



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of RESOURCES and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION

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March 22, 2016

The Honorable Chris Christensen, Chair
and the House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
NH State House, Room 305
Concord, NH 03301

Re: SB 441-FN, relative to discounts and admission without charge at state parks.

Dear Chairman Christensen and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 441 that would eliminate the discount coupon books, continue to provide free access to day use parks for NH seniors during the week, set the senior rate for skiing during the week at Cannon at 1/3 the normal day use rate, add a discount in statute for NH senior skiing on weekends, and allows the Division to provide additional free and discounted access for seniors in the fee package presented to the fiscal committee in accordance with RSA 216-A:3-g. The legislation would help bring parks statutes up to date under self-funding and address demographic trends that will affect the sustainability of the parks system park into the future.

The State Park Fund was established in 1991. The House Appropriations Committee report that recommended passage wrote: *'This bill establishes the New Hampshire state park and ski areas as an enterprise-type self-funded, accountable business entity to provide improved park and ski recreation facilities and services to New Hampshire citizens and tourists alike.'*

The fee approval process through the fiscal committee pursuant to RSA 216-A:3-g, was established *"...to provide the department with the ability to maximize revenues and to adjust fees according to market conditions and trends as is the common practice in private industry."* In addition: *"II. Fees for the use of campgrounds and ski lifts shall be comparable with the fees for use of similar privately owned facilities. The operation of all enterprise functions....shall be as profitable as possible, within the purposes of the park system."*

Free admission for NH seniors was enacted in 1973 (Chapter 503, Enacted 218:5-b) and the discount books were enacted in 1967 (Chapter 352, Enacted 218:5-a), both prior to 1991 when self-funding for the NH State Park System was emphasized through the establishment of the State Park Fund under RSA 216-A:3-i.

One of the five major challenges set forth in Parks Ten-Year Strategic Development and Capital Improvement Plan is to: *"Clarify statutory intent and framework within which the Division operates to reduce cumbersome, conflicting, and contradictory legislative direction so that operations can achieve the vision."*

The Honorable Chris Christensen, Chair
and the House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee

March 22, 2016

In addition to the changes in the parks funding model in 1991, there has also been a change in demographic factors since 1973 when free access was provided to NH residents 65 and older. First, according to the US National Vital Statistics 2012 Reports the average life expectancy for a 65 year old senior has increased by 12.2 years between 1973 and 2008.

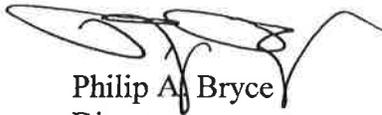
Secondly, a report by NH Center for Public Policy Studies estimates that: "*By the year 2030, nearly half a million New Hampshire residents will be 65 years or older, representing almost one third of the population.*" This is in contrast to 10-15% of the population that was 65 years or older in 1970's and 1980's. (We would note that these are factors that the park system is also considering as we improve our parks to accommodate the physical needs of all of our guests).

While continuing to provide free and discounted access to NH seniors over 65, the legislation also allows for additional discounted access to NH residents over 65 years of age in accordance with market trends through the fee package and fiscal committee approval. In fact Parks currently provides other discounts today to seniors for camping and skiing in the fee packages. However it is time to acknowledge where we are today by recognizing both how we now operate our parks system and how our population has changed since 1973 so that NH State Parks can successfully provide stewardship to the park system and ensure our parks are affordable and available to all visitors into the future.

Lastly, RSA 218:5-b requires the Division to provide coupons that reflect a 20% discount off its usual rates applicable at all day-use fee areas and the coupons do not expire. The greatest burden on the Division is administration of this program and this broad-based discount program is inconsistent with responding to market conditions. These discounts apply to our busiest days of the year. We are requesting that this law be repealed.

I am available to answer any questions you may have on this bill and we will do our best to provide any additional information you might need. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation.

