

## New Hampshire Recreation and Conservation Leaders Survey 2011



“Echo Lake, Franconia Notch” by icemomo (via Flickr). CC by license.



*NH Office of Energy and Planning*



*NH Parks and Recreation*



## Community and Economic Development Program

### *Strengthening New Hampshire Communities*

204 Nesmith Hall  
131 Main Street  
Durham, NH 03824  
(603) 862-4789  
Fax: (603) 862-0107  
Extension.unh.edu

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# **New Hampshire Recreation and Conservation Leaders Survey 2011**

## **Overview:**

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is the comprehensive strategic plan for identifying critical needs for outdoor recreation in New Hampshire. The SCORP satisfies the requirement of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) that each state have an approved SCORP on file with the National Park Service (NPS) in order to participate in the LWCF program. It also fulfills the New Hampshire statutory requirement (RSA 12-A:18) that there be an outdoor recreation planning program. The results of the stakeholder survey, presented here in this report, are part of the five year review and update and will be presented in the 2013-2018 SCORP which will be completed in 2013.

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension was commissioned by the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning (OEP) to gather stakeholder input for the 2013-2018 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). UNH Cooperative Extension developed a list of diverse stakeholders for recreation, natural resource management, public health and planning in the State of New Hampshire. These stakeholders were invited to be a part of the Advisory Work Group which was assigned to work on the development of objectives for the 2013-2018 SCORP. Cooperative Extension developed a web-based survey with input from the stakeholder Advisory Work Group. The survey was widely distributed to recreation stakeholders throughout the state of New Hampshire.

## **Survey Methodology:**

The survey was developed by UNH Cooperative Extension with input from the stakeholder Advisory Work Group and staff at NH Office of Energy and Planning and NH Parks and Recreation. The survey was designed to gather information regarding the outdoor recreation and land conservation planning needs and management priorities for communities throughout the state of New Hampshire. The survey results are intended to inform and update the goals and objectives for the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan currently under revision.

This was a web-based survey sent to targeted stakeholders (individuals and organizations) in the recreation, natural resource management, land conservation, public health and planning fields throughout the state of New Hampshire. The survey link was also posted on the NH Office of Energy and Planning website and circulated widely on various targeted lists such as the Recreation Association and Plan Link NH. The survey was available from October 28, 2011 through November 11, 2011. 136 survey responses were received.

## **Overview of Survey Respondents:**

The survey was taken by 136 recreation and conservation leaders throughout New Hampshire. 47% of those taking the survey identified themselves with a title in recreation, most often as director of recreation. Others taking the survey include conservation commission members, conservation organization staff, recreation users and town officials and state personnel. The majority (76%) of respondents have been in their position with a recreation or conservation organization for 10 years or less. Seven respondents have held their position for more than 20 years.

**Respondents Organizations:**

Those responding to the survey serve a varied number of constituents ranging from as few as 100 to over 100,000. The majority of respondents serve year- round users and a small number serve seasonal users although most indicated they do not or are unable to track this data. The respondents had a mix of part-time, seasonal and full time staff with volunteers representing a large number of “workers” to help recreation and conservation organizations accomplish their work.

**Table 1 - The type of organizations represented in the survey responses**

Response	% of Total Respondents	%
Recreation Department		27%
Town Conservation Commission		11%
Town Planning Board		5%
Town Select Board		2%
Non-Profit Organization		36%
Other, please specify*		19%

