



**Public Service
of New Hampshire**
The Northeast Utilities System



**Discover the Power of Parks
2011 Report**

Discover the Power of Parks is an interactive series of interpretive programs for visitors to New Hampshire’s State Parks. The program is a collaboration between the Division of Parks and Recreation, the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) with program support from the Corporation for National Service (AmeriCorps).

Program Overview

Six college-age interns were recruited and trained by SCA NH Corps to provide guided hikes, interpretive tours and imaginative environmental workshops for children, families and other visitors. Interpretive programs focus on connecting participants with nature and building appreciation for New Hampshire’s unmatched natural heritage. The parks included in this year’s program were: Pawtuckaway, Bear Brook, Greenfield, Monadnock, White Lake, and Franconia Notch State Parks. A website and a URL are maintained by the Division for the program, www.discoverpowerofparks.com and advertise the programs.

Measuring Success

When the Discover the Power of Parks was initially envisioned in 2007, there were several goals agreed upon by the collaborating partners. Those goals included:

- Serving the environment
- Driving economic development
- Meeting state priorities

Serving the Environment

The interns provided information and delivered environmental education programs to thousands of visitors, campers, hikers and local citizens. They were asked to keep track of the number of visitors they reached and reported the following:

	Program <u>Attendees</u>	Informal <u>Contacts</u>	Trail <u>Contacts</u>
Pawtuckaway	772	283	
Bear Brook	264	369	
Greenfield	336	465	
Monadnock			3289
Franconia Notch	1181	4175	491
White Lake	542	255	
Fall Programs	<u>364</u>		
	3459	5547	3780

Total Visitor Contact = 12,786

Programs

With guidance from the Education staff at the SCA NH and State Park staff, the interns created imaginative programs to connect families with the outdoors. This year the interns stationed at Franconia Notch State Park worked closely with the marketing and guest services department and offered programming sites throughout the Notch while still offering campground programs and hiker information.

The wide variety of educational programs offered at the 6 sites included:

Abandon Your Sight - Plunge into the Night - The sun goes down and a new world awakens. Come explore the magic of the darkness and join us on a sensory tour of the night. Learn how predators hunt their prey, watch as your neighbor's face disappears, and participate in a show of miniature pyrotechnics. You will never think about nighttime the same way again!

Discovery Drop-In - Join us at the day use area beach for crafts, ponding, or a fun quest. Meet at the pavilion or just drop by between swims!

Ponding - Be a scientist for a day and explore the mysterious aquatic world that lives just beneath the surface of Beaver Pond. Using nets, jars, and our bare hands, we will unearth some of the critters that live in and around the pond, and discover their identity at our research station. Wear shoes that can get wet!

Beavers - Nature's Greatest Engineer: Did you know a beaver can cut down a tree with a 4-inch trunk in less than 10 minutes? Did you know that their front teeth never stop growing? Watch as a human is transformed into a beaver!

Discovery Touch Table at the Flume Gorge - Discover what a fox feels like, see how big a moose footprint REALLY is, and learn about the animals who call Franconia Notch State Park home! Materials for making your own footprint will also be available.

Old Man Drop-In - Held at the Old Man in the Mountain memorial site. Stop on by and discover the wonders of the Old Man in the Mountain. See close up what the Old Man was made of, put the old man back together again, color a picture of the old man, or take a coloring sheet for the road.

Rocking Rocks Drop-In - Stop by to learn about the geologic history of the notch. The top of Cannon offers the perfect view of the geology of the area.

Campfire Songs - Join Ranger Dan for a laid-back evening of classic campfire tunes. Come on down to the circle behind the main office and sing along! We'll have a fire going, so feel free to bring-your-own marshmallows for roasting.

Environmental Explorers - Calling all Greenfield youngsters! This program is specially designed for kids ages 5 and up. Meet at the circle behind the main office for an afternoon filled with nature-based games and activities for children.

Fall Outreach

Two interpreters offered programs to schools, community organizations, and clubs in the Greater Merrimack Valley Area at no cost after Labor Day. Programs were offered on-site or at Bear Brook or Pawtuckaway State Parks. Program choice included;

Animal Detectives - Have you ever wondered what kinds of animals were around when you weren't looking? In this program, you'll become an animal detective to investigate the clues that animals leave behind. We'll explore tracks, scat and other animal "clues." You may even have the chance to create some animal clues of your own.

Plants & Trees - Get to know the woods like never before! Through exploration, crafts and games, we'll learn about the trees in our local forests and ways that people have used parts of the trees in the past and present.

Ultimate Survivor - What would you do if you were lost in the woods? In this program, you'll learn some of the basics of wilderness survival skills: from shelter building to navigating without a compass. The contents of this program will vary significantly based on the age level of participants.

Driving Economic Development

Tourism is a vital economic driver in New Hampshire and the State Park system plays a key role in providing recreational and educational opportunities for visitors and residents. Program participants were offered the opportunity to fill out a survey at random. The program and interpreters have consistently received high marks through the survey. While we have had some success attracting participation through our website, most participants are already in the park and learned about the program during their stay. Once introduced to the program, many guests attend more than one during their stay.

Meeting State Priorities

The parklands act as a "green magnet" for other attractions and businesses and are a vital economic driver in the state tourism economy. The Division is committed to providing high quality outdoor recreational opportunities to children and families. Interpretive programs allow exploration in a structured environment and introduce participants to important public lands.

Great Park Pursuit

For the fifth year the SCA NH Corps partnered with the Division to present the kick-off of the Great Park Pursuit, www.nhgreatparkpursuit.com, a program to encourage New Hampshire families and visitors to enjoy all the recreational resources and outdoor activities New Hampshire's State Parks have to offer. Discover the Power of Parks interpretive staff working with other members of the NH Corps presented the day's

activities and programming including preparing the teams for their NH Biodiversity Quest through interpretive programs. Over 46 teams, approximately 181 participants, attended.

Building on a Successful Program

Recruitment for four interns to provide programming at Monadnock, Greenfield, Franconia Notch and White Lake State Parks for 2012 has begun. Due to reduced funding available by the Division of Parks and Recreation, summer programming will not be offered at Pawtuckaway and Bear Brook nor will fall programming be offered in 2012. The program will continue to offer a mix of campground and day-use programming to interest a broad range of visitors.

Some programmatic goals we will be working on include:

1. Increase communication among interpreters, park managers, and SCA Education Manager.
2. Improve internal and external advertising
3. Improve program scheduling
4. Create evaluation plan for program

Selected Comments from Our Guests and Staff!

“Yeah, for learning about how senses make nature more fun!” ~ Summit NJ

“Great tricks, games, info, Thank YOU!!!” ~ Wyandotte MN

Fun to learn nature (Alexis 10yr), I loved it and Lizzy (Sara 10 yr), Wonderful with the girls (mom) ~ Plaistow NH

“Always excited about working with public and took on the task to start outreach programs. Interpreters were very excited at this possibility and open to new ideas along the way!” ~ Julianne Ireland, Program Assistant, Franconia Notch State Park

“This program helps draw people to NH state parks it has become a good selling point and has many people upon their return to the park asking what the program is this week.” ~ Harry Sloan, Park Manager, Greenfield State Park