Sincerely,



Philip A. Bryce
Director

PAB/ttl.011416

C: Jeffrey J. Rose, Commissioner

NH State Parks Value of Complimentary Entry - 2015

Statutory Free Entry	Quantity	Rate	Value	% of Total
*NH Seniors: RSA 218:5-c				
Day Use	19,903	\$4/\$5	\$ 89,053	10%
Beach Parking	7,704	\$15	\$ 115,560	13%
Skiing One Day Pass	2,112	\$52	\$ 109,824	13%
Skiing Midweek Season's Pass*	135	\$360	\$ 48,600	6%
Tram Summer	2,107	\$17	\$ 35,819	4%
Tram Winter	12	\$19	\$ 228	0%
Flume Summer	1,523	\$16	\$ 24,368	3%
Subtotal	33,496		\$ 423,452	49%
Other Statutory Free Entry				
Active Military RSA 216-A:3-g V	7,741	\$4/\$5	\$ 76,783	9%
Disabled Veteran RSA 216-A:3-g IV				
Walking Disability Parking RSA 265:74 (Beaches)	1,357	\$4/\$15	\$ 19,794	2%
Subtotal	9,098		\$ 96,577	11%
Total Statutory Free Entry	42,594		\$ 520,029	60%
Park Specific (deeded right to Towns)	9,864	\$4/\$5	\$ 43,168	5%
State Collective Bargaining Agreement	6,860	\$2/\$2.50/\$7.50	\$ 43,080	5%
Fee Package Discounted & Free Entry				
Children under 6 years of age	42,297	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 84,594	10%
General Court/Executive Council	38	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 463	0%
Amercia the Beautiful Pass (permanent disability)	511	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 4,148	0%
NH School Groups	7,100	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 106,797	12%
Senior Camping	1,892	\$5	\$ 9,460	1%
Annual Pass (promotional)	3,187	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 40,005	5%
Friends Groups/Volunteers	1,327	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 5,547	1%
Special Needs	426	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 2,085	0%
Division Employee	213	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 1,605	0%
Voucher	144	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 660	0%
90 Mile Challenge (promotional)	316	\$4/\$5	\$ 1,305	0%
Red Cross (promotional)	6	\$4/\$5/\$15	\$ 24	0%
Subtotal	57,457		\$ 256,693	30%
TOTAL	116,775		\$ 862,970	100%
Other Statutory/Fee Package Passes				
Discount Book RSA 218:5-b	306	\$24	\$ 7,344	
License Plate RSA 216-A3-g VI & RSA 261:75:c	13,650	\$4/\$5	\$ 48,680	
License Plate Beach Parking	6,054	\$15	\$ 90,810	
Cannon Senior Unrestricted Season's Pass**	32	\$374	\$ 11,968	
Subtotal	20,042		\$ 158,802	

*Compared to Bold & Beautiful Pass valued at \$399 minus the processing fee of \$39 - rate: \$360

**Full detail on discounted entry in Fee Package

MARKET RATE COMPARISONS FOR SKI AREAS & NH ATTRACTIONS

(prepared on 012216 for SB441)

Ski Areas	Ski Areas (2015-2016 Season)									
	Adult			Senior						
	Midweek	Wknd/Hol	Season Pass	Midweek		Weekend/Holidays		Season Pass 7 days		
	\$	\$	\$	\$	% discnt	\$	% discnt	\$	% discnt	
NH										
Cannon	\$75	\$75	\$859	\$0	100%	\$53	29%	\$529	38%	
Attitash	\$75	\$79	\$739	\$50	33%	\$54	32%	\$669	9%	
Sunapee 1	\$72	\$82	\$1,919	\$58	19%	\$66	20%	\$1,159	40%	
Bretton Woods	\$78	\$89	\$999	\$25	68%	\$89	0%	\$739	26%	
Waterville	\$77	\$77	\$949	\$57	26%	\$57	26%	\$579	39%	
Loon Mtn 2	\$85	\$85	\$1,245	\$65	24%	\$65	24%	\$869	30%	
NY 3										
Whiteface Mtn 65-69	\$92	\$92	\$999	\$72	22%	\$72	22%	\$999	0%	
70+ Rate				\$40	22%	\$40	22%	\$300	70%	
Gore Mtn 65+	\$75	\$75	\$549	\$75	0%	\$75	0%	\$210	62%	
Belleayre Mtn 65-69	\$54	\$54	\$1,039	\$40	26%	\$40	26%	\$549	47%	
70+ Rate				\$20	26%	\$20	26%	\$340	67%	

- 1 Season Pass incl skiing at Mt Sunapee, Okemo VT & Crested Butte CO
- 2 Loon Mtn Gold Pass (no blackout dates)
- 3 NY Whiteface Mountain's season passes are based off Nov. 4 and on rate (adult 30-69)
- 4 One day ticket price rounded to nearest whole number to adjust from sale price
 formula used: (original price)-(discount %)= total price
 This document is based off one day tickets and season passes.

