

Goshen Conservation Commission

PO Box 68, Goshen NH 03752

Commissioner Jeffrey Rose
Mount Sunapee Comments
Department of Resources and Economic Development
PO Box 1856, Concord NH 03302
June 2, 2015

Commissioner Rose,

The following members of the seven-member Goshen Conservation Commission oppose the current 2015-2019 Draft Mount Sunapee Resort Master Development Plan (MDP/EMP) West Bowl expansion for the following reasons:

As recently stated by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, *“The original reason that the Forest Society started protecting Mt. Sunapee in 1911, and assisted in its eventual transfer to the State, was to ensure that the ancient forests on its slopes be protected for posterity. As the current steward of this public treasure, DRED should continue the work started in 1911 and use its authority to sustain the ecological health of these forests within the State Park.”*

According to the Sierra Club, *“This development would fragment the 30,000 acre Pillsbury-Sunapee Highlands wild area, an area designated by the Sierra Club as one of 52 exceptional wild places in the nation. The plan would carve ski runs and a lift line through a state designated exemplary northern hardwood-spruce-fir forest community that is home to 200 to 300 year old trees, and is the only documented example of this forest type in both Merrimack and Sullivan counties.”*

The exemplary natural forest is protected by two statutes: RSA 216-A:1 states that the first priority of the state park system is to protect and preserve unusual scenic, scientific, historical, recreational and natural areas in the state. RSA 217-A:7 states that actions funded or carried out by state agencies shall not jeopardize the continued existence of any protected plant species or exemplary natural community.

The current mitigation plan is not acceptable. The exemplary natural forest will remain fragmented even after a trail is removed and the lift line narrowed. This will increase the amount of edge between forested areas and non-forested grassy areas (the trails) and will increase the forest’s vulnerability to windthrow, sunscald, and invasion by insects, diseases and other forest pathogens. Of the 410 acres to be added to the park for mitigation, 208 acres are already conserved, 52 highland acres are not suitable for development and the remaining 150 acres will contain the proposed lift, ski trails, lodge and parking lot.

Of interest specifically to Goshen is the statement in the MDP/EMP that “The distance between the existing potable water system and the West Bowl expansion would likely require development of a new water source and system to support the base area of the West Bowl.” A new water source, and sewage disposal, would likely be situated near Gunnison Brook, which runs into the Sugar River and eventually into the Connecticut River. According to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSPC), *“DRED should coordinate with DES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau to review water supply plans to resolve watershed impacts.”* This should take place before final approval of the plan.

Sincerely,
Robert Blackwood, Beatrice Jillette, Gary Dennis, Sandra Sonnichsen, Cynthia Phillips