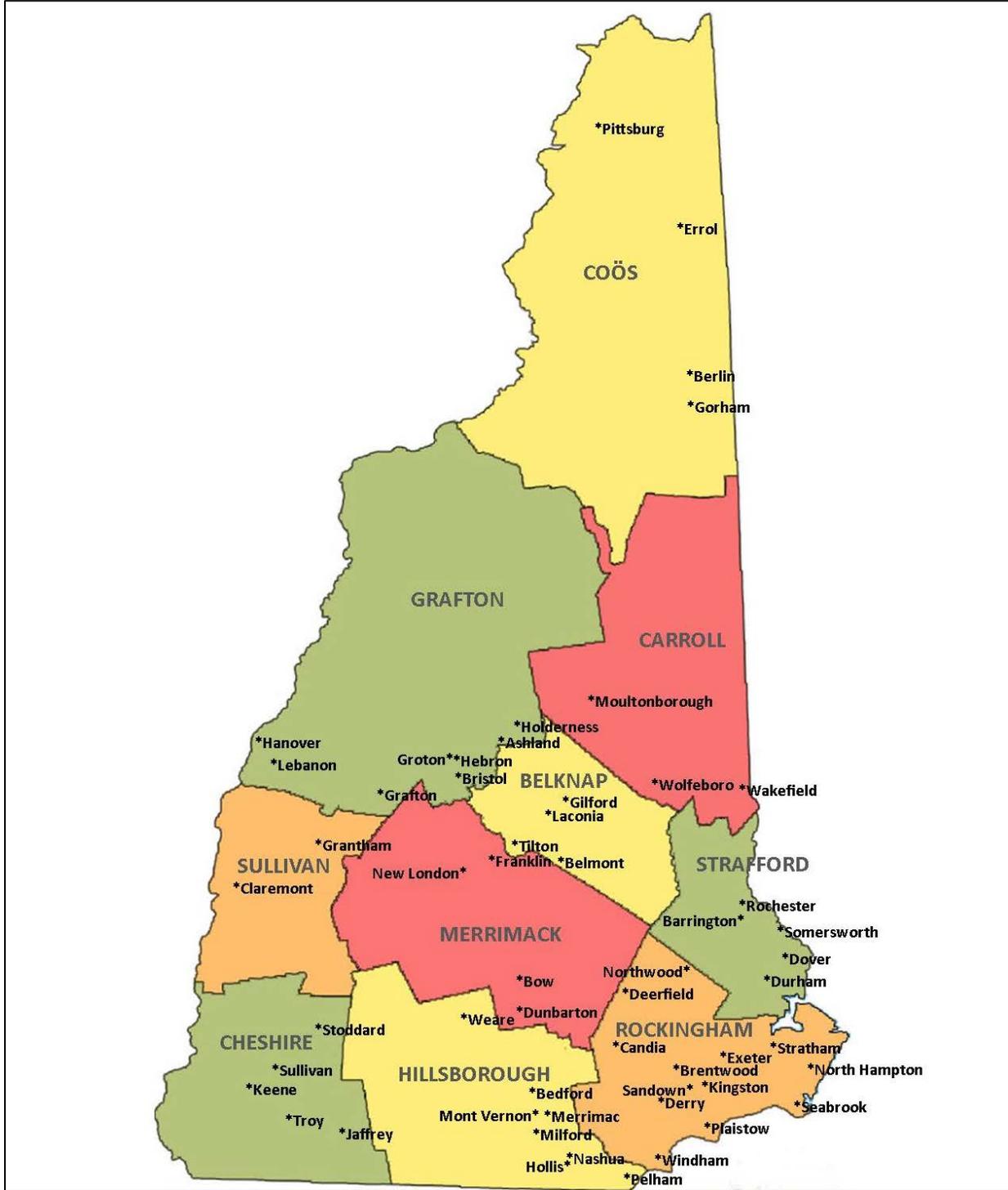
\*This category included state government, regional planning organizations, trail groups, town recreation committees and ATV and snowmobile club representatives.

**Table 2 – Primary purpose or philosophy of the responding organizations**

Response	% of Total Respondents	%
Our primary purpose is the protection and/or conservation of natural resources.		12%
Our primary purpose is the development and/or promotion of public outdoor recreation use on conservation land.		11%
Our primary purpose is to promote a balance between conservation and recreation use of natural resources.		34%
Our primary purpose is to provide community recreation programs		27%
Other purpose (please specify)		16%

