



Moose Brook State Park



Chapter 3: **Priorities**

Current and future trends nationwide and in New Hampshire provide relevant information for developing strategic priorities to connect people to the outdoors, promote healthier lifestyles; elevate New Hampshire's economic well-being; and conserve open landscape, natural, cultural, and wildlife resources now and into the future. The public engagement process for the 2013-2018 NH SCORP yielded the following key findings, which inform and support the 2013-2018 New Hampshire SCORP priorities:

- **Health and Quality of Life** – There is a growing appreciation for the benefits of outdoor recreation and the cost savings resulting from a livable communities focus. Communities that support quality of life initiatives can realize positive economic impacts.
- **Economic Development & Funding** – It is acknowledged that recreational opportunities contribute to economic vitality and attract businesses that support outdoor recreation initiatives. Adequate funding is vital for both facilities and lands, combined with public education about park and facility entrance fee uses.
- **Community Recreation, Children, and Youth** – Opportunities for recreation close to home and services for urban populations, immigrants, elderly, and youth are important. Leadership development opportunities for young people and partnerships with school districts for increased outdoor recreation participation are vital.
- **Connectivity – Places and People** – Connectivity of recreational site and trails for increased access for all users and provide awareness of environmental impact and safety concerns that can occur with multiple users. Active transportation corridors connecting community destinations can increase access to outdoor recreation for children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.
- **Communications and Outreach** – Cultivating volunteerism and developing partnerships to combine resources, talents, and knowledge. Creating a centralized source of information and education for users and private property owners, addressing the risk aversion of parents letting children play outdoors.
- **Stewardship** – Creating a uniform state trail signage system, implementing sustainability practices in stewardship plans and creating endowments for stewardship of outdoor lands and facilities.

America's Great Outdoors 2011 Report Highlights the Northern Forest

The Northern Forest covers some 30 million acres across New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, and New York. Its forests are diverse, ranging from the extensive broadleaf deciduous and mixed forests to montane and lowland spruce-fir and low-elevation forests of oak, pine, and hickory. Forests help define the region's character and are integral to its economy.

Federal partners have made notable investments in recent years through the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy program. Public-private conservation has enabled significant conservation in this region — conserved lands have increased from 4.3 million acres in 1997 to more than 6.5 million acres today.

Many opportunities remain to ensure that this largest remaining contiguous forest east of the Mississippi River continues to provide the products, outdoor recreation, and wildlife benefits that communities will continue to rely on for generations to come. *This project supports the AGO priorities of large landscape conservation and conservation of rural working lands.*



Crawford Notch State Park

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S SCORP PRIORITIES

Through a deliberative review of the findings from the public engagement process; analysis of existing state, regional, and national plans; and a study of trends impacting outdoor recreation, four strategic priorities have emerged for New Hampshire's SCORP to focus on over the next five years.

- Promote health and livability for all through connection to the outdoors
- Practice wise stewardship and conservation of natural resources
- Contribute to New Hampshire's economic vitality
- Educate multiple users, partners, and agency leadership

New Hampshire Listens - "How can our outdoor recreation areas become the best places for everyone to experience the natural wonders of New Hampshire?"

"How can state and local outdoor recreation areas help all of us, young and old, natives, and newcomers, be healthy and fit?"

-Community Conversation Questions from the "New Hampshire Listens" process



Milan Hill State Park

PRIORITY 1. CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE OUTDOORS

Children and Heart Disease - Six out of every ten overweight children already have at least one risk factor for heart disease.

Why is this a priority for New Hampshire?

Childhood obesity is growing at an alarming rate, and children are spending less and less time playing outdoors. A 2009 survey commissioned by KaBOOM!, a national nonprofit dedicated to bringing play back into the lives of children, included responses from 1,677 parents with children between the ages of 2-12. The survey found:

- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of parents report that their children do not have access to a community playground.
- Ninety-six percent (96%) of parents said playing outside was vital to keep children physically fit.

According to its 2011 BRFSS Update, DHHS reported that in 2009, 36.5 percent of NH adults were overweight, while 26.3 percent were obese. These rates are comparable to overweight and obesity estimates in US population.

An active lifestyle can help to reverse this trend that seems to be growing out of control. “Active” outdoor recreation, which includes bicycling, camping, fishing, hunting, paddling sports, snow sports, wildlife viewing, trail-running, hiking, and climbing not only contributes \$646 billion annually to the U.S. economy, but is a vital component in addressing our nation’s growing public health concerns.

