



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
 DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION
 172 Pembroke Road Concord, New Hampshire 03301
 Phone: (603) 271-3556 Fax: (603) 271-3553
 Web: www.nhstateparks.org

The Honorable Ken Weyler, Chairman
 Fiscal Committee of the General Court
 State House
 Concord, New Hampshire 03301

His Excellency Governor Christopher T. Sununu
 And the Honorable Council
 State House
 Concord, New Hampshire 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

1. Pursuant to RSA 14:30-a, VI, authorize the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) to accept and expend \$22,654,407 of American Rescue Plan (ARP) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (FRF), for the purpose of infrastructure investments to the State of New Hampshire’s Parks and Recreation and State Land Reservation system, effective upon Fiscal Committee and Governor and Council approval for the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023. **Funding Source: 100% Federal Funds**

2. Pursuant to the provision of RSA 124:15, I, Positions Restricted, and subject to approval of item 1 above, authorize DNCR to establish one full-time temporary position using ARP FRF in support of infrastructure investments into the State Parks and Recreation Systems and State Land Reservation system effective upon Fiscal Committee and Governor and Council approval for the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023. **100% Federal Funds.**

Funds are to be budgeted in FY2022 and FY2023 in the following account:

03-35-35-XXXXXX-24XX0000 – ARPA DNCR Capital Project Funds

Class	Description	FY22-FY23 Adjusted Authorized	Requested Action	FY22-FY23 Revised Adjusted Authorized
000-40XXXX		\$0	(\$22,654,407)	(\$22,654,407)
	TOTAL REVENUE	\$0	(\$22,654,407)	(\$22,654,407)

020-500200	Current Expenses	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000
022-500257	Rent - Leases Other than State	\$0	\$649,000	\$649,000
029-500290	Inter-Agency Transfers	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000
030-500300	Equipment New Replacement	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
037-500177	Technology - Hardware	\$0	\$1,500	\$1,500
038-500173	Technology - Software	\$0	\$1,500	\$1,500
039-500180	Telecommunications	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000
040-501587	Indirect Costs	\$0	\$82,150	\$82,150
041-500801	Audit Fund Set Aside	\$0	\$2,257	\$2,257
042-500620	Additional Fringe Benefits	\$0	\$10,000	\$10,000
048-500226	Contractual Maint. B&G	\$0	\$500,000	\$500,000
059-500117	Temp Full Time	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000
060-500602	Benefits	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000
102-500731	Contracts for Program Services	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
103-502664	Contracts for Oper Service	\$0	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$0	\$22,654,407	\$22,654,407

EXPLANATION

Pursuant to US Treasury 31 CFR Part 35, RIN 1505-AC77, the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund (FRF) established under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allows New Hampshire State funding for capital improvements to the State Park system and State Land reservation infrastructure as allowable uses of FRF funds to respond to directly the public health emergency and as aid to an impacted industry within tourism, travel and hospitality. Additionally some of these projects are also allowable as water or sewer infrastructure improvements.

A Declaration of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic was issued by Governor Sununu and the President on 3/13/20 followed by the Governor's Emergency Orders:

New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu has ordered all businesses and other organizations that do not provide Essential Services to close their physical workplaces and facilities to workers, customers, and the public and cease all in person operations as of 11:59PM on March 27, 2020,

Exceptions to the order included getting out doors and outdoor recreation:

New Hampshire residents shall stay at home or in their place of residence with the following exceptions (among others):

Leaving home to get fresh air or exercise....

Leaving home for outdoor recreation...

State Parks and state park employees were also an exception to the order:

The services identified in EXHIBIT A are hereby designated as "Essential Services."

Additional services may be designated as Essential and added to EXHIBIT A.

Exhibit A included:

Workers who support the operation, maintenance and public safety of state parks, forests, wildlife management areas, water supply protection lands, and other critical natural resources

In a memo sent to Parks staff on April 3, 2020 to encourage employees as they were opening up their facilities at a time when many other state employees were working from home, the following quote was shared from Pennsylvania State Parks:

In these times of mental, physical and economic distresses, our direct access to nature and its proven restorative properties is more important to us, and more worthy of safeguarding than ever.

Staff were also reminded in the memo that:

We are caring for the public in a time of need. While medical professionals have been charged with maintaining physical health during this crisis, we have been charged with maintaining our citizens' mental health.

NH State Parks saw unprecedented visitation when the pandemic began. For example, on March 21st, the parking lot at headquarters at Monadnock State Park was overflowing with 400 cars (representing approximately 1,000 hikers headed onto a single trail). The first day of spring was March 19th.

In spite of limitations on the number of campground sites that were available even after the 50% limitation was lifted, campground occupancy was up 7% over the previous year's overall, up 14% in August and 35% in September! These increases occurred even though five campgrounds were closed due to lack of staff, campground capacity limitations were still in place, **only** existing reservations were honored for cabins and dry camping was not permitted at Hampton South RV Park.

