

A Call to Action:



The Report of the Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont State Parks

December 2008

A Call to Action: Parks Commission Report

Executive Summary

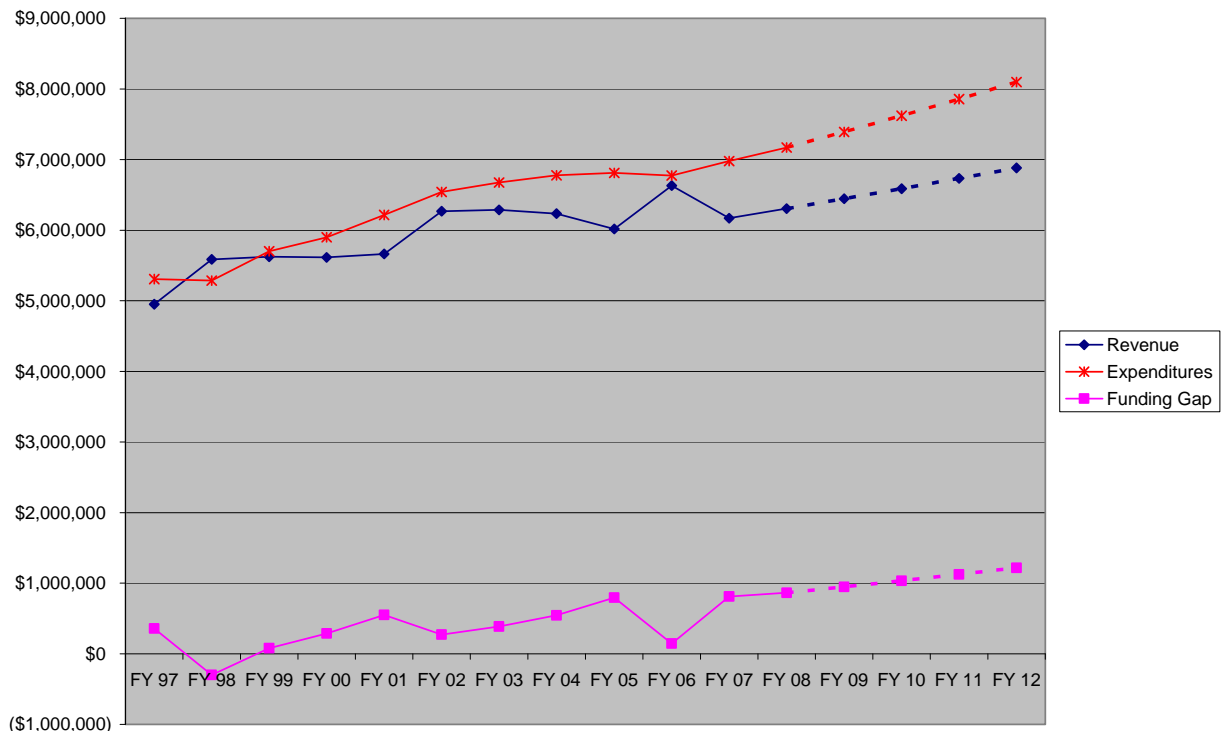
Introduction and background

The purpose of the Vermont State Parks is to provide access to a wide variety of environmentally inspired recreational and educational experiences while striving to be a leader in land stewardship.

State parks contribute significantly to the health, culture, economy and overall quality of life of Vermonters. Most park facilities were constructed during two periods of development. The first phase of development took place in the 1930's by the CCC. The second phase took place in the 1960's and was driven by a desire to accommodate a growing tourism industry. Because of long lived construction techniques employed in the 1930's and less durable efforts completed in the 1960's, both sets of facilities are coming to the end of their useful life at the same time. Today, the cost of addressing deferred maintenance and renovation for the park system totals \$40 million.

Additionally, the gap between revenue generated and the costs associated with operating and maintaining the park system is growing by \$300,000 per year. Day use attendance has declined steadily since the 1970's. Camping attendance has also declined (but not as dramatically).