The goal of the 2011 New Hampshire Recreation and Conservation Leaders Survey was to gather as much information as possible regarding outdoor recreation and land conservation planning needs and management priorities. The survey identified the top planning priorities for outdoor recreation and conservation, as outlined in *Table 9*.

Freedom to Roam is Diminishing - Studies show that the freedom to explore and improvise play has been reduced dramatically. The area in which children are free to roam has shrunk by 89% in 20 years due to loss of open space, population growth, and urban sprawl. According to the US Forest Service, an estimated 6,000 acres of open space is lost each day.

Table 9: Planning Priorities for Outdoor Recreation and Conservation in New Hampshire

Planning Priorities for Outdoor Recreation and Conservation	High priority	Medium priority	Total
Encourage keeping private lands open to the public for outdoor recreation opportunities	66%	21%	87%
Encourage partnerships and cooperation between diverse users of recreational land	59%	28%	87%
Focus on collaboration, volunteerism and environmental education particularly for youth, in developing and maintaining outdoor recreation areas	42%	44%	86%
Encourage local development that supports connectivity of open space for recreational and cultural uses	56%	28%	84%
Cultivate a new generation of users (i.e. under-served audiences) by increasing awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities	48%	33%	81%
Focus efforts statewide toward development of and access to outdoor recreational opportunities that connect people to where they live and work	40%	41%	81%

Additional priorities were identified by survey respondents, and many were supported by citizen participation *New Hampshire Listens: Statewide Community Conversations on Outdoor Recreation in New Hampshire*, conducted by the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire. Priorities were identified in the following categories:

- **Trails**

Improving and developing trails with a focus on connectivity with existing trails and newly developed trails. Equestrian concerns included a lack of support for equestrian use on trails and public lands, a lack of understanding about equestrian use and its impact.

- **Access**

Providing access to outdoor recreation opportunities for all users was a common theme in the community conversations. Participants were concerned about access to private lands from landowners, easier access for seniors and the disabled population, access related to fee structure, providing access close to home and work, parking and connections with public transportation, and ensuring permanent access to outdoor recreation lands. Equestrian users expressed concern relative to trail conditions and shrinking access due to loss of Class VI roads throughout the state. Conversely, Fish and Game Survey respondents expressed satisfaction with the level of access afforded for fishing, boating and hunting.

Connecting people to the outdoors through trails, open spaces, and recreation facilities is encouraged by providing easy to access information and close to home opportunities that are safe and convenient.

Top Reasons Why New Hampshire Residents Visit State Parks

- Wanted to get away
- Family tradition
- Good value for the money
- Many things to do
- Convenient/nearby

-2011 New Hampshire Division of Parks and Recreation 10-Year Strategic Development and Capital Improvement Plan

As stated in the Center for Disease Control newsletter, *Vital Signs - More People Walk to Better Health (August 2012)* “more than 145 million adults now include walking as part of a physically active lifestyle. More than 6 to 10 people walk for transportation or for fun, relaxation, or exercise, or for activities such as walking the dog. The percentage of people who report walking at least once for 10 minutes or more in the previous week rose from 56% (2005) to 62% (2010).” Some points listed in the report are:

- Walkable communities result in more physical activity.
- People need safe, convenient places to walk.
- People need to know where places to walk in their communities exist that are safe and convenient.
- Walking routes in and near neighborhoods encourage people to walk.
- People walk to get to places they want to go when places are nearby.

Additional recommendations from The “*Guide to Community Preventive Services*” include:

- Creating more places for physical activity with information and outreach that lets people know where these are.
- Considering walkability in community design.
- Using community-wide campaigns to provide health education and social support of physical activity.

Connect People to the Outdoors in New England, a 2011 Report to the National Park Service, US Environmental Protection Agency and Commission on Land Conservation of the New England Governor’s Conference, outlines seven pathways on land and water envisioned to connect people throughout New England by experiencing outdoor recreation. Supporting this important vision creates the necessary alignment among national, regional, and state values for conservation, public health, recreation, and livability.

Connect People to the Outdoors in New England - In a bold vision for the future, these pathways and blueways (river trails) will serve to connect four out of five people in New England:

- Androscoggin River
- Blackstone River
- Champlain Valley
- Connecticut River
- East Coast Greenway
- Merrimack River
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail

Five out of seven pathways weave through New Hampshire.

