



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of RESOURCES and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE of the COMMISSIONER

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GEORGE M. BALD
Commissioner

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January 28, 2004

Mr. Phil O'Brien, Executive Director
Lake Sunapee Protective Assn.
PO Box 683
Sunapee, NH 03782

Dear Executive Director O'Brien:

DRED's Natural Heritage bureau has completed its study of the 350-acre East Bowl at Mount Sunapee. Thanks to funding by the Mount Sunapee Resort, the ecological significance of the East Bowl has now been carefully researched and documented. The bureau's report, titled "Natural Heritage Inventory of the East Bowl at Mount Sunapee" is a comprehensive assessment of the context, land use history and present status of the East Bowl. The report will be posted on the Division of Forest and Lands' website by February 1st (<http://www.nhdfl.org/>). I hope everyone on the Committee will have a chance to read this report, but for those who can't, here are a few highlights:

- The East Bowl is at the northern end of a 30,000-acre continuously forested area, one of the three largest contiguous forests in southwest New Hampshire.
- The East Bowl is entirely forested and consists of 2 forest types: Sugar Maple-Beech-Yellow Birch, and Northern Hardwood-Spruce-Fir.
- The East Bowl's forest is a mixture of old growth and mature stands. Tree cores from plots in the old-growth areas found living red spruce and yellow birch trees older than 200 years. The oldest tree documented was a 323-year old yellow birch.
- In addition to tree age, a comparison of forest stand characteristics between Sunapee's East Bowl and other documented old growth northern hardwood forests in New England were found to be equivalent, including basal area, total number of stems, number of large stems, maximum tree diameters, number of standing dead trees, number and basal area of standing dead trees, and tree diameter distributions.

- To date, the old growth stands at Sunapee's East Bowl are the only old growth forest remnants known in Merrimack County.

Based upon its findings, the Natural Heritage Bureau has recommended that the East Bowl study area and a portion of polygon 23 receive special conservation status. We will be exploring ways to accomplish this in the coming year and will be looking to the Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee for guidance. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions about the report.

Sincerely,



George M. Bald
Commissioner

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