

STATEMENT BY GEORGE BALD
TO THE MT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 27, 2002

As you know, in July 2001, Okemo requested that the state consider an expansion of their lease boundary on the Westerly side of Mt. Sunapee Ski area. Pursuant to the authority vested in me by Chapter 134, Laws 1998, I would now like to explain how I intend to proceed with this request.

The State and Okemo have enjoyed a good working relationship to date. When we faced issues of concern in the creation of the original Master Development Plan required by the terms of the lease, we were able to arrive at solutions that protected the environmental integrity of the old growth forest present on the leasehold while allowing Okemo to make the changes and investments they believed necessary to ensure the ski area's economic success.

As a result of Okemo's request for an expansion of the lease boundary, I have heard from local citizens, municipal officials, economic development entities, environmental interests, and of course you, the Advisory Committee. I believe we again have a situation in which a careful balancing of interests is needed, and sufficient time for a thoughtful process to unfold.

Therefore, today I am announcing that I will make my recommendation on the expansion of the lease boundary, to the Governor & Council, only after the following items are completed:

1) Okemo will reopen the Master Development Plan or create a new 5-Year Master Development Plan that will include plans for the use of the additional land in the area created by the expansion of the lease boundary. The proposed plan will encompass all proposed development activity associated with their management of the ski area, and any adjacent land Okemo intends to develop. The new or revised plan must then be reviewed and approved through the process required by the Lease and Operating Agreement.

2) Okemo will involve local citizens, businesses, the Planning Boards of Goshen and Newbury, all abutters, as well as the Regional Planning Commission, in their preparation of the new or revised Master Development Plan. Public involvement will further be sought in accordance with the Public Involvement and Oversight Policy, adopted August 31, 1998.

3) Okemo will identify a parcel of land adjacent to the Mt Sunapee/Pillsbury Greenway of at least 100 acres. The property will be acquired by Okemo and donated to the State of New Hampshire for inclusion in the Greenway. As I stated when I approved the original Master Development Plan in the fall of 2000, the Department is committed to expanding the boundaries of Mount Sunapee State Park by purchasing adjacent properties. This process presents an opportunity to move forward with that vision.

I would like to thank the members of the Mt. Sunapee Advisory Committee for their thoughtful suggestions and helpful advice on how we should proceed.