



Friends of Mount Sunapee

Mount Sunapee from Gunnison Lake, Goshen, N.H.

Friends of Mount Sunapee

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June 5, 2015

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Friends of Mount Sunapee advocates for protection of Mount Sunapee State Park and its essential public values; conservation of the Sunapee highlands and its watersheds; and preservation of the unique character and natural beauty of the rural communities in the mountain's shadow.

Commissioner Jeffrey Rose
Dept. of Resources and Economic Development
172 Pembroke Road
PO Box 1856
Concord, NH 03302

RE: Draft Decision to the Mount Sunapee Resort 2015-2019 MDP and EMP

Dear Commissioner Rose,

Our organization opposes Mount Sunapee Resort's expansion into the West Bowl of Mount Sunapee State Park, and the elements of the Draft Decision that facilitate this proposal. This letter does not attempt to address all elements of the Draft Decision our organization opposes. Instead, this letter focuses on how the expansion, if approved, will degrade the existing Summit Trail.

The Summit Trail is the only four season, public hiking trail on the western side of the park. This popular trail is both well-designed and well-constructed. It was specifically built to run outside the perimeter of the ski area where it is free from interference by ski trails and resort infrastructure.

The Summit Trail is part of a large interconnected trail network that includes the 50-mile Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway and the Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway (a 75-mile loop of trails that connects four State Parks, three State Forests, and NH Fish and Game protected lands, as well as town and private properties.) With hiking and overnight backpacking gaining in popularity, longer uninterrupted trails play a vital role in New Hampshire's recreational economy.

Email: info@FriendsofMountSunapee.org
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Our organization opposes expansion into the West Bowl of Mount Sunapee for the following reasons:

- It will directly interfere with public access and diminish other public benefits and uses of the state park as the ski lift and trails will cut across the Summit Trail in multiple locations and will sever the Summit Trail from the existing trailhead on the Old Province Road in Goshen.
- Exemplary natural forest will be lost whereby significantly altering the natural environment and woodland experience that now exists along the trail and in this area of the park.
- The court ordered change of the leasehold boundary line does NOT obligate the State to grant approval to the West Bowl expansion and/or other proposals presented by the lessees of the ski area.
- The operating lease states that no development or improvements shall interfere with other outdoor recreational activities at the ski area.
- The Division of Parks and Recreation 10-year study (2010) found that 71% of park users feel our parks should focus on traditional uses, and many people seek low-impact and low-cost recreation, such as hiking and snowshoeing.

For the aforementioned reasons, we respectfully request that DRED preserve the Summit Trail and ensure its existence for year-round access without diminishing the aesthetics and significant public value the trail now provides to: hikers, snowshoes, birders, scientists, teachers, hunters and many others.

In addition to preservation, we request that the public hiking trails on Mount Sunapee continue to be maintained by a "friends/trail maintenance group" trained to maintain 'hiking only' trails and NOT by the lessee. Mount Sunapee Resort has clearly stated, as recently as the June 2, 2015, at the Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee meeting, that their focus remains alpine skiing and fee based recreation (the 'Adventure Park') and non-recreation activities (weddings and corporate events).

In the alternative, we respectfully suggest that DRED bring together representatives of interested hiking and trail maintenance organizations (including the Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway Coalition (SRKG), Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway Trail Club, Cardigan Highlanders, the NH Chapter of the Sierra Club and Friends of Mount Sunapee to discuss the future of the Summit Trail and its maintenance. SRKG has recently indicated a wish to relinquish trail maintenance responsibilities. Accordingly, it is timely and appropriate to discuss this matter with other organizations.

Requests for additional information:

We respectfully request that DRED provide any and all available information regarding the widening of an abandoned hiking trail (to approximately 20') that runs through the 'exemplary forest' outside the current leasehold and runs north and downhill from Jack and June Junction to the Summit Access

Road. It is our understanding that the trail was abandoned approximately 20 years ago due to its steep grade, yet is now brushed and blazed with red.

We also request clarification of the role Mount Sunapee Resort has assumed, if any, as to the cutting of trees and/or brush on and adjacent to the hiking trails on Mount Sunapee.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to your timely response to the requests for additional information.

Sincerely,
(signed)

The Board of Directors of Friends of Mount Sunapee
Linda Dennis
Jolyon Johnson
Catherine Bushueff
Beatrice Jillette
Brenda Shapiro
Jennifer Shea
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