AN ACT relative to indemnification of volunteers performing duties in the state park system.”

Ch. 256:2 amended 2007, 359:5 as amended by 2010, 374:1 to revise the repeal date to June 30, 2016.