

**Director's Report**  
**STATE PARK SYSTEM ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**Division of Parks and Recreation**  
**January 26, 2024**  
(Last report date was October 17, 2023)

**STATE PARK SYSTEM FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT**

- **FY2024 Park System Comparative Statement** (sent separately) covering Week 28 from July 1, 2023 to Jan 11, 2024, has revenue at \$8,324,431, up by 0.3% from the previous period in FY23. Day-use, camping, Franconia Notch and State Park Plates are included in this revenue report. Cannon Mtn unaudited ops revenue is \$3.55M, up 16.8% from the previous period FY23. Hampton Parking Meters is \$2.1M, up by 33.6% from the previous period in FY23. This increase is attributed in part to the \$1 increase in the meter rate.
- **FY2024 Retail Comparative Statement** (sent separately) covering Week 28, excluding Mt Washington and Cannon Mtn, has revenue at \$2.9M, up 1.7% from the previous period in FY23. Mt Washington revenue is at \$1.3M, up 2.3% from the previous period in FY23. Cannon Mtn retail revenue is at \$934.8K, up 24.3% from the previous period in FY23. Cannon has a new POS system that has improved retail sales reporting. E-Commerce sales at \$19.8K, up by 30.5% from the previous period in FY23.
- **NH State Park Plate** As of Jan 6<sup>th</sup>, there were 18,898 State Park plates and 3,197 Moose plates registered. The total revenue earned in FY23 from State Park Plates closed at \$1,736,601. FY24 to date revenue is \$868,140.
- **Donations:** FY24 to date (1/23/24), NHSP has received \$49,283.50 from 7,724 online donations. FY23 closed with \$90,168.11 from 13,020 online donations. Since the last report, we have added historic sites and several unstaffed parks to the park specific online donation pages.

**RETAIL OPERATIONS**

Concessions closed out the season and generated \$7 million in total retail sales. Breaking down the revenue, the sales look like this:

- \$3.6 million at our beaches, campgrounds and gift shops
- \$1.5 million atop Mt. Washington
- \$1.9 million at Cannon and Tramway

Retail continues to build a foundation on firewood, ice, and boat rental sales. This past season sales were,

- \$434,249 in firewood sales, processing 66,807 bundles for the 2023 season.
- \$308,754 in boat rental sales with a total of 9,734 individual rental transactions.
- \$75,636 in ice sales as 27,504 bags were sold.

The retail product mix continues to expand with a focus on the best sellers

- 1,000,000 + items were individually sold in NH State Parks in 2023. The breakdown is as follows.
- 405,834 items in park campgrounds and beach stores.
- 480,631 items in our gift shops. (Mt. Wash, Crawford, and Flume)
- 100,000+ items at the Tramway and Cannon Mountain Ski Shop.

NH State Parks **sold 1,107 items over the holiday season, resulting in \$45,657 in revenue.** Of that, \$23,784.50 was brought in from gift card sales (274 gift cards). This was ~\$3000 and 300 products more than last year during the same time.

Below are the Top 10 Products sold from 11/1-12/27/2023

#	Product Name	Qty Sold	Total Amount
1	NH State Park Gift Cards	274	\$ 23,784.50
2	NH Resident Family Season Pass (Incl.S&H)	43	\$ 4,677.00
3	Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway Ornament- Red (Incl.S&H)	127	\$ 3,803.65
4	Individual Season Pass (Incl.S&H)	39	\$ 2,406.00
5	Mt. Washington Summit Sign Ornament (Incl.S&H)	72	\$ 1,436.40
6	Handmade Hiker Backpacks- Mt. Washington	43	\$ 857.85
7	Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway Ornament-Yellow (Incl.S&H)	21	\$ 628.95
8	Non-Resident Family Season Pass (Incl.S&H)	6	\$ 618.00
9	Handmade Hampton Beach Bag Ornament	39	\$ 583.05
10	Collectible Bear Brook State Park Sign - Fall (Incl.S&H)	15	\$ 374.25

**PARK OPERATIONS**

[FIS 23-363](#) Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – requests approval to amend the previously approved schedule for **campground fees** by increasing selected fee categories, effective February 1, 2024 (Originally approved (FIS 12-139) on April 13, 2012). *APPROVED*

**E-Commerce, Season Passes, and Gift Cards:**

Pass Type	Qty Sold	Revenue
Individual	222.00	\$ 13,864.50
NH Resident Family	256.00	\$ 27,736.50
Non Resident Family	72.00	\$ 8,647.50
Seacoast Parking	15.00	\$ 2,665.50

NHSP has sold 3,019 e-commerce items FY24 to date, with a total of \$89,869.60 in revenue. 565 passes were sold in this time period, accounting for \$52,914.00 in revenue. 397 gift cards have been sold in FY24, resulting in \$33,044.00 in revenue. 864 items and passes were sold during the holiday season, resulting in \$23,648.45 in revenue.

