



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES  
**DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION**  
172 Pembroke Road Concord, New Hampshire 03301  
Phone: (603) 271-3556 Fax: (603) 271-3553  
Web: [www.nhstateparks.org](http://www.nhstateparks.org)

January 17, 2023

The Honorable Laurie Sanborn  
and the Ways and Means Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Rm 202  
33 North State Street  
Concord, NH 03301

**RE: HB 60 camping fees for non-residents**

Dear Chair Sanborn and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (“Department”), Division of Parks and Recreation (“Division”) regarding HB 60 camping fees for non-residents. **The Department appreciates the concern of the bill’s sponsor. We respectfully provide the Committee with the following information. The Department already has the statutory authority to set its camping fees.**

Pursuant to RSA 216-A:3-g, “[t]he commissioner of the department of natural and cultural resources, in consultation with the director of parks and recreation, shall establish fees for access to and use of the state park system. The fees approved by the commissioner, after prior approval of the fiscal committee, shall not be subject to the provisions of RSA 541-A, so as 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.”

Pursuant to RSA 216-A:1, the intent of the general court that a comprehensive state park system shall be developed, operated, and maintained to achieve four purposes, including continually providing park areas and facilities as may be necessary to meet the recreational need of the citizens of all regions of the state as well as to encourage and support tourism and related economic activity in the state. The Department strives to balance these priorities in part by continually examining fee structures, visitation data, and other metrics to inform recommendations for adjustments to camping fees.

The Department has considered a separate fee schedule for non-residents who access state park campgrounds. However, with 65% of our campers coming from out of state, we are concerned that campers will elect to go elsewhere; thereby, resulting in a negative financial impact to the self-funded state park system. Additionally, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) monies were used to develop and improve state park campgrounds. The LWCF program rules prohibits unequal access to LWCF-funded public lands based upon residency.

We recognize that some NH campers experienced difficulties in reserving the campsite and dates of choice. As many in the outdoor industry can attest, the COVID-19 pandemic created a much greater than normal interest in outdoor pursuits. The Division has made great strides in improving the camping reservation process over the years. This trend includes a greater emphasis

on online reservations, which accounts for 94% of all our reservations, versus 3% that the call center fulfills. Additionally, the Division has implemented a lottery reservation system which levels the playing field with respect to the opening of inventory and many savvy campers knowing to reserve the very minute inventory becomes available. This program is very successful at Hampton Beach State Park Campground and Jericho Mountain State Park, both of which see some of the system's highest occupancy rates.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and additional information on HB 60.  
**Pursuant to RSA 216-A:3-g, the Department currently has the authority to set fees, including fees charged to non-residents.**

Sincerely,



Brian J. Wilson  
Director

C: Sarah L. Stewart, Commissioner, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

BJW/ttl-011623