Vermont State Parks Revenue & Expenditures



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The Commission has identified three fundamental problems facing the state park system:

- 1) **Meeting Public Demand:** The park system and its services and programs must meet the current and future needs of Vermonters and their visitors. The system must provide the experience desired by its customers.
- 2) **Capital Investment:** Based on conservative estimates, the cost of the dramatic backlog of deferred maintenance, renovation and repair to facilities and structures is projected to increase from \$40 million to \$64 million in the next ten years.
- 3) **Operational Expense Escalation:** Operational expenses of the park system have been cut to the bone. The result of simple inflation combined with flat or declining attendance, is an ever-increasing gap between operational expenses and available revenues.

Problem 1: Meeting Public Demand

Solution: Re-vision the system of state parks

The Commission does not believe simply fixing old infrastructure as it exists is an appropriate use of funds. While continuing to work on the most urgent and obvious needs, we recommend a review of the entire park system take place to determine whether changes in facilities or services are necessary to position each park to best meet current and future demands. Specifically:

- This process will involve an internal review of each park to determine how well it is positioned to meet demands. It is expected that some parks may be deemed suitable as they are currently configured while other parks may require investment to change or remove barriers to their suitability.
- Many park facilities serve obvious local recreational interests, and it is important that local stakeholders are an integral part of the review process. The park system must build strong community relationships and establish a sense of local ownership to ensure those parks remain relevant to the people who benefit from them most.
- The park specific review process can be as simple or as complex as is necessary to achieve the greatest return for the effort. The result will be an action plan for the

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Park system that ensures it is relevant, efficient and meaningful to today's Vermonters, worthy of their active use, admiration and support.

The Commission calls for \$50,000 funding to assure timely completion of the park system re-visioning exercise

Problem 2: Capital Investment

Solution: A Public/Private joint venture

The Commission believes that, over time, significant funds can be privately raised to support the state park system. However, to inspire the confidence of the private sector, the public sector will need to make a commitment to fund rebuilding the basic parks infrastructure.

- Private support must be focused on establishing an independent and effective Vermont State Parks Foundation which will provide a sustainable source of private capital to support and advocate for the park system.
- Public support through the issuance of capital bonds specifically for parks infrastructure rehabilitation will be essential to demonstrate public sector resolve, critical for attracting private philanthropic support.
- Both sides of this partnership can support each other in creative ways furthering their mutual objective of bettering the park system.

The Commission calls for \$75,000 of “seed money” to establish the Vermont State Parks Foundation, with this amount to be matched by at least \$75,000 from private sources.

The Commission calls for eventual future issuance of general obligation bonds with proceeds specifically earmarked for , and sufficient for the purpose of addressing deferred maintenance throughout the park system. (An incremental \$40 million over 5 to 10 years).

Problem 3: Operational Expense Escalation

Solution: The Commission believes the surest way to address this issue is through the system-wide re-visioning process described earlier. This assessment process, followed by appropriate capital improvements will realign infrastructure and programming with user

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needs, thereby making the parks more relevant. If completed properly, the re-visioning process will inspire both greater support for allocation of public funding and private sector philanthropic funding for sustaining and expanding park services.

Solution: The Commission believes the State must create workforce development partnerships and partnerships that enhance the outdoor education and recreation opportunities.

The Commission calls for:

- The Governor to direct appropriate state agencies to foster relationships that will benefit both the park system and the partnering programs.
- Significant expansion of a wide variety of private sector partnerships to expand specific uses where appropriate (e.g. mountain biking, horseback riding and motorized recreational use).
- The Vermont State Parks Foundation to develop resources to assist the park system in establishing and managing an extensive partnership program.

Conclusion

The Commission feels strongly that these recommendations, taken together, represent the best hope for achieving the promise of vitality and sustainability for the state park system. The three fundamental challenges facing the park system can be solved only through creative and practical partnerships that enhance the parks' resources and expand their community of supporters.

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Commission Members:

Win Smith, Chair

Thomas Hark, Co-Chair

Stanley (“Pal”) Borofsky, public member

Hugh Bradshaw, Agency of Human Services

Nick Caputo, State Parks

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John Fischer, Department of Education

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Jonathan Wood, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

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Introduction

A vital system of state parks is critical to the health, culture, economy and overall quality of life of Vermonters. Our state parks are an essential part of our heritage and it is incumbent upon all Vermonters to honor our responsibility to future generations by renewing our commitment to our parks and to all they contribute to our way of life. Bold, powerful and creative action must be taken now before the value of the park resources is diminished beyond repair. The Governor's Commission on the Future of State Parks presents this report and the recommendations herein with the strong belief that, as a holistic solution, this entire package of recommendations offers the best hope for the future of these state treasures.