**Day Use Reservations:**

95,379 day use reservations were made in calendar year 2023, with a total day use revenue of \$4,292,457.35 and 929,704 visitors. We are hopeful that the weather will cooperate this season, increasing day use visitation and revenue for the 2024 season.

**Camping Reservations:**

In CY23, NHSP welcomed 127,939 visitors into our campgrounds generating \$4,370,265. We anticipate another busy season in 2024 and are already beginning to prepare for the opening of our primitive camping season in April.

CENTRAL REGION

The Division is in the process of closing on an in-holding parcel at **Crawford Notch State Park**. The owner wanted to conserve the property and provided the State with first right of refusal.

## SEACOAST REGION

The **Seacoast Science Center** was given the #5 spot for most beautiful aquariums in the country in this [USA today article](#).

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, **Odiorne Point State Park** hosted **US Secretary of the Interior Haaland and US Fish and Wildlife Service Director Williams** who came to celebrate with the Department of Environmental Services and partners the recent awarding of a grant for saltmarsh restoration. At the gathering Secretary Haaland announced a new keystone initiative to restore existing salt marshes and protecting adjacent, inland areas to allow marshes to migrate as sea levels rise. This initiative will mitigate sea level rise impacts and help the critically endangered salt marsh sparrow and many other coastal dependent species and communities which call the saltmarshes on the NH seacoast including Odiorne Point State Park home.

**NH Beach Patrol** to receive the President's Award from the **Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce** for their service to providing safe and accessible beaches at their annual awards dinner January 25<sup>th</sup>. 2023 stats include 456 lifesaving rescues, 255 accessibility services, 213 missing children reports, and 1 plane crash rescue.

## SOUTH

The **SCA NH Corps** held a recognition ceremony on 10/19 at **Bear Brook State Park**, Spruce Pond Camp, for members who completed 6 months of service in NH. Director Wilson was one of the speakers who thanked the members for the conservation projects and education programs they presented in state parks this year.

## MOUNT WASHINGTON STATE PARK

- Closed for the season after Sunday, October 15th. Over 354,000 estimated visitors came to the summit since opening on May 26th. Attendance slightly down from 2022 (361,000).
- Retail rallied in October and rose above 2022's revenues (but some prices saw a slight increase), so total number of actual sales were close to 2022's numbers.
- The weather has affected visitation at the Park this season. Mount Washington recorded its snowiest June on record and also experienced the wettest summer on record at the summit by far.
- The Capital Improvement Project at the Park saw significant progress, despite the weather. 2 brand new year-round 20,000 gallon water storage tanks have been fully installed, buried, and are in use for winter.

The new Wastewater Treatment Plant did not meet its expected installation due to the manufacturer not being able to complete the build out in time. The new facility will be completed and the installation and activation will occur in the early summer. The current Wastewater Treatment Plant is set up to continue serving the State Park and Mount Washington Observatory staff and guests for one more winter season.

- Including the installation of the new Wastewater Treatment Plant at the summit, there will be a few more final tasks to complete this Capital Project in the Spring and early Summer of 2024, including any final aesthetic and wrap up work and the removal of the pair of aged out water storage tanks that were part of the previous summer water system.
- The Park Supervisor, Maintenance Supervisor, and our Retail Managers had a great visit to Pike's Peak in Colorado where they met with and spent days with the Pike's Peak Management, Maintenance, and Retail staff and got full behind the scenes tours of the facilities, management strategies, and challenges.

With Pike's Peak running a full summit visitor center as well as having a road and cog railway to its summit, there are a lot of parallels and demands to Mount Washington. This has been a great relationship between our mountain staff and theirs. The hope is Pike's Peak will make a trip to NH in the near future so we can return the favor and continue sharing notes, ideas, histories, and strategies with one another.

