

Mt. Washington Commission Meeting
December 13, 2013 – AMC Highland Center, Crawford Notch, NH
Brief Notes – December 16, 2013

Advance Preparation Take-Aways & Themes

- The 1970 Master Plan is worth reading carefully
- The ongoing need for a lot of capital investment
 - A future vision for capital investments is important
 - The hostile environment has significant implications for infrastructure maintenance and improvements...and is a significant cost driver
- The value of productive partnerships
 - Public-private cooperation
- The impact of Mt Washington on the local economy
- The commission and the summit has a long and rich history
- This is a truly unique recreational asset and fragile environment
 - Core responsibilities have remained constant
 - Stewardship of summit (infrastructure, landscape)
 - Visitor experience
 - Carrying capacity
- Management of the park and summit is complex
 - Resources for managing are generally limited/constrained
- There is a balance of conflict, conflict resolution and cooperation
- Awareness of Mt. Washington State Park is higher among those in close proximity
- Serving the public while protecting the resource is the main priority
 - Guest experience is a key driver
 - Research is an important function
- The number of people at the summit has grown continually over time
 - There are constraints (space, environment, etc.)
 - Question of carrying capacity and guest experience

Threats

What are the threats facing each of the Commission members and what are the implications for Mt. Washington State Park?

- Increasing number of people on the summit
- Increasing number of hiker issues
 - Unprepared, off season
 - Increased need for search and rescue operations
- Changing and intense weather patterns
- Customer safety and legal issues, e.g.
 - life/safety regulatory concerns
 - Fire
 - Sewage treatment
 - Tank farm
- Overall financial health of the economy and impact on...
 - Customers

- Partners on the summit
- State park
- State park financial model – bottom line drives value of parks to system
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Opportunities

What are the opportunities facing each of the Commission members and what are the implications for Mt. Washington State Park?

- Summit as a visitor experience – many opportunities to improve this
- Position Mt. Washington as “the” NH Icon
- Capturing international visitors market share/customer share
- Technology developments provide opportunity to dramatically expand visibility, customer experience, e.g.
 - Web-based and social media marketing
 - Interpretive uses
- Mt. Washington proximity to population centers
- Mt. Washington proximity to other mountains, natural resources and recreation facilities
- Mt. Washington Fund means there is more flexibility and control of funds (than for other parks in the system)
 - Hampton Beach study example

Strengths

What are the strengths of the each Commission member that they bring to the Mt. Washington State Park?

- Nationally and internationally significant resource
- Observatory improvements
- MW Commission members
 - Marketing capability and savvy of the various partners
 - Reputation and visibility of partners
 - Collective abilities of group
- Collaborative nature of the MWC
 - Sense of shared vision and goals
 - Ability to work together to manage resources
- Forest service as a resource manager
- Weather observing capacity – huge value to public, research community

Weaknesses

What are the weaknesses of each Commission member that they bring to the Mt. Washington State Park?

- Aging and deteriorating infrastructure
- Summit as a “visitor experience” unto itself (vs the adventure of getting there)
 - Customer education, interpretation and exhibits needed
- Space constraints
- Mt. Washington State Park is woefully underfunded

Additional Information Needed for Planning

- Need to better understand and utilize access points
- Need to better understand the public (legislative) funding model
- Need to better understand carrying capacity
- Develop a bold, comprehensive vision and approach that can leverage all partners
- Engineering studies once vision is identified
- Differentiate between “no brainer” necessary improvements vs long-term, future vision improvements
- Operating information and data from partners and the park
- Timeline – keep momentum
- Be willing to seek funding for development of a shared plan
- Look at 2010 and see what might be translated into action sooner than later
- Explore collaboration with Franconia Notch (for overall North Country benefit)
- Review Hampton Beach study as an example
- AMC Economic Impact Report

Commision Member Suggestions for Next Steps

- Schedule a follow-up meeting in early 2014 (January/February) for the Commission to continue the conversation. Possible focus areas:
 - Overarching vision for the future of the summit to guide short-and long-term decisions about improvements and infrastructure upgrades
- Phil and Walter will reconvene ASAP to outline practical/political path
- Howie Wemyss will provide Pikes Peak planner contact information to Walter