The purpose of the Vermont State Parks is to provide access to a wide variety of environmentally inspired recreational and educational experiences while striving to be a leader in land stewardship.

Vermonters are fortunate to have such a large and diverse system of state parks. The fifty-two developed park areas spread throughout the state offer a variety of opportunities for outdoor recreational activities. The system, however, is at a turning point.

Despite valiant efforts by park staff, the facilities and infrastructure built mostly in the 1930's and 1960's is in dire need of renovation and rehabilitation. Based on an assessment conducted in 1999, an estimated \$40 million is needed to bring the system to acceptable contemporary standards. To date, available capital funding has fallen far short of meeting these needs. In fact, some facilities have already been decommissioned for lack of resources to keep them safe and useable. More facilities are expected to fail as maintenance and renovation are further deferred.

Operational costs are escalating much faster than are corresponding sources of operating revenue. From 1983 through 2002, the operation and maintenance of the system was supported entirely by park entrance and service fees as well as lease payments by private ski areas operating on state land. Despite significant cost reductions and fee increases, expenses have outpaced revenues. Since FY2003, General Fund support has been used to fill this gap. Annual operating expenses of the park system have continued to escalate between \$150,000 and \$300,000 each year with no increase in services. Unless additional funds are found annually, park services will be scaled back suddenly and severely in the near future. (See Appendices 1 and 2).

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The Commission has identified three fundamental challenges facing the state park system:

- 1) **Meeting Public Demand:** The park system and its services and programs must meet the current and future needs of Vermonters and our visitors. The park system must provide the experiences desired by its customers.
- 2) **Capital Investment:** Based upon conservative estimates, the cost of the dramatic backlog of deferred maintenance, renovation and repair to facilities and structures is projected to increase from \$40 million to \$64 million in the next ten years.
- 3) **Operational Expense Escalation:** The result of simple inflation is an ever-increasing gap between operational expenses and available revenues.

The Governor's Executive Order charged the Commission with focusing on the theme of **partnerships**. Partnerships can dramatically stretch available resources and expand the community of park users and supporters. The park system will flourish only by capturing and focusing the collective energy of multiple partners in as many creative ways as possible. We see opportunities to build upon and expand crucial existing partnerships with other state agencies, educational institutions and non-profit partners. These sorts of partnerships can certainly provide both direct and indirect support for the needs of the park system. Thinking more broadly, the Commission believes the State can act as the catalyst for a much more significant new partnership by supporting the creation of a private foundation that would focus on Vermont State Parks.

The remainder of this report is organized into discussion of the specific challenges listed above and recommended solutions.

Problem 1: Meeting Public Demand

The first step to attracting a level of attention and support necessary to sustain the park system is to ensure the facilities, programs and services offered are, in fact, meeting today's needs and demands. The parks must be valuable, meaningful and relevant to Vermonters. Operating traditional park facilities in traditional ways in the midst of a changing society is not a recipe for success. Most Vermont State Parks, like virtually all other state parks across the country, were created and developed during the 1930's with resources from the workforce of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Facilities were designed to meet the public recreation needs at the time as interest in camping and picnicking and the use of the automobile for recreational travel were blossoming. Another period of parks expansion occurred in Vermont in the 1960's. The design of this second phase of parks was similar to that of parks built by the CCC

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which had been validated by the significant growth in interest for state parks that came after WWII and continued throughout the 1950's.

Park attendance for day use activity has generally been in decline since the 1970's. Camping attendance has also been in decline, but not nearly as much so. While this trend tracks the broader experience of the National Park Service, it does not reflect patterns of many other state park systems. Although there are a number of valid possible reasons for this pattern, it is clear, at least in general principle, that people will choose to visit their parks if they find them relevant to their needs and interests. Considering the Vermont State Park system receives over 700,000 visits per year and considering the very high level of satisfaction indicated by visitor surveys, it is obvious that the park system is still valuable and relevant to a large number of people. Yet, despite this loyal following, the decline in use indicates that the parks are less relevant to an increasing number of today's users.