MARKET RATE COMPARISONS FOR SKI AREAS & NH ATTRACTIONS (con't)

(prepared on 012216 for SB441)

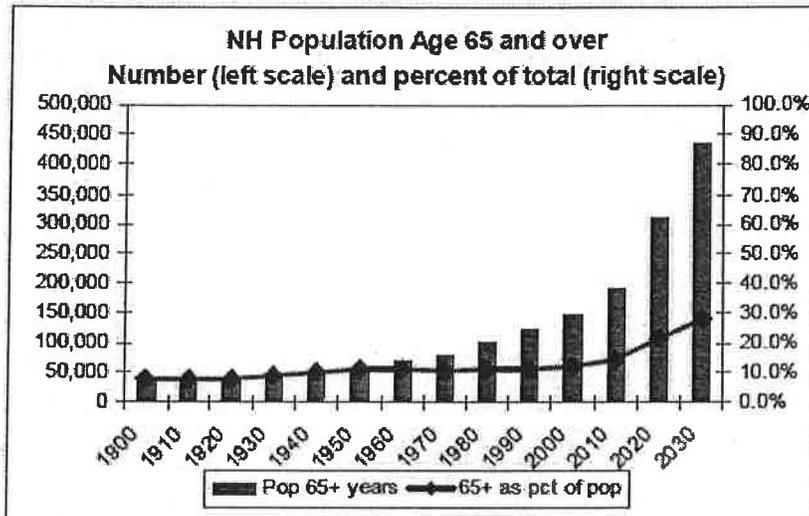
NH Attractions	NH Attractions		
	Adult	Senior	
	\$	\$	% discount
Franconia Notch Flume Gorge	\$ 16.00	\$0.00	100%
Franconia Notch Tram (weekdays)	\$ 17.00	\$0.00	100%
(weekends)	\$ 17.00	\$ 17.00	0%
Alpine Adventures (Lincoln)			
Treetop tour	\$ 65.00	\$ 65.00	0%
Sky Rider	\$ 95.00	\$ 95.00	0%
Super Sky Rider	\$ 115.00	\$ 115.00	0%
Canobie Lake Park (60+)	\$ 38.00	\$ 29.00	24%
Castle in the Clouds (65+)	\$ 16.00	\$ 14.00	13%
Clarks Trading Post (65+)	\$ 22.00	\$ 20.00	9%
Cog Railway (65+)	\$ 68.00	\$ 63.00	7%
Conway Scenic Railroad (N Conway)	\$ 16.50	\$ 16.50	0%
Hobo Railroad (Lincoln)	\$ 16.00	\$ 16.00	0%
Loon Mtn Adventure Park (65+ Lincoln)	\$ 51.00	\$ 51.00	0%
Lost River Gorge & Boulder Caves	\$ 19.00	\$ 19.00	0%
Mt Washington Auto Road (62+)			
Car and Driver	\$ 29.00	\$ 29.00	0%
Guided Tour	\$ 36.00	\$ 31.00	14%
Polar Caves Park	\$ 17.50	\$ 17.50	0%
Santa's Village (62+)	\$ 31.00	\$ 28.00	10%
Story Land (Glen)	\$ 32.99	\$ 32.99	0%
Water Country (65+ Portsmouth)	\$ 39.99	\$ 27.00	32%
Whale's Tale Water Park (70+ Lincoln)	\$ 35.00	\$ 5.00	86%

NH Center for Public Policy Studies

New Hampshire's Silver Tsunami: Aging and the Health care system, September 2011

"... By the year 2030, nearly half a million New Hampshire residents will be 65 years or older, representing almost one third of the population." (pg. 8-9)

Figure 7: New Hampshire will have a higher proportion of elderly residents in the future



From: Bryce, Philip
nt: Friday, January 22, 2016 4:54 PM
To: Andy Peterson; Brett St. Clair; Brian Buonamano (LEASING SUBCOMMITTEE); Craig Mayo; David Govatski; Jeffrey Gilbert; Maggie Stier; Rep. Chris Christensen (RR&D Chairman); Rep. John Mullen (RR&D Clerk); Rep. Suzanne Gottling (RR&D Member); Ruth Griffin; Ryan Owens; Senator Gerald (Jerry) Little; Senator Nancy Stiles; Senator Nancy Stiles; Susan Arnold; Tango-Low, Torene; Will Abbott
Cc: Tango-Low, Torene
Subject: SPAC Meeting Attachment Set 3 Background RE: SB 441
Attachments: SB190 Editorials 2013 (2 docs).pdf; National Parks Recreation Article Seniors (2).pdf

Background information that may be of interest.

While I encourage you to read the entire National Parks magazine article, this is of particular interest given that much of what we hear in opposition is about ability to pay:

The Senior Discount Issue

The dramatic shift in seniors' status described here indicates they are likely to be the fastest-growing target market for recreation and park agencies, and central to their future viability. This suggests the tradition of giving price discounts to this group should be reviewed.

Senior discounts became part of the marketing lexicon in the 1950s. They made both commercial sense in the private sector and equity sense in the public sector, because at that time, one-third of all seniors were below the federal poverty level. Today, however, seniors' standard of living and their economic well-being is better than that of their younger counterparts. The

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Seniors, too, should help support parks

Geezers have been freeloading long enough. As of today, senior citizen discounts are outlawed. Graybeards and bluehairs have to pay full price, just like everyone else.