In spite of limiting capacity in the day use parks to support social distancing through the entire season (up to 50%) and stay at home messaging for out of state visitors, day use visitation was greater than previous years for the sites that were open. For example, visitation was only 9% off previous years at Sunapee State Park Beach even though we were limiting visitation on any given day to 50% capacity.

Many Parks visitors were very pleased with their experience last year:

"All of the park staff members were wonderful! They were always around and very helpful. I felt safe during our stay, as they were very aware of and keep up with safety procedures."

"Just keep up the good work. We really appreciated the effort and commitment required by everyone to pull off a safe experience for our family during these most trying times!"

"One of the best campgrounds I have ever been to. The cleanliness was really impressive."

Parks are a key economic driver. Estimates are that over half of visitors are from out of state – in some parks as high as 90% - supporting our tourism industry. Park investment can result in corresponding business investment. OHRV businesses to support visitors to Jericho Mountain State Park and the investments across the boulevard from the recently redeveloped Hampton Beach State Park are just two examples.

In a December 2017 survey report by Stay Work Play, three of the six reasons why young professionals (age 20-40) stay in New Hampshire are: the Quality of the Environment; the Quality of Parks and Recreation Areas; and, the Proximity To Outdoor Recreation Areas

Results from an image perception research conducted for the NH Division of Tourism and Development indicated: “...it is clear that New Hampshire is strongly perceived as a beautiful outdoor destination.” The state parks are an essential component of the tourism, hospitality and travel industries in New Hampshire. Visitors to the state parks also utilize other aspects of the tourism, hospitality and travel industries. In fact, one of the four purposes of the state park system under state statute (RSA 216:1) is “To encourage and support tourism and related economic activity within the state. RSA 216-A:3-f also requires that the directors of parks and travel and tourism consult on parks promotion and “This program shall be coordinated with the state’s general tourism promotion efforts.”

The purpose of the request for investment in state parks is to ensure facilities are in a condition to be open and providing services to the public, to increase the capacity at campgrounds to meet demand, to accommodate RV’s, and to provide a safe experience for the increasing numbers of visitors.

Project Funding Specifics:

Mt Washington Water System Upgrade \$1,020,000

- Continue to offer visitor services at the Sherman Adams Building to over 300,000 visitors who hike the mountain or travel to the summit privately run Cog Railway or Auto Road and support the Mt. Washington Observatory museum and research.

Roofing and Repairs \$1,550,000

- Address deferred maintenance across the park system to ensure parks continue to be safe and available to the public and maintain the integrity of the structures. In addition to roofing, provides resources to: repair system failures such as water, septic and heating; make utility upgrades; and address non-reimbursable storm damage.

Investments in State Parks \$20,000,000 - Itemized as follows:

- Mt. Washington Sewage Treatment Plan replacement **\$3,000,000**
- Mt. Washington, Sherman Adams Building repair and emergency doors **\$1,475,000**
 - o Continue to offer visitor services at the Sherman Adams Building to over 300,000 visitors who hike the mountain or travel to the summit by the Cog Railway or Auto road.
 - o Maintain integrity of building to support Sherman Adams Building to support public services and make improvements to ensure compliance with life safety codes.
- Cannon Mountain Station Sewage Treatment System **\$1,200,000**
 - o Continue to offer visitor services and support private concessionaire’s operations at the Tram Summit building in Franconia Notch State Park.
- Franconia Notch, Highway signs and message boards **\$100,000**
 - o Install missing signage, upgrade existing signage, and install message boards to communicate safety and venue messaging to park visitors and hikers.
- Ft. Stark, General improvements **\$615,000**
 - o Redevelopment and improvement projects including security and safety improvements such as grate repair and fencing, entrance and parking lot improvements, 2 family bathrooms in a new building adjacent to the OMS building, extension of municipal water service to the toilet building, a new septic system for the toilet building, demolition of the harbor entrance control post building, and the cleaning and securing of bunker tunnels, rooms, and entryways.

- Rye Harbor, Ragged Neck upgrades **\$250,000**
 - o Design, engineering and preliminary site work for facility upgrades to bathroom, pavilion and cottage.

- Campgrounds (As listed below) - **\$7,787,000**
 - Entails replacement of obsolete infrastructure, addition of infrastructure, expansion of campsites and supporting facilities (i.e. bathhouses) to support existing visitors and meet the demand for camping experiences.
 - o Greenfield, Water system distribution/piping replacement, move electrical wires underground \$270,000
 - o Hampton Beach RV Park Electric Upgrades \$347,000
 - o Ellacoya RV Park Electric Upgrades \$475,000
 - o Jericho Mountain RV dump station tie in to existing leach field \$85,000
 - o Crawford Notch, Dry River Campground expansion \$1,480,000
 - o Pawtuckaway, Big Island expansion, 25 new sites \$390,000
 - o Bear Brook, Catamount Pond area horse campground \$695,000
 - o Mollidgewock, 1/2 mile road to access high ground of park, with new tent and cabin sites, park office and visitors center \$2,640,000
 - o Jericho Mountain new camping area near beach, cabins and RV sites \$1,405,000

 - Coleman Lodges, Sprinkler system and renovations **\$800,000**
 - o Entails renovation of buildings at former youth services site to make available for overnight stays by motorized and non-motorized visitors and accommodate events. Investment supported by the Local Chamber of Commerce.

