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March 29, 2016

The Honorable Maggie Hassan
Office of the Governor
State House
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Hassan:

I write to you in advance of the Executive Council meeting at which the Council will consider the proposed expansion of the ski area lease at Mount Sunapee State Park.

The Forest Society has had a century-long role in the conservation of Mount Sunapee. In 1911, we worked with Herbert Welsh and many citizens to acquire and protect land that makes up much of the State Park, and then entrusted that land to the state in 1947. We appreciate that Commissioner Rose took seriously some of our recommendations in his decision on the proposed ski area expansion.

That said, the Forest Society has never been in favor of expanding the ski area. We share the concerns expressed by many who care deeply about Mount Sunapee that an expansion will forever mar the character of the mountain, its rare and remarkable forests, and the community they define.

We further share the concerns of those who fear that the ski area expansion today would yield still more expansion at some future date, including private development that would have an adverse impact on forest resources. Of particular concern has been the land immediately adjacent the State Park owned by stakeholders in the ski area lease (but not part of the expansion proposal.)

While we recognize and respect the private property rights of those landowners, our history reminds us to think a century or more ahead as we contemplate potential changes at Mount Sunapee. The Forest Society would welcome the opportunity to explore with them the possibility of permanently conserving those adjacent acres through purchasing a conservation easement or the land itself.

Such an outcome, we believe, would go a long way to addressing concerns about the long-term future of Mount Sunapee as one of the state's great natural icons. I hope you will offer your support for such a conversation. I look forward to speaking with you further about this idea at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Jane A. Difley
President/Forester

CC: Councilor Joseph D. Kenney
Councilor Colin Van Ostern
Councilor Christopher T. Sununu
Councilor Christopher C. Pappas
Councilor David K. Wheeler
Commissioner Jeff Rose