Happy April Fools Day. The preceding paragraph is false. What's true, however, is that a bill has been filed that would end the venerable practice of letting senior citizens use New Hampshire state parks free of charge, a policy that's also extended to people with disabilities, legislators, executive councilors, active duty military members and their families, National Guard soldiers and retirees, and Blue Star mothers with a family member in the armed forces.

Lawmakers should approve a new \$20 park pass for older residents.

state parks for \$20. The pass will allow seniors free entrance to the 38 state parks that charge an entrance fee and let them continue to ski or snowboard for free at Cannon Mountain on weekdays. The legislation, sponsored by Hampton Republican Sen. Nancy Stiles, appropriately eliminates the state park freebies for members of the Legislature, Executive Council and governor and their staffs, but leaves the policy unchanged with respect to other groups now allowed to use the parks gratis.

Fairness, the needs of the badly underfunded parks system, and demographic realities justify the change. The parks system is chronically short of money. It is the only state parks system in the nation that's expected to be self-funded, a goal that may be impossible to meet unless park prices are increased to a level that puts them out of reach for many.

A 10-year plan for the parks system developed in 2008 identified \$750,000 in immediate needs to replace worn-out equipment, \$28.5 million to catch up with deferred maintenance in the plan's first five years, and \$71 million

over the decade to replace and redevelop park facilities. Compared with that, the money raised by reducing senior discounts is small. Stiles estimates that if 40 percent of the senior citizens who now use the state parks frequently purchase a pass, it would raise about \$300,000. That estimate is probably low. A survey done for the 10-year plan found that 12 percent of the system's frequent users were age 65 or older. By 2030, that figure will be 29 percent, largely because, as the report said, "expectations and behaviors for those over 65 are changing."

No self-funded system can be expected to survive when one-third of its users pay nothing. In time, in order to keep prices affordable for the young and economically struggling, the discount given seniors will have to shrink.

Free use of state parks by seniors is the rule in New England, but discounts in most states are less generous. Half-off is a common approach.

Senior discounts came about in an age when a majority of older Americans were poor or nearly so. That's not the case today, though many are struggling. The demise of the defined benefit pensions, flat wages and poor saving history of many in the baby boom generation has led economists to predict that, while roughly half of the baby boom generation will have at least an adequate income in old age, half will live in poverty. At least one state, Washington, uses an approach that may someday be appropriate in that situation, Washington's allows free use of state parks and half-price camping, mooring and boat launch fees, but only for seniors in households with an income below \$35,000.

While it won't be popular with seniors who get a free ride now, that policy is one that New Hampshire lawmakers should consider down the road.

Charging seniors

The right policy for state parks

NH Sunday News-Union Leader 03/24/13

Every New Hampshire resident can get into our state parks and historic sites, as well as Cannon Mountain Ski Area, for free. All you have to do is reach the age of 65. Or you can be an elected legislator or Executive Council member — or one of their staffers. Finally, some politicians have realized what a bad policy this is and have acted to change it.

New Hampshire has a user-supported parks system. To keep general taxes low, the state charges a modest entry fee at the state parks and at many historic sites. The individual entry fee for state parks is only \$4. That is an entire day at a place like Bear Brook State Park for less than the price of one movie ticket.

The senior exception is generally thought of as a kindness. In reality, it is a cross-subsidy. Every other user subsidizes the "free" access for senior citizens. If the general admission price is to stay low, the exception cannot continue. The parks system cannot afford to let so many people in for free. (The politician exception is inexcusable and never should have been passed in the first place.)

Sen. Nancy Stiles, R-Hampton, has proposed legislation

to offer seniors a \$20 parks pass. For less than the price of a dinner for two, senior citizens could purchase a pass that would let them into every state park and historic site — and Cannon Mountain — for the year. On Thursday, the Senate passed the bill by a vote of 17-7.

Stiles says that by charging seniors and the political class, the state parks will see about \$300,000 a year in increased revenue. That money will go directly to the parks system, which has struggled financially in recent years even after some reforms that have improved revenues.

It is understandable that seniors would be annoyed by this change, and that Democrats (every senator to vote against the bill was a Democrat) would oppose it for purely self-interested political reasons. But really the current policy is indefensible. State parks fees are modest. Stiles' \$20 pass is modestly priced (too modestly) as well. (The bill should include a separate, higher-priced pass for Cannon Mountain.) It is neither cruel nor unreasonable to ask seniors to contribute a tiny bit to the upkeep of the state parks if they want to use them.