## Survey Respondents Service Area

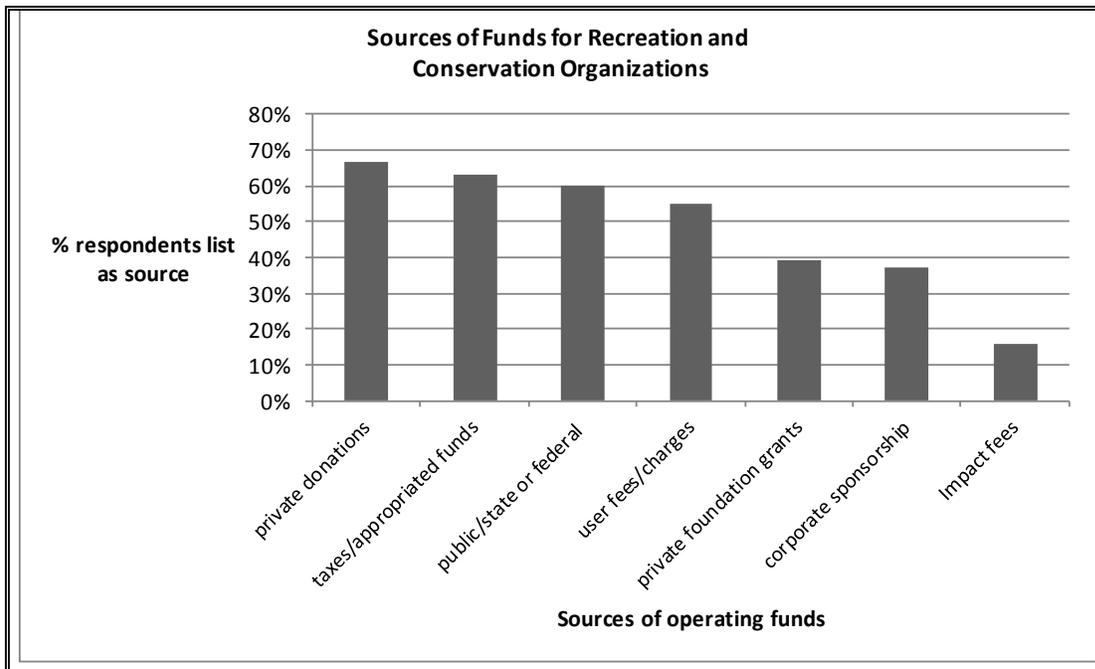
Survey respondents largely represented a city or town as their service area (57%). Other survey respondents represented a region (21%) or they serve the entire state (21%). Some towns, counties, regions or the state were represented by more than one survey response.



## Funding and Support of Recreation and Conservation Organizations

Recreation and conservation leaders were asked to indicate the sources of operating funds for their organizations. In addition to the sources of funds listed here, some respondents also listed endowments, fundraising events and membership dues as other sources of funds. Private donations are listed as a source of funds by 67% of respondents while 63% list taxes and appropriate funds as a source and 60% list state or federal funds as a source.

**Table 3 – Sources of Funds for Recreation and Conservation Organizations**



The majority of respondents indicated funding as a top challenge for their organization. 40% indicated that public funding had “stayed about the same” and 27% indicated it declined.

**Table 4 - Recreation and conservation leaders view of the change in public funding support for outdoor recreation and conservation over the past 5 years:**

Response	% of Total Respondents	%
Remarkably improved		5%
Improved		19%
Stayed about the same		40%
Declined		27%
Remarkably declined		9%

## Planning Priorities for Outdoor Recreation and Conservation

Below are all the planning priorities for outdoor recreation and conservation which were presented in the survey. Table 5 shows the highest to lowest planning priority of those who indicated it as a high or medium priority. See Appendix A for all data.

**Table 5 - Planning priorities for outdoor recreation and conservation**

PLANNING PRIORITIES FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND CONSERVATION	High priority	Medium priority	Total
Encourage keeping private lands open to the public for outdoor recreation opportunities	66%	21%	87%
Encourage partnerships and cooperation between diverse users of recreational land	59%	28%	87%
Focus on collaboration, volunteerism and environmental education particularly for youth, in developing and maintaining outdoor recreation areas	42%	44%	86%
Encourage local development that supports connectivity of open space for recreational and cultural uses	56%	28%	84%
Cultivate a new generation of users (i.e. under-served audiences) by increasing awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities	48%	33%	81%
Focus efforts statewide toward development of and access to outdoor recreational opportunities that connect people to where they live and work	40%	41%	81%
Partner with organizations to foster the connection between outdoor recreation, health and wellness	40%	31%	71%
Increase opportunities for under-served groups (seniors, multilingual, youth, disabled) to participate in outdoor recreation	29%	42%	71%
Prioritize renovation/refurbishment of existing recreational facilities over funding new land acquisition	26%	44%	70%
Improve the diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities, particularly in urban areas	28%	34%	62%

## Vision, Challenges and Priorities

### Vision

Survey respondents were asked to share comments and their “vision” for outdoor recreation in New Hampshire. The three most common comments describe outdoor recreation as (1) adding to the quality of life in New Hampshire; (2) being a part of the culture and; (3) having a strong, positive impact on the economy. Respondent’s vision for outdoor recreation had common themes which are described below.

