



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT of NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION of PARKS and RECREATION  
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March 14, 2019

The Honorable John Cloutier  
and the Public Works and Highways Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 201  
Concord, NH 03301

**RE: HB 727 relative to boat ramp and parking improvements at Mount Sunapee state park beach and making an appropriation therefor.**

Dear Chair Cloutier and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation regarding HB 727 relative to boat ramp and parking improvements at Mount Sunapee state park beach and making an appropriation therefor.

First, I would like to thank the prime sponsor, Representative Wolf, for the effort he has made over the last couple of years to reach out to our agency to try to find a solution to a very challenging issue. The open and thoughtful discussion and sharing of information has been much appreciated.

The Department does not have a position with respect to the Wild Goose boat ramp site. Our involvement is because the Mount Sunapee State Park beach has been suggested over the years as a location for the NH Fish and Game Department to develop a boat launch on the lake. There is an existing boat launch located in Chandler Brook and 12 boat and trailer parking spots available for day use visitors to the park.

While the position of our department in the past regarding the state park beach has been that "...the state beach is not the appropriate location for a fully developed boat launch facility," the Commissioner and I have been willing to consider improvements to boat access at the beach. As a member of the Lake Sunapee Public Boat Access Development Commission, we agreed to the following finding in the February 28, 2018 final report: "7. The New Hampshire Division of State Parks is committed to exploring additional boat trailer parking at Sunapee State Park, for park visitors, outside of the current parking lots. This development would increase access in the near term for trailered boats."

We contracted for a wetlands survey this past year along the western side of the entrance road and have prepared a preliminary design for us to add ten additional boat trailer parking sites. However, as we move forward, also please consider another finding of the Commission: "6. Sunapee State Park cannot serve as a replacement for the deeper water, thirty-one trailer boat parking space, Wild Goose site."

As we explore the opportunity to improve boat access to Lake Sunapee, there are several significant concerns that we expressed in a letter to Representative Wolf, dated November 27, 2017:

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“Sunapee State Park Beach is a state park. The park provides affordable opportunities for the general public to enjoy a beach on Lake Sunapee... As we have consistently stated during our several meetings, the availability of the beach to the public, the flow of traffic, the ability to charge fees, the revenue generating capacity of the park and equity between users cannot be affected adversely and should be enhanced with any future investments at the park. Specifically:

- “There cannot be any loss of parking spaces. We are in direct conflict with our statutory mission if we decrease public access to enjoy the park. As I know from personal experience from years living in Claremont, this beach is a special recreational asset accessible to many people living and working in the region. We are unable to meet current demand for parking. And while we recognize the existing boat launch serves as an amenity to the park visitors who also want to enjoy the lake, if the existing boat launch was not there we could use those spaces to help meet the demand for beach parking on busy days.
- “The flow of traffic within the park and outside of park cannot be made worse and should be improved. For example, the backup of vehicles out to the traffic circle has been a longstanding issue and presents both a safety hazard and creates frustrated park visitors waiting in line.
- “All entrants to the park must pay a day use fee in accordance with the fee package approved by the fiscal committee. In addition to providing a long term sustainable source of revenue for the park and park system, the collection of fees from all users of the park is fair.” We understand that the current version of the bill providing for the use of the statewide public boat access funds under RSA 233-A:13 will allow us to continue to charge all visitors to the park in accordance with the fee package approved by the fiscal committee.

We appreciate that we were provided a conceptual plan of boat access improvements prepared by CLD consultant engineers for our review and comment. The plan includes additional boat trailer parking along the entrance road but also expands the boat launch area and provides separate access. (This plan would add around 2 additional boat parking spaces over what our own plan provides plus what exists today.) Our review of CLD the plan allowed us to understand some key issues that concern us, in particular a change in how school bus unloading and parking is handled and the impact of a protective well radius on twelve of the proposed boat trailer parking spaces in the conceptual plan. A copy of our full review of the CLD plan is available.

These issues very well may be resolvable, and we continue to be committed to improve boat access, but we are very concerned that if these issues are not resolvable, expectations would have been created that would not be able to be met. A reduction in the number of parking spaces that is available to day use visitors would be unacceptable if that ended up being the only way to meet those expectations for improved boat access.

Regarding the language in the legislation, we would want to be certain that the decision whether or not to proceed with the boat access improvements is clearly up to the Department. This is the only way we can ensure that the existing day use of the state park beach is protected. The legislation states that “the department of natural and cultural resources shall be responsible for the improvements to and operation of the boat ramp and parking at Mount Sunapee state park beach.” This seems to indicate that expansion

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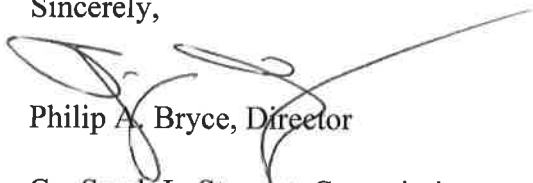
and improvements are required to be completed under this bill and so we would request further clarification.

The legislation also provides for funding to construct an improved boat launch and to offset lost park revenue, which is appreciated. However, the additional cost of operating and maintaining the boat launch, including any dredging of the channel are not addressed. For example, according to parks staff at Wellington State Park, NH Fish and Game has one or two additional staff on site to manage boat traffic. As the state park system is operationally self-funded, we do not believe that the costs of operation and maintenance of the boat launch should be subsidized by Mount Sunapee State Park beach goers and other parks in the park system. It is not clear to us that the costs of maintaining and operating the boat launch would be fully covered by the boater's entrance fees.

I would close by reiterating our commitment to improve boat access at Mount Sunapee State Park beach, however would request that you give full consideration to the impact on state parks and our beach going visitors. We appreciate the opportunity to assess each aspect of this proposal in a thoughtful manner in order to avoid unintended consequences.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on **HB 727**. Please let me know if I can answer questions or provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip A. Bryce", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Philip A. Bryce, Director

Cc: Sarah L. Stewart, Commissioner