- Per the Master Plan and through approved funding from the State, a Summit Environmental Study RFQ was released in November and closed to prospective applicants in December. A team of DNCR staff along with a member of the Mount Washington Advisory Commission read through and scored all submissions. The top 3 scoring firms are being interviewed by the scoring team this week.

2024/Winter projects are well under way by Park staff. Including, but not limited to:

- Park Office floors have been redone and improved.
- Painting/touching up around building and summer signage is underway
- Physical changes and updates are occurring in the Gift Shop. The Food Service kitchen has been completely stripped and will be repainted. New flooring will be installed and a
- Retail design/ordering has already started
- We are working on the steps needed to secure a new POS system for retail.
- New handheld radios for Park Staff and new base radios for stationing and use in our staffed areas on the summit have been ordered and we hope to have them in service for the start of the upcoming season.
- The Tip Top House renovation projects are in their next phases. With the aid of the Bureau of Historic Sites and our new agency Curator, design of the new displays are coming together and historical information, photographs, and other pertinent information is being pooled, collected, and organized. We anticipate the ability for physical work to begin this summer in Tip Top.
- The Summit Information Desk area has been stripped down and will be reorganized, renovated, and improved for staff use and efficiency.

## **BUREAU OF HISTORIC SITES**

Staff attended the **New England Museum Association annual conference** in Portland, ME from November 8-10.

The **Nansen Ski Club** was honored at the November 1, 2023 Berlin Mayor and City Council Meeting. NSC received the "Extra Mile Award" for going above and beyond to improve life where they live or for other people who reside in a particular city or town. The site hosted an Eastern Ski Jumping event, a winter carnival and a NH High School jumping meeting in January 2024. The events were covered by numerous news outlets including the [Associated Press](#), NHPR, [WMUR](#) and the Union Leader.

**Wentworth Coolidge Mansion Association** received a grant in the amount of \$3,200.00 from the Rosamund Thaxter Foundation. The grant will be used to purchase light blocking shades which will help protect the new, flocked wallpaper which was installed in the Billiard Room in 2022. Our consultant Kleinfelder has completed their work on a conditions assessment with climate resiliency study and a maintenance and repair work scope is being created based on recommendations.

**Fort Stark's** ARPA project is well underway with a basecoat of pavement on the new parking area and doors and windows on Battery Hunter have been closed with steel plates. The Fort did experience damage from storm surge in January 2024 and strategies on a cleaning up are underway.

**The John Wingate Weeks Historic Site** at Weeks State Park's design is 90% complete for the ARPA project on site. The project includes rebuilding the historic north terrace with an ADA lift to the second story and ADA compliant

bathrooms. The project will be put out to bid in April 2024. An RFP for repairs to the fieldstone, fire tower will also be posted this spring when contractors can access the site, this work is funded by Moose Plates.

**Bear Brook** demolition project for the Nature Center building and sleeping cabins at Spruce Pond is underway. The Spruce Pond work is completed, and the Nature Center is awaiting DES sign off on hazardous mitigation.

Matthew Flanders, Chief of the Bureau of Historic Sites, was elected Chair of the American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission which is tasked with organizing the observance of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. An event is being planned for December 2024 at **Fort Constitution** representing the Capture of Fort William and Mary (now Fort Constitution) as the first act of aggression against the British, leading to the American Revolution.

## **CANNON MOUNTAIN**

“This is the most **comprehensive recruitment campaign** to date for Cannon Mountain and mirrors our successful 2023 spring/summer hiring campaign for parks that was conducted system wide and produced some of our highest staffing numbers in recent years.” – Shawn Hamilton

Hiring so far for **snowmakers and lift attendants** has noticeably improved over last year with both quantity and quality. Counting all snowmakers and snowmaking managers we currently sit at 24 (with about 6-7 3<sup>rd</sup> shift employees versus the 2-3 we had last year) and currently for lift operations we have 38. We do have a few more applicants that we are waiting for paperwork on so the number might be closer to 41 for lift attendants. We started last season with around 25 lift attendants. Snowmakers we had 25-26 throughout the year – maybe 15 at most as one time.

## **BUREAU OF TRAILS**

On Saturday November 4<sup>th</sup>, Bureau of Trails (BOT) staff participated in the **NH Snowmobile Association’s (NHTSA) annual Trails Workshop** at Attitash Mountain in Bartlett, where we provided training sessions to the snowmobile clubs on applying for Grant in Aid funds, and proper trail signing requirements for safety. BOT also participated in various breakout sessions that included a discussion on the current challenges that the clubs, volunteers, and landowners face with maintaining a statewide trail network.