New ADA guidelines

On September 14, 2010 the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued an amended regulation implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 2010 Standards). On March 15, 2011 the amended Act became effective and, for the first time in history, includes recreation environment design requirements. Compliance with the regulations must be effective March 15, 2012. This includes design and construction requirements and the development of a three-year transition plan. By March 15, 2015 implementation of the three-year transition plan must be complete.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has listed on their website proposed new guidelines for people with disabilities. Specific information can be obtained at www.ADAinformation.org or www.ada.gov. These guidelines will ensure the following outdoor recreation amenities are compliant for accessibility:

- Campsites
- Picnic shelters
- Boating areas/ramps
- Trails
- Beaches

The Role of the ADA

On July 26, 1990, the United States officially recognized the rights of people with disabilities by enacting the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA). The provisions of the ADA state, “**People with disabilities are allowed equal access to all services provided by local, state, and federal governments, including recreational services. The ADA allows full and equal access by persons with disabilities to any place of public accommodation, governmental or private.**”

To determine the accessibility of facilities, agencies should conduct a review of facilities using the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).

- How a community interprets and implements the guidelines of the ADA regarding parks and recreation programs and services for children, youth, and adults with disabilities ultimately depends upon the philosophy of staff and how accepting they are of people with disabilities.
- Some organizations provide a basic level of service as per the law and other communities embrace the notion of accessibility and choose to exceed what is expected.

New Hampshire Listens - “How can outdoor recreation facilities partner with schools, community recreation centers, and programs like Scouts, church groups, and others to enhance outdoor experiences?”

- *Community Conversation Questions from “New Hampshire Listens”*



Rhododendron State Park

PRIORITY 2. CONSISTENT STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION

Why is this a priority for New Hampshire?

The New Hampshire Listens report notes “...*outdoor recreation is an important issue in New Hampshire. The public has strong connections to outdoor facilities and lands used for outdoor recreation, and therefore, have a stake in future plans. Outdoor recreation supporters would like to see an expansion and strengthening of outdoor recreation opportunities and resources to benefit residents, visitors, communities, economic development, and future generations.*”

Most Important Natural Resource Issues Facing New Hampshire

- Water Quality
- Habitat Loss

-2010 NH Fish and Game Department Survey

With the possible development of a Federal level 21st Century Conservation Corps (modeled after the historic Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC]) to engage youth and returning military personnel in conservation initiatives, New Hampshire may have opportunities to maintain existing conservation, water, and cultural resources, while supporting job creation.

Given this statement of public preferences for outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities, it is vital that stewardship and conservation of wildlife and natural resources remain a top priority into the future to ensure that carrying capacity is properly managed for resource protection and sustained access for multiple uses. This approach is supported by responses from the New Hampshire Listens process and the Recreation and Conservation Leaders survey.

- **Land Conservation**

The use of volunteers was discussed by most participant groups in connection with on-going and long-term stewardship of state and local recreation, open space, and natural lands. There is concern about whether there will be volunteer stewards in the future if the next generation (youth) are not interested, acclimated, or comfortable in the outdoors.

- **Stewardship**

There is concern about resources, both human and financial, for the future stewardship and maintenance of outdoor recreation lands, facilities, and the built environment. There is a strong sense that long-term plans for stewardship must be in place.

- **Partnerships**

Participants put a high value on the importance of partnerships, collaboration, and cooperation. Partnerships can be created among user groups; local and state entities; within state departments dealing with lands and recreation; towns, schools, and local organizations; government entities; and the business community, federal government, state government, and private conservation groups. Partnerships are viewed as a way to strengthen resources and limit conflict.

- **User Satisfaction**

Some of the most popular recreational activities in the state (e.g. walking, wildlife watching, hiking, etc.) are highly dependent on open space and tracts of undeveloped land. The SCORP outreach results show that residents view the protection of natural landscapes and natural areas as highly important management objectives, and felt that setting aside natural areas from development was either a very or most important management objective of the state.

- **Water Quality**

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Water Division conducted a study including a public engagement process, to determine the economic impact and importance of clean water to the state's long term economic vitality. Conclusively, clean water is an important aspect of why New Hampshire is attractive to residents and tourists, as well as vital to fish, wildlife, and environmental health.

PRIORITY 3. ECONOMIC VITALITY

Why is this a priority for New Hampshire?

Promoting outdoor recreation events, programs, parks, and facilities that attract day travelers and overnight visitors is a vital component of developing a positive economic impact for New Hampshire. Creating new and strengthening existing partnerships with businesses such as chambers of commerce, recreation equipment vendors, and guide services enhances the economic benefits of outdoor recreation for all.