Recreational needs, demands and interests of the public are very different now than they were when the park system was developed. There is greater interest in such activities as hiking, mountain biking, motorized use, paddling of all sorts, horse camping, and camping with more comfort than the original tent camping. Parks today also serve as excellent settings for experiential education in environmental awareness and resource stewardship.

Solution: Re-vision the system of state parks

It would not be wise to simply retain all facilities unchanged or to continue offering the same services at the same facilities. Rather, a system wide effort must be undertaken to evaluate each state park to determine whether changes in facilities or services are necessary to position each park to best meet current and future needs.

Specifically:

- Armed with a broad understanding of both local and statewide outdoor recreation market trends, parks staff will conduct an internal review of each park to determine how well positioned each is to meet demands and needs. It is expected that some parks may be deemed suitable as they are currently configured while others may require investment to change or remove barriers to their suitability.
- For many park facilities which serve obvious local recreational interests, it is important that local stakeholders are an integral part of the review process. . The park system must build strong community relationships and establish a sense of local ownership to ensure those parks remain relevant to the people who benefit from them most. Local input will give

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greater credibility to the assessment process and will create a foundation for future important local partnerships. Similarly, it will be important for any other relevant advocacy interests to participate as their support will be of value moving forward.

Some examples of changes that should be considered include:

- Year-round staffing at selected parks to enhance offerings and build community connections
- Motorized recreation vehicles and other non-traditional uses at selected parks
- Emphasis on “off season” activities
- Expand program services
- Trail connections from park to park and from parks to other nearby public lands
- Enhance energy efficiency and alternative energy measures
- Reduce or eliminate facilities that no longer serve today’s needs and have little potential to do so even with investment

The park specific review process can be as simple or as complex as it needs to be to achieve the greatest return for the effort. The result will be an action plan for the park system that ensures it is relevant, efficient and meaningful to today’s Vermonters, worthy of their admiration and support. The plan will list changes, improvements and enhancements requiring investment in order of priority to achieve the greatest and quickest return on invested capital. Throughout this re-visioning process, work will continue on urgent and obvious needs.

The Commission calls for:

- Thorough re-visioning of the park system based on a park specific review that can be as simple or as involved as it needs to be to achieve the greatest return for the effort. Funding (\$50,000) will assure a timely completion.
- **Return:** An action plan for the park system which will ensure the parks are relevant to today’s visitors. Modified facilities and enhanced services, that respond to users’ needs will correlate directly to increased attendance and operating revenue.

Problem 2: Capital Investment

The need for capital investment in the park system is well documented. It is also obvious that without a new, bold alternative to financing the parks’ capital needs, the system will quickly deteriorate past the point of repair and the value of the park system will be lost to Vermonters. Achieving a bold vision requires a new and innovative approach to funding rehabilitation of the park system infrastructure. A collaborative effort that provides for a

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public-private partnership will best enable the State of Vermont to ensure that the legacy of its State Parks continues well into the future.

Solution: A Public/Private Joint Venture

Private Sector Support:

The Commission's research suggests the viability of a non-profit, private sector-based organization that would support state parks, a Vermont State Parks Foundation. Modeled after similar entities in other geographies, such an organization would leverage strong "pro-Vermont" sentiment (which exists not only here in Vermont but also far from the Green Mountains) to mobilize broad financial support for the park system. Over time, the yield from this contribution would support the park system in a variety of substantive ways. Initial conversations suggest significant funds can be privately raised in the years ahead in support of the park system.

Today, many philanthropists and philanthropic organizations have developed an approach to giving that is investment oriented. Said differently, these donors seek to maximize the return on their donation, or "investment." The currently challenged condition of Vermont's State Parks therefore creates an opportunity: certain donors may be attracted by the prospect of funding lasting change that will keep the park system vital and relevant. A well-crafted philanthropic appeal will, by its very nature, be imbued with the essential character of the parks' history: their very existence reflects the original acts of philanthropy—in some cases, nearly a century ago—that provided a lasting gift which has inspired a shared sense of place and community to stand for generations to come.

