

# *The Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition*

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22 May 2015

Mr. Jeffrey J. Rose, Commissioner (email to: MountSunapeeComments@dred.nh.gov)  
Department of Resources and Economic Development  
Mount Sunapee Public Comments  
PO Box 1856, Concord, NH 03302-1856

Dear Commissioner Rose:

This letter is the response of the Board of Directors of the SRK Greenway Coalition to your recommended conditional acceptance of the 2015-2019 Master Development Plan (MDP) proposed by Mount Sunapee Resort (MSR). Mount Sunapee State Park's 2.4-mile Summit Trail, a sub-section of our 75-mile, 14-section, SRK Greenway is our primary concern.

1) We urge you to recommend that NH Parks develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that assigns to Mount Sunapee Resort and its successor leaseholders primary responsibility for maintenance of hiking trails for year-round, four-season hiking within the lease area.

-- Because a NH court in 2014 extended the Resort's lease boundary to the western boundary of Mount Sunapee State Park, the entire Summit Trail is now included in the lease area. As the Resort widely advertises to bring tourists to hike Park trails in summer, volunteer trail maintenance is inadequate and the Resort should have primary responsibility for trail maintenance.

-- An MOU between NH Parks, Mount Sunapee Resort (MSR) and all-volunteer SRKGC would establish clear lines of responsibility for the Summit Trail, which is a core sub-section of the SRK Greenway as it passes from Newbury harbor to Goshen and then towards Sunapee harbor. The MOU will be more enforceable and more permanent than a simple agreement between SRKGC and the Resort and will better serve the interests of NH Parks and hikers.

2) Please reassure New England hikers that the Summit Trail remains open for winter snowshoe hiking. Four-season, year-round hiking is central to New Hampshire's recreational culture. Hikers also depend on the Summit Trail for access to and from the 50-mile Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway.

3) In an attached memo, we propose two alternative routes for safe winter hiking that will minimize snowshoe hiker crossings of ski trails. The existing, more gradual, trail should continue to be the primary trail for 3-season hiking. Please note that the Summit Trail, completed in 1997, was specifically designed for the SRK Greenway and built to specifications of NH Parks to be outside the lease area and free from interference with ski trails.

4) If the lease document is re-opened we believe language should be added referring to the MOU and lease-holder responsibilities for the Summit Trail.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Lawton & Nathan Richer, Co-chairmen, SRK Greenway Coalition

cc: Nancy Marashio (SPNHF), Nathan Miller (UVLSRPC), Jay Gamble (MSR) and others

MEMO to Commissioner Rose from SRKGC Board of Directors re Summit Trail winter options:

**OPTIONS TO REDUCE WINTER HIKER CROSSINGS OF PROPOSED SKI TRAILS:**

Major trail rerouting in the upper mile of the Summit Trail could reduce crossings of proposed west bowl ski trails to two crossings rather than the map-indicated 5-or-6 crossings.

**Disadvantages:** steeper climb and descent along the upper mile at and below the level of Polygon D. This additional steepness will require more trail structures for water diversion and erosion control (e.g. stone waterbars and steps)

**Advantages:** makes winter hiking viable by reducing skier/hiker interaction. If DRED approves and MSR invests in hiking trail rerouting, the two crossings of lower ski trails should be within engineering know-how.

**OPTION 1:** The first two (northerly) lower crossings appear unavoidable. A rerouted Summit trail could run between the north side of Polygon D and the new trail #67 leaving Outer Ridge trail.

Above those first 2 crossings, a major reroute would avoid the 3 crossings of new trail #W4 now shown along the west-bowl lift line below and within Polygon D.

The rerouted Summit Trail would arrive at the top of the new west-bowl lift line (trail W4), then turn south along a level contour line to meet the existing Summit Trail to climb steeply as now arriving at the grass field south of the summit lodge.

**OPTION 2:** An alternate would require less rerouting of the Summit Trail but would require a 3rd crossing under the ski-lift (Trail #W4) in Polygon D but avoid two lower crossings of W4.. By climbing more directly in beech forest from the lower 2nd crossings, it would meet the existing Summit trail inside Polygon D. The Summit Trail would continue on existing route to meet the top junction of trails W4, W6, W8 and W9 at the lift line top and continue into forest uphill as at present.

**IMPACTS ON POLYGON D OF WINTER REROUTE OPTIONS FOR SUMMIT TRAIL:**

The map appears to have the new west-bowl lift line (Trail W4) terminate well below the summit and above Polygon D. It seems that skiers connect to the existing north-side trails at the top elbow bend of the Upper Ridge trail (at a new ski trail #67 running downhill from that bend of Outer Ridge Trail #28). That is where the rerouted Option 1 Summit Trail would cross above the ski lift drop point (new Trail #W4). Option 1 for Summit Trail reroute removes hikers from Polygon D. Option 2 keeps them inside the Polygon on a more gradual contour rise (where no one has been complaining about them to date).

**EXPECTED COSTS TO REROUTE THE SUMMIT TRAIL FOR WINTER HIKING:**

The two options above will require careful design planning and trail building. Special concern is that more water diversion structures and more annual maintenance will be required because of steeper terrain location. Design and long-term maintenance costs should be the responsibility of the Leaseholder. All the more reason why DRED should require an MOU that holds the lessee responsible for the trail and held to "Appalachian Trail Fieldbook" standards.

SRKGC, as the long-term volunteer maintainer of the Summit Trail and other trail sections on our 75-mile route through 10 towns, is able and willing to assist in this process and believes the MOU can serve to involve and protect the interests of all parties as well as those of NH hikers and the hiker tourism industry.