 - Bear Brook, Bear Hill Camp revitalization **\$2,400,000**
 - o Entails renovation of former 4-H camp buildings to provide additional access to overnight stays at the park, support family and group outings and other events in the "Pods" and dining hall, and preserve historically significant buildings.

 - Fire Tower Renovation and Reconstruction - **\$2,373,000**

In 1937 the NH Forestry Commission evolved into the NH Forestry and Recreation Commission. This change was significant in that it signaled the importance of recreation to our NH economy and it embraced the importance of multiple use natural resource management. From this date forward, our fire towers and staff have evolved to offer much more than the basic detection of wildfires.

While the primary role of the Forest Fire Lookout has always been fire detection, our staff are cognizant of the fact that they are providing much more in today's complex and changing world. NH Fire towers have become landmarks and destinations for hikers and recreation enthusiasts. Similar to a lighthouse protecting ships from a rocky coastline, fire towers serve as a beacon of light in the forest. Whether you are a fire tower historian or simply a hiker seeking to cross off another peak from your bucket list, fire towers have seen a resurgence of support and interest throughout the country, with thousands of visitors hiking to the sites in New Hampshire annually. The reasons are many; solitude, personal renewal, self-achievement, beautiful scenery, immaculate views, experience nature, and in general, a sincere appreciation for responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

In 2005 NH initiated a Fire Tower Quest program to reward hikers who visit our 15 active fire towers. If they visit 5 of them and record the date of each visit they can return the visitor register and they will receive a certificate of achievement and a complimentary Tower Quest patch. This program has experienced continued interest from hikers and family groups with over 250 individuals completing the quest by visiting at least 5 of the Fire Towers during the 2020 season. We expect this interest and program growth to continue as more people choose to recreate outdoors and become aware of the program. With the investment of \$2 Million NH's Fire Tower Quest program will have opportunity to grow in popularity-taking some pressure off of other, more widely known hiking destinations that have become overcrowded.

Before we can push for more Fire Tower activities, we must make some structural upgrades. 7 of the 15 fire towers have been identified as needing comprehensive work for continued staff and visitor safety and enjoyment. With some restoration work, 7 historic tower watchman's cabins have been identified as locations we could rent out to the public as overnight destinations. Additional maintenance and repairs to assure access and availability for outdoor adventurers are anticipated and would be covered in this overall "Fire Tower Restoration Project".

Funds are budgeted as follows:

Class 020 – Current Expenses – office supplies, paper and printer ink for staff and own force labor supply needs to support program

Class 022 – Rents – Leases – Equipment rental and leasing for site work with own force labor

Class 029 – Interagency Transfers – Funding of DD&M staff support in Commissioner's Office

Class 030 – Equipment – Office furniture for staff

Class 037 – Technology, Hardware – laptop, monitors and docking station for staff

Class 038 – Technology, Software – standard software required for new staff

Class 039 – Telecommunications – phone for new staff

Class 040 – Indirect Expenses per agency approved Indirect Cost rate

Class 041 – Audit Fund Set Aside – at a rate of .01%

Class 042 – Additional Fringe Benefits – post retirements costs for staff

Class 048 – Contractual maintenance Buildings and Grounds – Maintenance projects

Class 059 – Temp Full Time – for one temporary full-time position requested above

Class 060 – Benefits – for temporary full-time position requested above

Class 102 – Contracts for Program Services – Contracted professional services as needed to support architectural and engineering design

Class 103 – Contracts for Operational Services – Contracted services to perform various facility and infrastructure work.

The following information is provided in accordance with the Comptroller's instructional memorandum dated September 21, 1981:

1) List of Personnel involved:

One full-time temporary Public Works Project Manager II Position # 9TXXXX

2) Nature, need and duration:

The period of performance runs until December 31, 2026.

3) Relationship to existing agency programs: Supports ongoing Design, Development and Maintenance project program

4) Has similar program been requested of the Legislature and denied? No

5) Why wasn't funding included in the agency's budget request?

It was not known that these funds would be available at the time the agency established its FY22/FY23 biennial budget.

6) Can portions of the grant funds be utilized for other purposes?

These funds can only be used for the purpose of the grant award.

7) Estimate the funds required to continue these positions:

The plan is for this position to be funded through FY25, the estimated cost for years FY24 and FY25 is \$150,000.

8) Geographic Area Served:

Statewide

9) Sources of Funds:

American Rescue Plan State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

In the even that Federal Funds become no longer available, General Funds will not be requested to support this program.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L Stewart,
Commissioner