Public Sector Support:

Yet savvy donors will be unwilling to "invest" many millions of dollars in a park system where the long-employed approach of deferring maintenance has taken its toll. With an unfunded obligation of \$40 million, responding on an annual basis with a meager appropriation from the annual capital appropriation does not represent sound fiscal policy. The infrastructure of Vermont's State Parks represents a pool of long-lived assets, and the most appropriate means of funding a pool of long-lived assets is with long-term debt—in this case, with a special-purpose bonding initiative.

Such a targeted use of bonding recognizes the State's low cost of capital, the high rate of inflation on the necessary park projects, the costly degradation suffered by further deferring such expenditures, and the return—in broad-based tourism-related tax receipts—that such investment will provide. Furthermore, with the general obligation bond rating meaningfully

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predicated upon the strength of the tourism sector of Vermont's economy, the eventual issuance of a targeted "Parks Bond" will demonstrate an act of fiduciary responsibility on the part of Vermont's state government, while also inspiring confidence among prospective donors to a non-profit, private sector-based organization that would support Vermont State Parks. (See Appendix 3)

Public/Private Connection:

Without a strong public commitment manifested in a "Parks Bond," donors will be hesitant to commit capital to a parks system currently plagued by failing infrastructure. So, too, without a strong private sector commitment—from individuals, foundations, and corporations, the State will be hesitant to commit to bonding in support of the Parks.

Acknowledging that the taxpayer and the donor have different "investment" tools, they share a common objective: keeping the parks vital and relevant. A properly structured public-private partnership capitalizes on the congruence of public and private interests, and provides an opportunity for each to contribute resources that compliment those of the other, recognizing that if their shared aspirations for the future of Vermont State Parks are to be achieved, neither can go it alone.

The Commission calls for:

Funding for Vermont State Parks Foundation: \$75,000

- **Purpose:** To be used as "seed money" to fund organization development, director salary, advocacy, fundraising (feasibility study), partnerships and volunteer group relationship development, and participation in park system re-visioning exercise
- **Source:** General fund allocation of \$75,000 to be matched with at least \$75,000 of private funds
- **Return:** Lay the groundwork for raising substantial philanthropic funds to support the park system, add value to the re-visioning process (community connection, validation of commitment to public involvement in the process, Foundation ownership in process and outcomes, volunteer efforts to help with the re-visioning process), enhance park programs and services and possibly achieve cost reductions by fostering partnerships and volunteerism.

Eventual future issuance of general obligation bonds, with proceeds specifically earmarked for, and sufficient for the purpose addressing deferred maintenance throughout the park system (an incremental \$40 million over 5 to 10 years).

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- **Use:** Proceeds from the “parks bond” will be used to rehabilitate parks infrastructure and to enhance targeted facilities in keeping with the recommendations developed through the re-visioning process.
- **Source:** State bond issuance. Prior to implementing any phase of park redevelopment, the necessary public/private funding mix will be established and supported by project specific cost-benefit data and agreed upon by public and private partners.
- **Return:** A park system that is responsive to the needs and demands of Vermonters and is therefore, sustainable.

Problem 3: Operational Expense Escalation

Funding for operation and maintenance of the park system is derived from three primary sources: revenue from fees and charges at park facilities; revenue from leases held by private ski resorts that operate on state lands; and General Fund support. With expenses growing by up to \$300,000 per year, alternative sources and/or creative enhancements to these sources must be developed to sustain the park system.

The Commission believes that the proposed re-visioning exercise combined with the creation of a public/private partnership offers a holistic solution to the challenge of near term capital needs and long term sustained operational needs. An effective, well financed private sector partner like the Vermont State Parks Foundation would be an ideal private sector partner allied with the public sector in bettering the park system. Together these partners can work to form strong and meaningful connections between the parks and the communities in which they are located thereby generating the support needed to attract significant public and private resources. The following specific initiatives further address the challenge of escalating operational expenses.

Solution: Create workforce development partnerships

There are a variety of employment and job training programs in Vermont, many of which could be tied to a park system renaissance. The range of programs varies from post-secondary education for engineers to more basic work experience for individuals not yet prepared to enter to the labor market. Depending on the individual client’s needs and goals, programs provide a combination of case management services, job search assistance and financial and tuition assistance. Other programs provide opportunities for participants to practice their new skills or to learn basic work skills. The varied needs of the state park system provide a

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multitude of opportunities for participants in these programs to enhance their abilities. The park system benefits from such partnerships by gaining additional resources and by expanding its community of users and supporters.

