

## *Friends of Mount Sunapee*



*Mount Sunapee from Gunnison Lake, Goshen*

May 22, 2008

Commissioner George Bald  
NH Department of Resources and Economic Development  
172 Pembroke Road, PO Box 1856  
Concord, NH 03302-1856

Delivered via FAX and email

Dear Commissioner,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed 2008-2009 Annual Operating Plan (AOP) presented to the Mount Sunapee Ski Area Advisory Committee (MSSAAC) on May 13, 2008.

Friends of Mount Sunapee (FOMS) seeks to promote the public interest and to protect the essential public values of Mount Sunapee State Park. From that perspective, we offer the following comments regarding the AOP:

### **1. Leases, Contracts & Agreements (page 20)**

FOMS objects to any proposal to lease space inside Mount Sunapee State Park for the purpose of real estate sales and marketing. This proposal violates the park's fundamental public values and its more than 100 years of conservation heritage.

We refer to Page 20 of the proposed AOP, which reads:

*Resort Real Estate Sales - Mount Sunapee may enter into an annual contract and lease agreement with an outside company to provide marketing and sales services at Mount Sunapee Resort during the winter ski season.*

FOMS wants to thank you for your two previous non-approvals of this same proposal, first in May 2004 and again in June 2007.

We ask you to categorically reject this proposal for this and all subsequent AOPs. A clear and decisive denial would best serve the public interest, and will reduce the likelihood of this proposal coming forward again during the remaining half of the current lease term.

Approval of a private real estate office would be in direct conflict with the clearly legislated intent of the lease, which strictly limits the lessee's use of our cherished public resource. Paragraph 4 of the Lease and Operating Agreement states: "The Operator agrees to manage and operate the Leased Premises as a public ski area and summer recreational facility to provide year-round outdoor recreational opportunities for the general public. ....The State agrees that no other commercial recreational activity shall be authorized at this location."

Sales and marketing of real estate from within the state park is entirely inconsistent with Mount Sunapee's heritage, ambience, and the laws and agreements governing our public reserve. Again, we urge you to issue a clear and lasting denial of this inappropriate proposal.

## **2. Signage (page 27)**

Okemo/MSR states that it intends to renovate the large sign at the Route 103 rotary and "upgrade" other signs. FOMS greatly appreciates recent efforts by Parks Director Allison McLean to return the state park system's seal to its place at the entrance to the park. We feel that this AOP presents an opportunity to further restore the park's public identity to the public eye.

FOMS asks that you consider returning a more prominent State Park sign to the traffic circle, one that clearly indicates to the motorist that they are passing, or about to enter, a NH state park. Such a sign would enhance the visibility of Mount Sunapee's public assets, as well as our entire state park system, and would further indicate public ownership and access. We encourage DRED to review existing and proposed signage to insure they aesthetically and appropriately adhere to Parks & Recreation guidelines and the requirements of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

## **3. Septage Disposal/Treatment (page 22)**

Considering the close and upstream proximity of the lagoons and spray fields to Chandler Brook and Lake Sunapee, changes to the park's septic system concerns all who care about our lake and watershed.

Significant development is anticipated within the state park and up-slope from the lagoons and spray fields in the near future. This development will place additional demand on the park infrastructure. In addition, the anticipated blasting, earth removal, and construction of Parking Lot 4 (previously proposed for this immediate area of the park) may further challenge the lagoon system.

The confluence of these many proposed developments and the cumulative impact should be thoroughly considered as part of the larger 5 year review of the septic system underway by the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES). FOMS will forward a copy of these comments to DES for inclusion in the public record as well.

## **4. Overall Planning for Public Access to Mount Sunapee State Park**

FOMS is very pleased to see that restrooms at Spruce Lodge are available for public use throughout the year. Availability of restrooms at Mt. Sunapee State Park should be clearly indicated on the Parks Division's website, brochures, and maps. It currently appears to the potential visitor that these facilities are only available at Mount Sunapee State Park Beach, which may discourage public use of the mountain's wonderful natural, cultural, recreational, and historic resources.

For members of the public with special needs, access to public meetings and functions held on the second floor of Spruce Lodge continues to be challenging. We urge DRED and Okemo/MSR to always insure handicapped accessible access to all public meetings and events. The current elevator in the Spruce Lodge does not comply with state regulations concerning handicapped access, and is very difficult to find or use.

## **5. Inventory of Park's Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources**

FOMS is troubled by the AOP's habitual written declaration stating there are "no archeological or significant historical resources" nor "critical wildlife habitat areas" identified within the leasehold area. Anecdotal and historical data contradict this assertion.

FOMS urges DRED to engage the NH Natural Heritage Bureau, the Division of Historic Resources, and Fish & Game's Non-Game and Endangered Wildlife Program to undertake a comprehensive inventory of all areas of Mount Sunapee State Park not previously studied. This is particularly important for areas of the park subject to development or terrain alteration. It is important that the historic and natural resources of the park be comprehensively recorded and preserved, not lost to future generations.

Thanks again for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

[signed]

Jolyon Johnson  
President

cc: Governor John Lynch  
Mount Sunapee Ski Area Advisory Committee  
NH Department of Environmental Services  
Town of Newbury, Board of Selectmen & Planning Board  
Town of Goshen, Board of Selectmen & Planning Board