Parks and Property Values - In a 2005 study, *Real Estate Impact Review of Parks and Recreation*, Dr. John Crompton of Texas A&M University estimated that property values abutting or fronting a passive park are 20 percent higher than similar property not situated near a park. Parks have a substantial, positive impact on property values within 500 feet, and the study found that 57 percent of respondents want to live near a park.

New Hampshire State Parks

According to the 2011 New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development Annual Report, annual earnings from state parks are between \$5.8 and \$6.5 million. This range considers the weather dependent nature of state park visitor preferences. It is estimated that state parks' contribution to New Hampshire's economy is \$545 million through spending and tax revenues.

In a 2009 report conducted for New Hampshire State parks by Applied Economic Research, *The Economic Impact of Visitors to the New Hampshire State Park System: A Preliminary Estimate*, spending by state park visitors provides direct support for more than 8,000 jobs in restaurants, accommodations, recreation, retail trade, services, transportation, and information.

Quality of Life = Economic Health - One of the key findings of the Recreation and Conservation Leaders survey is that outdoor recreation is seen as adding to New Hampshire's quality of life and is a contributing factor in the economic health of the state.

Tourism and Local Economies

Outdoor recreation and tourism have played a key role in New Hampshire's economic development at the local and state level, and will continue in this trend. Many of New Hampshire's small communities are located near popular outdoor recreation, wildlife and natural resources, and cultural sites, such as the White Mountain National Forest, ski areas, water parks, and major concert venues. Income derived from the lodging, food, and hospitality industries support both rural and urban economies.

There are numerous economic benefits of trails and greenways. Studies have shown that trail users spend money on food, beverages, camping, hotels, and bike rentals, which stimulates the local economy.

Top rated experiences reported in the 2005 US Fish and Wildlife Service Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge Stakeholder Survey:

- Experiencing a serene environment
- Viewing birds on or near the water
- Being in natural, undeveloped lands

Lake Umbagog is an example of integrated multi-level collaboration among local communities, and state and federal agencies for wildlife and water resource protection and economic benefits.

Equestrian Economics

According to a 2004 survey of more than 1,000 equine owners conducted by the New Hampshire Horse Council, the sum of all equine-related expenditures by New Hampshire equine owners in 2003 was about \$61 million. The most common activity among equine users in New Hampshire is pleasure riding and trail riding. State parks and beaches were the most popular places for equine riding, in particular Bear Brook State Park.

Snowmobile Economics

“The Economic Impact of Spending by Snowmobilers on New Hampshire’s Economy 2010-2011,” a report prepared for The New Hampshire Snowmobile Association by The Institute for New Hampshire Studies at Plymouth State University, acknowledges the past and current value of snowmobiling in the state. “Snowmobiling has been an important winter sport in New Hampshire since the early 1970’s,” and, “has become one of the key components of winter tourism for Coos and Grafton counties.”

In addition, the report found the following:

- The sport of snowmobiling delivers an economic impact of \$586 million to the State of New Hampshire annually.
- Spending by snowmobilers was 0.3 percent of the gross state product and more than 5.2 percent of all travelers spending in the state.
- Snowmobile traveler spending supported 2,394 direct full and part-time jobs, while indirect spending supported an additional 680 full and part-time jobs.
- Average spending per visitor per day in New Hampshire was \$79 per resident and \$114 from non-residents. In addition to spending on trips, each snowmobiler spends \$1,307 annually and each out-of-state snowmobiler spent \$1,179 annually on equipment, clothing, club membership, insurance and state license fees.
- There were 56,645 registered snowmobiles in New Hampshire from May 2010 to April 2011. New Hampshire Fish & Game reports 22,871 New Hampshire households and 10,450 out-of-state households registered snowmobiles during the 2010-2011 season.



Pawtuckaway State Park

The Economic Value of Clean Water

A multi-year study begun in 2001 and commissioned by the New Hampshire Lakes Association on the economic value of New Hampshire's lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds revealed the following:

- The total sales generated by recreational uses (i.e., boating, fishing, swimming) of New Hampshire's freshwaters and public drinking water supplies, range from \$1.1 billion to \$1.5 billion annually.
- Annually, there are approximately 14.7 million visitor days spent boating, fishing, and swimming in New Hampshire by both residents and non-residents. These visitor days represent roughly 65 percent of the state's summer visitor days and roughly 25 percent of the state's annual visitor days.
- Days spent boating, fishing, and swimming collectively generate approximately \$320 million to \$340 million in annual household income and 9,000 to 15,000 full-time and part-time jobs.
- One-half to two-thirds of visitors would decrease or cease their visiting days to a particular site if they perceived a decline in water clarity and purity, natural views and scenery, crowding levels, and water levels and flows.