Appended to this report (Appendix 4) is a list containing examples of such partnership opportunities to be investigated. Emphasis should be placed on using the Parks' operational and capital needs to craft job opportunities that correspond to the skill levels and capabilities of partner program participants. This will ensure the long term success and sustainability of the partner relationship.

Solution: Create partnerships to enhance the outdoor education and recreation opportunities

Each state park offers unique opportunities for education/interpretation and recreation. As part of the re-visioning process outlined herein, each park will be evaluated in the context of the community in which it is located. Parks can help serve a wide variety of community needs including outdoor recreation, workforce development, and education. Partnerships can be developed to better integrate the parks into their communities. Through partnerships, educational and recreational offerings can be expanded. Although the possibilities are almost infinite, Appendix 5 lists some strong suggestions.

The Commission calls for:

- The Governor to direct all appropriate state agencies to build upon existing long term relationships and to establish new partnerships wherever feasible for maximum possible contribution to the park system.
- The Vermont State Parks Foundation to provide the staff resources necessary to develop and manage partnership relationships. This suggestion acknowledges the importance of having the resources and staffing necessary to maximize these opportunities. Private partner support for this is critical given the severe fiscal constraints facing state government services.

Vermont State Parks Foundation

Integral to the solutions outlined above is the creation of a Vermont State Parks Foundation which will become a partner to the park system. The primary purpose of the Foundation will be to solicit and receive private funds to support the needs of park system. Specific roles and responsibilities will be clearly spelled out in the Foundation bylaws and in a carefully crafted Memorandum of Understanding between the Foundation and the Department of Forests,

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Parks and Recreation. Fundamentally, the Department's role, subject to oversight and approval of the Administration and Legislature will remain unchanged. The Department's role is to establish the direction and priorities for the park system to ensure it serves the best and broadest interests of the citizens of the state. The Foundation's role will be to serve as a partner with the Department gathering the private sector energy and resources in support of the direction and priorities of the Department.

Whenever possible, private donations secured by the Foundation will be placed into the existing Lands and Facilities Stewardship Trust Fund for allocation by the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation for state park facilities. The Trust Fund, established by the General Assembly in 2001 is an income producing fund managed by the State Treasurer from which expenditures can be made to supplement the efforts of the Department in the management and stewardship of State-owned lands and facilities. The Commissioner has the authority subject to approval of the Legislature to use a portion of the proceeds from the Trust Fund for eligible projects not otherwise accommodated in operating budgets. The current fund balance is approximately \$3.2 million almost all of which has been generated by the sale of timber from State Forests. Small amounts have also been generated by private donations and by use permit fees. The legislation establishing the Trust Fund limits both the amount that can be spent from the proceeds and the activities and services it can support. Therefore, to be effective, the Foundation must be able to channel funding more directly to the park system if donations are received for specific projects that are beyond the limitations of the Trust Fund. Any such contributions or spending will be subject to all appropriate approval and oversight by the administration and Legislature. Examples of this include project-specific contributions exceeding the amount authorized for annual use or contributions for uses not authorized for the Fund, such as operational needs and educational and recreational programming.

In addition to fundraising, the Foundation will also act as an advocate for the parks, promote volunteerism and foster partnership development.

Conclusion

All three major challenges facing the state park system (meeting public demand, capital investment and operational expense escalation) are interconnected, as are their solutions. Ensuring the parks' facilities and services are relevant to Vermonters is fundamental to addressing both capital and operational resource needs. Renovated facilities and infrastructure – reconfigured to meet today's needs- allow the parks to remain open and safe and to offer a more relevant visitor experience, thereby enhancing attendance and operating revenue. Creating strong and meaningful partnerships between the parks and their communities, their visitors, state agencies, educational institutions, non-profit groups and philanthropists is key to addressing the challenges facing the park system today. Because of this interconnectedness,

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the Commission feels strongly that all of our recommendations must be taken as a whole. They all rely on each other and none can be expected to succeed on its own. Our state parks contribute to the culture of Vermont in a vast number of ways. We cannot let them continue to decline. They are too important. We all share in their fate and we must all contribute to their sustainable future. Working together we can save these resources but we must be bold and we must act now.

