




GEORGE M. BALD
Commissioner

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT of RESOURCES and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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Date: December 18, 2000
To: Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee Members
Subject: Meeting Notification
From: George M. Bald 
Commissioner

At this time I do not see the need for the advisory committee to meet until March. The tentative date for the next Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee is Tuesday, March 20, 2001, (9:30 AM) at the Mount Sunapee Resort. As the date draws near I will send out a meeting reminder and agenda. I also would like to wish you and your family a happy holiday and to thank you for the assistance you have given the department over the last year.

GMB:jl

- Statement by George M. Bald, Commissioner of the Department of Resources and Economic Development – September 19, 2000

Since the initiation of the Mount Sunapee Ski Area lease on July 1, 1998 several events have successfully taken place to ensure the continued oversight of the recreational opportunities at the Mount Sunapee Resort within Mount Sunapee State Park.

- The *Public Involvement and Oversight Policy for Mount Sunapee Ski Area* drafted August 31, 1998 set guidelines for the administration of the Mount Sunapee Ski Area lease.
- The Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee was convened January 19, 1999 to advise the Commissioner of the Department of Resources and Economic Development.
- The Department of Resources and Economic Development and the Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee accepted the Annual Operating Plan for 1999.
- The first lease payment and percentage of gross was paid to the State of New Hampshire.
- A public hearing was held on March 2, 2000 at the Mount Sunapee Resort to present the *Five-Year Master Development and Environmental Management Plan 2000-2004* to the public.
- The Department of Resources and Economic Development and the Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee accepted the Annual Operating Plan for 2000.

The *Public Involvement and Oversight Policy for Mount Sunapee Ski Area* provides local residents and conservation groups a process to comment on the MDP/EMP. The Public Hearing on March 2, 2000 and the public comment period that followed provided public input to the five-year plan proposed at the Mount Sunapee Resort. The Department of Resources and Economic Development received 33 written comments from residents, state regulatory agencies and conservation groups.

Historic recreational use of the park has been defined by funding availability. Aging ski lifts and lodge buildings were not in keeping with market trends, and to compete in the market, investment was needed. Summer recreational experiences were not fully capitalized and if funding had been available the Division of Parks and Recreation may have proposed the same or similar summer recreation opportunities as proposed in the *Mount Sunapee Resort Five-Year Master Development and Environmental Management Plan*.

I have decided to accept the Mount Sunapee Resort master plan with the exception of the following components: the drive-in theatre, the water slide and alpine slide. These proposed activities require large tracts of real estate that will impact the physical image of the resort. Determination of these impacts as acceptable or unacceptable can not be made at this time.

Acceptance of the Master Plan will permit the Mount Sunapee Resort to move forward to accomplish their goals proposed in the MDP. It is important to remember that each item of the MDP will require additional information, as well as State and local approvals. The

Annual Operating Plan submitted to the department will provide detailed information on projects to be accomplished in that operating year.

There has been a great deal of discussion concerning the use of "old growth land". Polygon 23 is a mixture of Old Growth Forest, Young Forest and Mature Forest. The MDP submitted by Okemo will not result in activities in the land designated "Old Growth". They are proposing a ski lift and glades in the area defined as Mature Forest. It is important to remember that the terms Old Growth and Mature Forest are our definitions. There is not an official definition. Although the lift will not be in the Old Growth Forest, I recognize that cutting trees in an area adjacent to the Old Growth Forest could have an effect on the natural processes.

Because of possible impacts, I am requiring Mount Sunapee Resort to accept the following:

Mt. Sunapee Resort will not seek to expand into the East Bowl for the duration of its Lease.

Mt. Sunapee Resort agrees to leave the remainder of polygon 23 and all of polygon 20 in their current state, with no new trails and no new lifts for the duration of the lease Agreement.

Mt. Sunapee Resort agrees to fund a detailed natural heritage inventory of the East Bowl. (Estimate, not to exceed \$30,000). This study will allow the department to truly understand the ecological significance of these areas. As a result of the inventory, the Division of Forests & Lands, working with Parks and other State agencies, will create a formal designation of "natural areas". This will allow for more permanent protection of areas of ecological significance. We expect that if supported, the designation would be attached to Polygon 20, the remainder of Polygon 23 and the area so-called the east bowls.

There are numerous abutting properties that may have old growth or mature forest segments. The Department of Resources and Economic Development will seek to expand the boundaries of Mount Sunapee State Park by purchasing adjacent properties, to preserve undeveloped lands for the citizens and visitors of New Hampshire to enjoy.

I would like to take this time to thank the members of the Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee, Tim Mueller and the staff at the Mount Sunapee Resort, the members of the public that attended the public meeting and provided comments on the MDP. The advice and information provided by these people has been invaluable to the decision making process.

- 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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