Winslow State Park

America’s Great Outdoors Report Celebrates Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge - The Connecticut River, New England’s largest, flows 410 miles from its source at New Hampshire’s northern tip to its mouth on Long Island Sound. Along the way the river drains a 7.2-million-acre watershed in four states – New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, the only multi-state watershed unit in the National Wildlife Refuge System, has protected 35,134 acres of land in targeted areas in all four states, including 7,400 acres in the Mohawk River and Pondicherry divisions of northern New Hampshire.

The USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program has also been a critical contributor to protecting land in the Connecticut Valley through working forest-conservation easements, most notably the 171,000-acre Connecticut Lakes project in New Hampshire that protects the river’s headwaters. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail traverses the Connecticut Valley, and the National Park Service has acquired land and scenic easements along the trail corridor. The National Park Service also manages the 150-acre Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish.



Pillsbury State Park

PRIORITY 4. EDUCATION ETHICS AND BENEFITS

Why is this a priority for New Hampshire?

In a 2011 report to President Barack Obama, America's Great Outdoors proposed an overall goal to "reconnect Americans, especially children, to America's rivers and waterways, landscapes of national significance, ranches, farms and forests, great parks, and coasts and beaches." This goal closely parallels recommendations in "*Connect People to the Outdoors in New England*" an initiative of the New England Governor's Conference (NEGC) established in 2010. The objectives for the New England region, many of which pertain to educational activities, are:

- **Conservation Corps and Employment Opportunities**
Provide employment opportunities in the outdoors through the creation of a regional partnership with third-sector programs organized and promoted by New England's many youth and adult conservation and education organizations.
- **Livability**
Explore opportunities to develop community and urban gardens, serving as both a source of food as well as creating educational opportunities.
- **Recreational Opportunities**
Helping communities along New England's river corridors develop a wide range of recreational opportunities.
- **Environmental Education**
Collaborate in developing programs that introduce the public to the outdoors and generate awareness in the natural sciences.
- **Healthy Outcomes**
Provide opportunities through recreation, agriculture, and education that will contribute to healthy lifestyles for Americans.

According to *New Hampshire Listens* participants, education should focus on youth and parents, recreation users, and private property owners. It was stressed that many organizations currently focus on environmental education. Education was also closely linked with developing partnerships, especially with local schools and environmental/conservation organizations. Education was also noted as important among different user groups to help each group understand the other.

Challenges Facing New Hampshire Recreation and Conservation Leaders

When asked to list their top challenges in the next five years, overwhelmingly, recreation and conservation leaders identified funding of current and future projects and overall financial support for recreation lands, facilities, and programs as their top challenge.

- Recreation and conservation leaders were asked to indicate the sources of operating funds for their organizations, and responses show diverse approaches to supporting operations. Some respondents also listed endowments, fundraising events, and membership dues as funding sources.
- Federal and state funds were identified by 60 percent of respondents, indicating that LWCF funding is a vital component of recreation and conservation organizations overall funding strategies. Private donations (67 percent) followed by appropriated funds (63 percent), were identified by a slightly higher percentage of respondents.

Additional Challenges Facing New Hampshire Recreation and Conservation Leaders

- **Projects:** Initiation and completion of trails, parks, bridges, athletic fields and land acquisition projects.
- **Education:** Educating users, potential users, and private landowners on opportunities, rights, and responsibilities with recreation lands and facilities.
- **Volunteers:** The immediate need for volunteers and concern about attracting volunteers in the future.
- **Government:** The political atmosphere, the need for legislative support and political leadership were cited. All levels of government – local, state, and federal were seen as a challenge.
- **User Conflicts:** Managing and reducing conflict with different user groups on recreation lands.

Making Tangible Contributions – Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Lifestyles

While there is strong public support for outdoor recreation and well-developed strategies for effecting positive change in the health and well-being of New Hampshire citizens and visitors and protection of wildlife and natural resources, challenges still exist. Working together on targeted strategic actions, federal, state, and local agencies along with the business community and citizen advocates can achieve proactive change toward healthier citizens, visitors, communities, and the environment.



Franconia Notch State Park