



Weeks State Park

2013 Park Manager's Report and Season in Review

Prepared by Rachel Bruce

Introduction to Weeks State Park

The State of New Hampshire's Department of Resources and Economic Development's Division of Forest and Lands, Bureau of Parks, Bureau of Historic Sites, and Bureau of Trails cooperatively manage Weeks State Park. The Department of Transportation manages the scenic auto road. Weeks State Park is a multi-use park approximately 425 acres in size and offers visitors some of the best views in New Hampshire.

Modeling and promoting environmental stewardship, the management and staff of Weeks State Park is as wonderfully diverse as the park's natural landscape and visitor experience. With a crew of dedicated professionals, the park's management team works diligently and collaboratively in order to maintain and improve infrastructure and natural landscapes and features. We provide quality visitor recreational and educational experiences and historical site interpretation. To learn more about the park's history and John Wingate Weeks, and for a detailed list of what the park offers visitors, please visit the park website at www.nhstateparks.org.

Season in review

The 2013 season was indeed unique and one of the most challenging in my 8 years at the park. The season started off with a surprise from Mother Nature. The park auto road and historic site were open to the public on Memorial Day weekend, Saturday, May 25. On that evening, Mother Nature brought us cold temperatures and several inches of heavy wet snow. Thus causing a power outage and delaying the May 26th opening of the park to the public. Mother Nature brought us several more surprises over this past season with many severe storms causing more than 40 trees to be toppled over in the park. Over 15 trees on the auto road and over 25 trees on the trails had to be removed by parks and Department of Transportation personnel. The Department of Transportation also had to respond to and repair a small washout on the auto road.

Despite a slow start to the season, and several delayed openings, dedicated park visitors, and many of their pets, returned to the park making their customary walk, run, bike, hike, and/or drive to the top of beautiful Mt. Prospect. Once again, at the very beginning of our operational season in May, a staff member was pleasantly surprised when he heard the call of a cow moose behind the summit house. Hurrying to the back of the house, he

was greeted by a cow moose standing at the entrance to the North Overlook trail. Was she the same cow moose as last season? She could be.

Also this summer, many park patrons were delighted to see and use the very much appreciated new parking lot at the entrance of the Weeks State Park. Thanks to the Bureau of Parks and the Bureau of Historic Sites, funding was provided to build the new parking lot. The Division of Forestry and Bureau of Historic Sites oversaw the project. This new parking lot will provide for safer access to the auto road for hikers and walkers.

Late summer and most of the autumn season provided for some great weather and views from Mt. Prospect. Visitors enjoyed 2 unusual rainbows this past season: a double bow and an "unbow". In addition, visitation numbers finally increased in the fall surpassing last seasons by 3.7%. We were open a total of 78 days this season with 3 delayed openings, one closing, and 6 power outages. Our operating schedule included five days a week, Monday through Sunday, for 10 weeks, and after Labor Day, we were opened 2 days a week for 5 weeks. We were also opened for 4 holidays, and we had kept the park opened late for the Weeks State Park Association's 10 free Thursday evening programs.

As always, we like to thank our dedicated park patrons who help us keep special watch on the park. Spring, summer, fall, or winter, these patrons routinely help the park by reporting if something at the park is out of place or needs attention. Suggestions and feedback from the public are always highly valued. Feedback and suggestions assist us in making operational changes and improvements to park features and visitor services, as well as protect park fauna and flora.

We must give a very special thank you to the Asplundh crew, Paul Arno, Randy Rexford, and PSNH for their Day of Caring work at Week's State Park. The crew worked hard and removed several dead and hazardous trees on the auto road as well as cleared the area around the summit caretaker's cottage. We hope to have this amazing crew back at the park for another day of caring next season.

Thank you to the Mt. Prospect Ski Club, Lancaster Snow Drifters Club, and to the Heritage Trail volunteers for all their contributions in providing and improving park visitor experiences. Hopefully, we will have more snow this winter! Also a big thank you to the Weeks State Park Association for their continued organization and promotion of the quality Thursday evening programs and the wildflower and bird walks.

In addition, we appreciate the work of the park staff as they once again wore all their different hats and performed a great job this past season. We are very grateful to John Dotski, Serena Bruce, Derek Roberts, and our newest members, Norman LaCroix and Nate Accardi. Also responsible for much of the work performed at Weeks State Park are the Great North Woods Management Area supervisors, Sandy Young and Andrew Zboray. Their regional maintenance staff member, Reuben Rajala, also completed some great work the park this past season. In addition, we are also always grateful to Forest and Lands' Captain John Accardi and the Northern District Forester Maggie Machinist. Thank you to NH DOT crew, Chris Martin, Foreman, and Brian Schutt, District Engineer, for their quality work and direction with many road related issues.

Once again, the Historic Sites' Supervisor, Ben Wilson, deserves a big thank you for his continued outstanding support of Weeks State Park. Ben Wilson has made many of the park's improvements, special events, and the park's positive future outlook possible. His continued efforts and perseverance in ensuring that the restoration project takes place has been a monumental task and one that he is making happen. Without Mr. Wilson, there would be no restoration plans or funding for Weeks State Park. Over the fall, the tower received some much needed restorative work and restorative site work will resume in the spring.

Some of the many accomplishments at the park this season included:

- Assisted the Trail's Bureau with routine maintenance of the park's trail system: cleaned up trails, cut up and removed fallen trees, and opened trail heads.
- A new parking lot was built and unveiled at the park entrance.
- A new informational kiosk built and installed on the park summit.
- General maintenance and repairs completed throughout the park.
- Cut and removed a lot of extra brush and trees on the summit, on/along the park auto road and trail system
- Routinely weed-whacked and mowed several areas in the park and on the summit
- Continued to maintain the tennis court area, summit loop trail, and several scenic overlooks.
- Assisted in hosting and organizing and setting up the museum for the free public WSPA's Thursday evening programs, WSPA's Northern Gateway Chamber Mixer, and WSPA's annual meeting.
- Conducted traffic detail for Thursday evening programs.
- Maintained park gardens, cleaned the tower, and kept the fire watchman's cabin open to visitors one day a week.
- Repaired and painted picnic tables, benches, and signs.

What is in Weeks State Park's future?

We continue discussions with the Weeks State Park Association's Board of Director's in hopes of bringing a shuttle service to Mt. Prospect for the Thursday evening programs at Weeks State Park. The association would pay for this service, which would be extremely helpful to many elderly and disabled attendees.

Collaborating with partner agencies, volunteers, and area businesses, we will continue to expand special events and educational programming, increase outreach, maintain and improve nature trails, add interpretive features, add interactive elements and audio/visual content to the museum and tours, improve on park signage, publicity, and operational information, complete major building renovations and repairs, and maintain and improve habitat for park flora and fauna.

We are very excited about the 2014 season as restorative projects will continue on the summit buildings. Donations for the park or for the restoration project are always welcome and very much appreciated. If you would like to make a donation, please contact the Bureau of Historic Sites at 271-3556. For park updates and further information, please visit the New Hampshire Division of Parks and Recreation website at www.nhstateparks.org or contact park headquarters at 271-3556 or call the park at 788-4004.

Thank you again for another great season at such a beloved park. It is my privilege to serve the public.

Sincerely,

Rachel M. Bruce, Weeks State Park Manager