#### Vision for Outdoor Recreation:

- Serving diverse populations across the state
- A mix of resident users and visitors
- An educational component for users and providers
- An expansion of current funding and plan for future funding
- Diverse opportunities for a variety of users
- Trail expansion, maintenance and connecting trails
- Strong partnerships among community organizations, business community and public sector

“We need to improve opportunities for all and connectivity of parcels via trails.” survey respondent on vision for outdoor recreation.

#### Top Challenges for Recreation and Conservation Leaders:

Survey respondents were asked to list their top 3 challenges in the next 5 years. They were not asked to rank their top three challenges just list them. Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated funding and financial support as a top challenge. Of the many challenges identified, top ones included:

Funding:	Current and future project funding and overall financial support for recreation lands, facilities and programs.
Projects:	Initiation and completion of trails, parks, bridges, athletic fields and increasing the amount of conservation lands.
Education:	Educating users, potential users and private landowners on opportunities, rights and responsibilities with recreation lands and facilities.
Volunteers:	The immediate need for volunteers and a larger concern about attracting volunteers in the future.
Government:	The political atmosphere, the need for legislative support and political leadership were cited. All levels of government – local, state and federal were seen as a challenge.
User Conflicts:	Managing and reducing conflict with different user groups on recreation lands.

## **Top Priorities for Recreation and Conservation Leaders:**

Survey respondents were given an open ended question to list their priorities for outdoor recreation and conservation. Responses were given as a short phrase or sentence. Top priorities fell into the following categories.

Trails: Improving and developing trails (hiking, walking, biking, riding) with a focus on connectivity with existing trails and newly developed trails

Land Conservation: Additional land acquisition and land conservation efforts

Stewardship: Stewardship of existing recreation and conservation lands

Education: Education of outdoor recreation users, potential users and private landowners

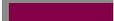
Other priorities listed by respondents include project planning; improved access to outdoor recreation and conservation land and overall increased usage of outdoor recreation and conservation lands. Single respondents indicated increased staff, policy issues, tourism, senior citizens, health objectives, minority populations and partnerships as priorities.

## **Key Findings**

### **Key Findings of the Survey:**

- Outdoor recreation is seen as adding to the quality of life in New Hampshire and is a contributing factor in the economic health of the state.
- Funding outdoor recreation is the top challenge for recreation and conservation leaders
- Leaders support a vision which includes increasing access to underserved populations, providing diverse opportunities and bringing in a new generation of users.
- Trail work and making connections between trails is a priority for recreation and conservation leaders.
- There is strong support for keeping private lands open for outdoor recreation opportunities
- Volunteers are important to outdoor recreation and conservation work and there is a concern about developing a volunteer base for the future.
- Education is seen as an important component to outdoor recreation use and land conservation.

**Appendix A: Priorities for outdoor recreation and conservation in the next 5 years:**

<b>A. Encourage local development that supports connectivity of open space for recreational and cultural uses</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		0%
Low Priority		16%
Medium Priority		28%
High Priority		56%

<b>B. Prioritize renovation/ refurbishment of existing recreational facilities over funding new land acquisition</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		10%
Low Priority		20%
Medium Priority		44%
High Priority		26%

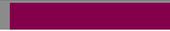
<b>C. Encourage keeping private lands open to the public for outdoor recreation opportunities</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		2%
Low Priority		11%
Medium Priority		21%
High Priority		66%

**Priorities for outdoor recreation and conservation in the next 5 years (cont'd):**

<b>D. Improve the diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities, particularly in urban areas</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		10%
Low Priority		28%
Medium Priority		34%
High Priority		28%

<b>E. Increase opportunities for under-served groups (seniors, multilingual, youth, disabled) to participate in outdoor recreation</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		3%
Low Priority		26%
Medium Priority		42%
High Priority		29%

<b>F. Encourage partnerships and cooperation between diverse users of recreational land</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		1%
Low Priority		13%
Medium Priority		28%
High Priority		59%

<b>G. Focus on collaboration, volunteerism and environmental education particularly for youth, in developing and maintaining outdoor recreation areas.</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		2%
Low Priority		12%
Medium Priority		44%
High Priority		42%