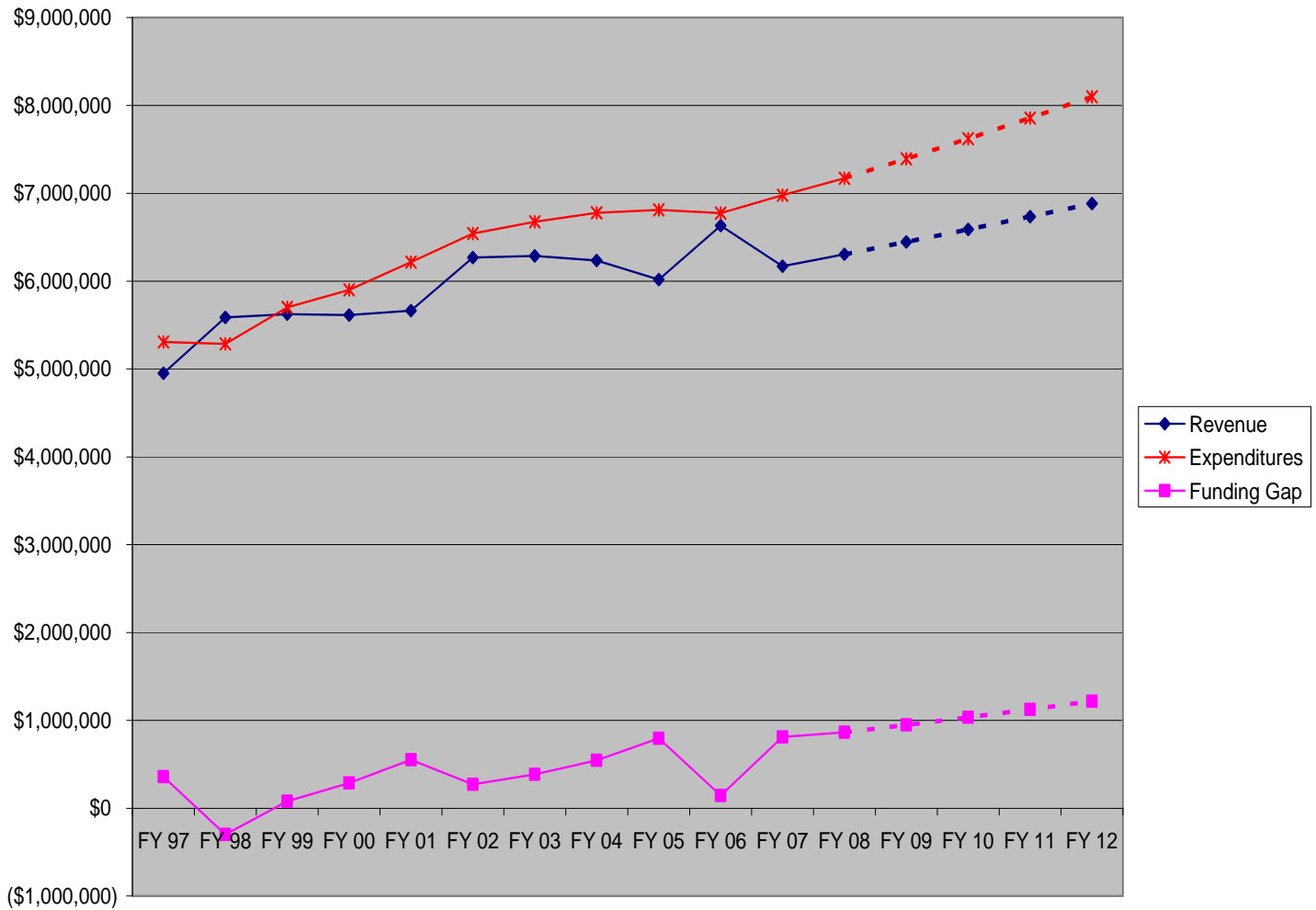
It is important to note three members of the Commission disagree with some aspects of these recommendations as they prefer a greater reliance on public funding (Lands and Facilities Stewardship Trust Fund and fees) and less reliance on the role of a Foundation in meeting the park system's financial challenges.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1