BOT participated in multiple **legislative study committee** meetings (known as the HB1188 Commission) that is charged with studying the impacts and benefits of Off Highway Recreational Vehicles (OHRV) in NH. At the meetings, the committee recommended forming a smaller subcommittee to review the existing OHRV statutes that relate to wildlife and environmental impacts. BOT staff will participate and co-chair this subcommittee that includes participation from AMC, TNC, NH Audubon, SPNHF and NHF&G.

BOT staff continues to meet with the **NH Rail Trail Coalition**, which is a bi-monthly standing meeting to coordinate rail trail management with various non-motorized users.

BOT hosted the **Statewide Trail Advisory Committee (STAC)** at DNCR HQ where various motorized and non-motorized user groups advise the Parks Division Director and the BOT of matters related to the statewide trail system, as required by [RSA 216-F:5](#)

BOT purchased new winter grooming equipment through a \$3 million ARPA grant and recently announced a **new winter groomer loaner program** to allow local snowmobile clubs to use state-owned grooming equipment to benefit winter grooming operations across the state’s 7,400 mile snowmobile trail network.

BOT has been meeting with leadership at NHTSA and NHOHVA to draft rule improvements and clarifications to the **Res 8400 Grant in Aid (GIA) Administrative Rules** that will hopefully improve and simplify the grant process for clubs and for BOT administration. Draft rules have been submitted to our legal coordinator for additional review prior to submitting them to the NH Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (JLCAR).

## COMMUNITY RECREATION

The **volunteer program** sent out reminders to 37 volunteer long term groups to file their annual work plans for 2024. This is the first step in the annual process of planning volunteer work, projects, and events for groups across the state. The annual work plan is also the tool we use to collect data on volunteer hours, document project successes, and track the income and expenses of volunteer groups working on DNCR land.

Many hearty outdoor enthusiasts started 2024 on the right foot at **First Day Hikes on Jan. 1** with a self-guided tours. Participating parks included: Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion State Historic Site, Bear Brook State Park, Northwood Meadows State Park, Rhododendron State Park, Monadnock State Park, White Lake State Park and Weeks State Park.

## PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

The **Hampton Beach Accessibility** advisory committee interviewed two candidates and has selected GEI Consultants. The contract is being prepared and expected to be presented to Governor and Executive Council in February.

Staff is scheduled to meet with the Nottingham Planning Board on 2/14 to discuss the plans to expand the campground at **Pawtuckaway State Park**.

The division is working on the Public Use and Recreation Management and Road Management Plans as required by the Grant of Conservation Easement **Connecticut Lakes Headwaters**.

## ARPA

- Lincoln Sign Company constructed and installed new welcome/leaving and site **signage along Route 93**.
- The design of the campground expansion project sites, **Jericho Mountain, Mollidgewock and Pawtuckaway State Parks**, is almost complete. Bidding is expected to be advertised spring 2024 with construction to start in the fall of 2024.

The **Fire Towers Facilities Upgrade Project on Belknap and Cardigan Mountains** is nearing completion. Work of the project includes cab replacement, foundation repair, new stair tread and railings, and painting of the steel work. The pictures are of the renovated tower on Belknap Mountain and were taken from the helicopter used to transport materials to and from the summit. Work for the season will wrap up this week with the towers substantially complete. Painting and some other punch list items will be completed when the warm weather returns in the spring.

The **SCA NH Corps** will begin its 30<sup>th</sup> program year on April 1<sup>st</sup> (no fooling). The Division has contracted with the NH Corps to provide 15 hitches of conservation service and will provide 9 Interpretive Rangers who will be offering natural and cultural resource education programs in 12 parks next summer.

## OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

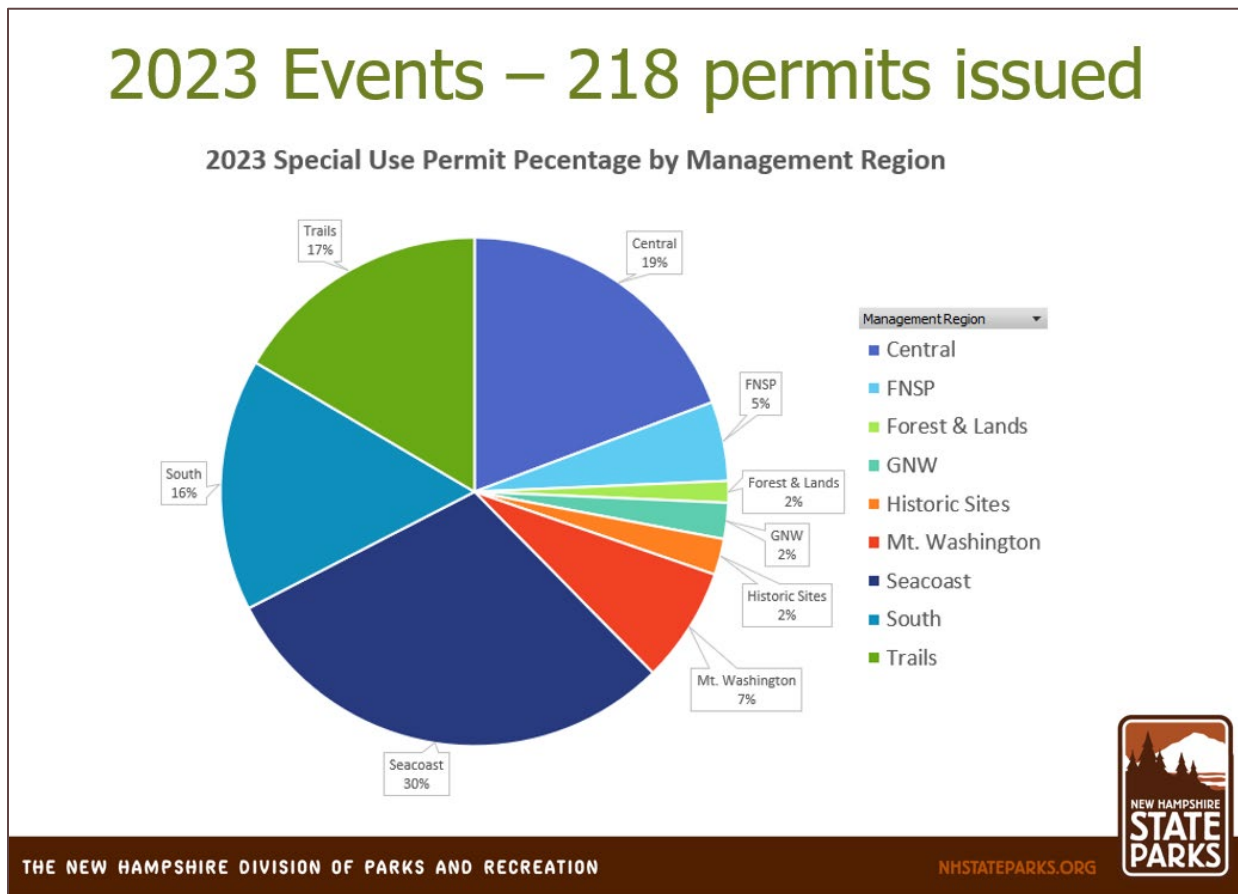
CHIEF OF STAFF We are pleased to share the news that **Colin Capelle** will be joining the Division of Parks and Recreation as the **Chief of Staff** starting Friday January 12<sup>th</sup>. Colin comes to us after 8 years supporting the Department of Administrative Services in various statewide managerial roles at the Division of Procurement and Support Services. Prior to State service, Colin had a long career in hospitality, managing teams devoted to

nationally and globally acclaimed food and wine service following attending both undergraduate and graduate studies in the fields of Finance and Business Management in Boston, MA. He is beyond excited to join the team and support the high value statewide initiatives that keep the Granite State top of mind for outdoor experiences. Colin lives in the Lakes Region and is making his way through the 48 4,000 footers. In his free time, you can either find him out in the woods doing his best to stay on course, or at home cooking up something fun.

This role will support the entire Division of Parks & Recreation, with focus areas on contracting and enterprise support, personnel, financial analysis, policy, organizational health, and enhancing synergy.