**Priorities for outdoor recreation and conservation in the next 5 years (cont'd):**

<b>H. Focus efforts statewide toward development of and access to outdoor recreational opportunities that connect people to where they live and work</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		4%
Low Priority		15%
Medium Priority		41%
High Priority		40%

<b>I. Partner with organizations to foster the connection between outdoor recreation, health and wellness</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		5%
Low Priority		24%
Medium Priority		31%
High Priority		40%

<b>J. Cultivate a new generation of users (i.e. under-served audiences) by increasing awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Not a Priority		3%
Low Priority		15%
Medium Priority		33%
High Priority		48%

## **Appendix B: Specific projects identified for outdoor recreation and conservation efforts in the next 5 years**

Significant trail work to stop prevent erosion in Purgatory Brook Watershed including installation of water-bars, moving rocks, upkeep of overgrown trails, etc.

We have a small park and pond in town center that needs significant work and are in the process of devising plan for dredging the pond to open up springs, and clean up area around pond, prevention of algae blooms, etc. It's a great place for children to ice skate, fishing derbies, etc. We have enlisted conceptual plan from engineer but needs funds to go forward.

Hebert Town Forest was harvested several years ago, now needs clean up, maintenance and marking of new trails, some bridge work for wet areas. 4) Private land owner wants to donate 20 acres to town for conservation land to be used for public recreation. We are in the process of hiring surveyor to change lot line, and needs funds to find non-profit to hold conservation easement.

Walking track around our town park

Increase year-round outdoor community events

13 mile woods trail, flume brook trail

Access to Headwaters designated roads

Adding service facilities at recreational areas to reduce discharge of untreated waste; supporting watershed groups to engage in direct resource management & protection

All cluster subdivisions

As stated above

Bocce courts

Building an Outdoor Education & Research Facility on summit of Mt Washington

Cain Brook watershed, dredge two ponds, restructure earthen dam to natural rock riffle aquatic passage

Children in Nature

Completed 24 acre development for Recreation usage

Complete athletic field expansion

Complete riverwalk path project

Connecticut Lakes Head Waters ATV trail access to connect with the Errol, NH ATV trail system.

Continue to support FNRT efforts and increase awareness of towns and state that Class VI roads are a legacy to future of NH recreation and should be protected and preserved.

Creating water trails.

Daniell Park - Basketball Court

Odell Park - Fishing Pier

Stone Park - Replace Playground Equipment

Stone Park - Basketball Court

Daniell Park - Picnic Area

Odell Park - Surveillance Equipment

Odell Park - Ice Skating Rink

Developed walking trail system in the Concord Hospital campus area.

Development of regional parks and active recreation facilities

Dover Community Trail.

Forbes on Long Hill Road.

Several confidential projects.

Economic Impact Study

Economic Impact Study

establishment of legacy funding and conservation easements on currently identified private holdings

Exeter River Clean-Up

Buffer and Erosion Control Projects along Exeter River  
 Land Conservation Projects  
 Explore sale of carbon credits as income source for NH forest landowners  
 Extend and upgrade trail systems to connect existing parks, design and build a new facility with bathrooms and storage at an existing park,  
 Fall Festival  
 Moonlight Snowshoe Walks  
 Vernal Pools Workshops  
 Geocaching Events  
 Field expansion and recreation trail construction  
 Friends of Northwood Meadows State Park improvements; Isinglass River LAC management plan; Northwood Area Land Management Collaborative educational activities.  
 Fully fixing up scoutland in rollinsford, for all to use  
 Habitat demonstration plantings.  
 Landowner relations signage.  
 habitat plantings, education and outreach  
 I have taken part in many community cleanups along the Sugar River Recreational Rail trail, have cleared many deadfall trees from the Rail trail, and have built bridges over freshwater streams in the woods of Claremont and Newport as part of Sullivan County ATV Club.  
 Improved numerous trails, built bridges, installed culverts and added trail signage.  
 Improvement of current trails.  
 Increase and improve the trail system in and around Northwood Meadows State Park  
 invasive species control on our preserves  
 Build new trails  
 Better interpretation of our conserved lands  
 Jericho Lake ATV State Park  
 Lake Winnepesaukee watershed management plan  
 Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant program  
 Land protection around Oyster River water supply  
 Landowner permission & trail building the Seven Islands Bridge location on Rte. 26 between Milan & Errol.  
 Legislative initiatives to help landowners keep their lands open  
 Lighting multipurpose fields to increase capacity instead of just building more fields  
 Linking trail networks  
 Locate more carriage drive areas  
 Maglaras Park redevelopment in conjunction with the development of the Cocheco River waterfront and Riverwalk Park.  
 Maintenance of the Hopkinton-Everett Riding area.  
 Manchester Airport Access Road path and on-highway bicycle access, Windham Rail Trail, Northern Rail Trail, proposed Memorial Bridge multi-modal connectivity.  
 mapping, signing, tread improvement, possible bridge construction  
 Mascoma River Greenway (Rail Trail extension).  
 Outdoor Adventure programming.  
 More trails, Land owner permission, building bridges, cutting new trails.  
 Must keep all land owners update on club trails movement to help keep getting use of their land for today and years ahead  
 New ballfields  
 New walking trail, benches, trash receptacles etc. for parks.

Rail trail system work and connections.  
 With SPNHF on Black Mtn (Kearsarge) and Pillsbury-Sunapee Ridge; work with ASLPT on land conservation; work with towns on planning and zoning.  
 OHRV Trail from Rollinsford, NH. to Wakefield NH.  
 Parson Main/Central Square Project  
 Wyandotte Walkway  
 Riverwalk  
 Pat for new groomer being delivered this fall--- Repairs to old groomer---  
 Repair storm damages to 130 miles of trails  
 Pursue purchase of property on Lake Winnesquam  
 Pisgah, Pawtuckaway and Bear Brook State Parks and Conservation Land  
 Planning to Complete the third phase of a three phase playground project.  
 Re-finishing our four tennis courts and one outdoor tennis court.  
 Protection of 20 acres of agricultural land. This is Phase 2 of a project started in 2010.  
 Purchase of fee simple land and easements and donations of same  
 Rebuilding washed out trails and maintaining trail systems.  
 Re-establish trail system formerly maintained by the now defunct Epping Traildusters, re-establish trails on the East side of Rt. 125 that lead to Pawtuckaway State Park as well as re-establish trails in and around Kingston State Park.  
 Refurbish public pools  
 Improve current active parks  
 Improve maintenance of trails  
 Maintain a higher level of service with less staff  
 Renovate and increase our playing fields. Adding a walking trail  
 Revamp field at playground  
 Remove milfoil at beach  
 Connect pathway to road  
 River walk and pavilion grant application with LWCF  
 River Walk and walking trails and OHRV trails.  
 Same as above  
 Setting up programs to familiarize people with the outdoor recreational opportunities here in our community  
 Start a capital campaign and find new funding sources.  
 supporting amendment of SB107  
 CLHW property 5 year plan  
 To widen some of the trails for better access and for safety reasons. To fix bridges add better signage. mapping the trail system with GPS for quicker response to locate an injured person  
 Town owned property.  
 Trail and sidewalk improvements.  
 Trail maintenance  
 Boundary identification  
 We have 37 project to finish from prior grant rounds and will announce awards to about 24 more in December of this year  
 We need another regulation baseball field & a long term plan for a new Rec Complex  
 We would to build a club house for meetings safety course classes a stopping point for our trail users and info area  
 Web site

## Appendix C: 2013-2018 Advisory Group Work Team

### Organization

Granite State Independent Living  
White Mountain Attractions  
Center for Health Promotion  
Department of Transportation  
NH Department of Resources and Economic Development  
NH Fish and Game Department  
NH Office of Energy and Planning  
Town of Moultonborough  
NH Rivers Council  
NH Snowmobile Assoc.  
NH Bureau of Trails - DRED  
NH Department of Resources and Economic Development  
NH Division of Parks and Rec  
Audubon Society of NH  
NH Grand/Northern Community Investment Corporation  
NH Recreation and Parks Association  
Forest Society  
NH Wildlife Federation  
NH Department of Resources and Economic Development  
NH Department of Environmental Services  
NH Department of Environmental Services

### Contact

Jeff Dickinson  
Jayne O'Connor  
Jason Aziz  
Tom Jameson  
Johanna Lyons  
Judy Silverberg  
Joanne Cassulo  
Donna Kuethe  
Michele Tremblay  
Gail Hanson  
Chris Gamache  
Gail Wolek  
Jane Carey  
Carol Foss  
Samantha Kenney Maltais  
Herb Greene  
Will Abbott  
Ed Boyle  
Diane Holmes  
Carolyn Russell  
Jackie Colburn