**SPECIAL USE PERMITS.**

In 2023, we wrote 218 permits for events that take place in State Parks or on the rail trails. This includes events for triathlons, 5k runs, surfing lessons, filming permits, research projects, trainings, and more. Some of the events are for fundraising efforts while others are meant to raise a profit for the event coordinators. To date, we have received \$128,973.81 for special use permit related revenue. We do anticipate receiving more revenue as the permittees submit their required reports and additional fees as listed in their permits. Below is a breakdown of the percentage of events based on the management region as captured in our end of season reporting:



The 2024 season is shaping up to be quite busy for permitting. Some of the notable events for which we have received applications include:



Event	Location	Dates	Description
Rock Spot Climbing Ice Fest	Franconia Notch State Park – Flume Gorge	2/17 – 2/24 and 3/2 & 3/3	The 2024 Rock Spot Climbing Ice Fest offers both beginner and advanced ice climbing clinics.
Eastern Mountain Sports Overnight at the Mt. Washington Observatory	Mt. Washington State Park	1/20, 2/17, 3/23, 3/30, and 4/6	EMS will guide a small group up to the summit of the mountain, stay overnight at the Mt. Washington Observatory, and then hike down the mountain the next day.
Redline Guiding Overnight at the Mt. Washington Observatory	Mt. Washington State Park	2/24	Redline Guiding will guide a small group up to the summit of the mountain, stay overnight at the Mt. Washington Observatory, and then hike down the mountain the next day.
Hampton Half Marathon and 5K	Hampton Beach State Park – Main Beach	3/3	The Hampton Half Marathon is a road race along the shorelines of NH.
Eastern States 20 Miler and Half Marathon	Hampton Beach State Park – Main Beach	3/17	The Eastern States 20 Miler and Half Marathon is a road race along the shorelines of NH

**SEACOAST PARKING ENTERPRISE SYSTEM:**

In 2023 we rolled out 42 new multi-space pay stations. The pay stations allowed the visitors to pay using coins, cash, or credit cards by using their license plate as the identifier to our enforcement officers. Further, we offered the added feature of pay-by-phone using the Park Mobile app. Although we hit several bumps in the road when we first went live, we were able to resolve most of the issues by Memorial Day weekend and the end-user experienced minimal issues after Memorial Day.

In 2024 we will be installing upgraded machines that will have a more modernized feel to them. Their screens will be in full color and will include images of the beaches. Although currently they operate very similar to the machines we had in 2023, we are working with the vendor to have some added features that were not previously available.

Although it was a wet summer, we only saw a light decrease in the number of purchases that were made this season. With the approved rate increase 5/1 – 9/30 from \$2.00 to \$3.00, we saw an increase of 29% in total revenue over the 2022 season. Below is the breakdown of purchases and revenue for 2023.

2023 Season	# of Purchases	Purchase Amount	% Change 2022 - 2023	% Changed based on 2022 rates	
April 1 – October 31, 2023	452,937	\$3,086,796.09	29%	\$2,153,900.72	-10%
April 1 – October 31, 2022	453,363	\$2,385,491.14			
April 1 – October 31, 2021	480,711	\$2,368,031.09			
April 1 – October 31, 2020*	280,352	\$1,364,838.01			

\*2020 was during COVID and didn't start collecting until June.

\*\*It is important to note that the hourly rate increased to \$3.00 on 5/1 instead of the \$2.00 in previous years.

**2024 LIBRARY PASSES:**

This program began in 2013 and is intended to provide NH residents an opportunity to visit many of our parks by obtaining the pass from their local library. It cost \$105 and allows 2 adults (12+) and up to four dependents to



enter most parks (except the Tram, Flume, Hampton Beach South and Wallis Sands) access to the park for no additional fee. It is not valid for camping or the metered parking on the seacoast. To date, we have sold 10 passes to 8 communities across the state. We anticipate this number growing over the next several months.

#### AGREEMENTS

- **Centerplate Sodexo** concessionaire contract for food and beverage services at FNSP/Cannon Mountain, expires on May 16, 2024.
- **Mt Washington Auto Road** agreement for the use of summit parking lots at Mount Washington State Park, expires June 30, 2024.
- **AMC** lease for use and operation of Lonesome Lake Hut, expires on June 30, 2024.
- **Mount Washington Observatory** lease for use of museum and weather observatory space at the summit of Mt Washington, expires September 30, 2024. A third and final 5-year renewal option is available for an expiration date in 2029.
- **Reserve America Enterprise Reservation System** for park and campground reservations, POS transactions, and ecommerce, expires October 31, 2024.

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#### **REPORTS PROVIDED SEPARATELY:**

- Parks & Retail Comparative Statements, Week 28
- Parks Legislative Report, 2024 Session
- Summary of Administrative Rule changes

*BJW/tt/lw-01242024*