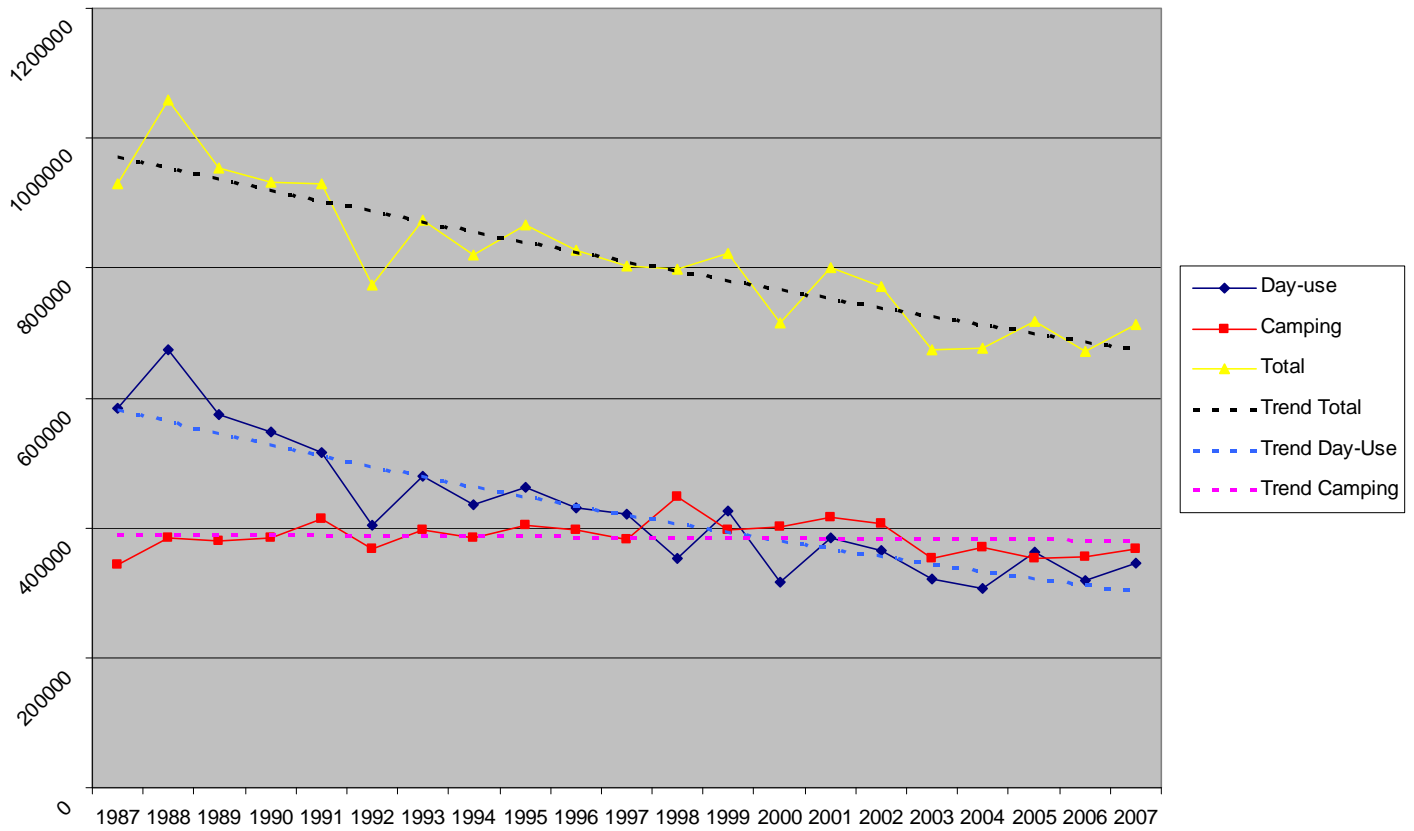
Vermont State Parks Revenue & Expenditures



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Appendix 2

Vermont State Parks - 20 Year Attendance Trend

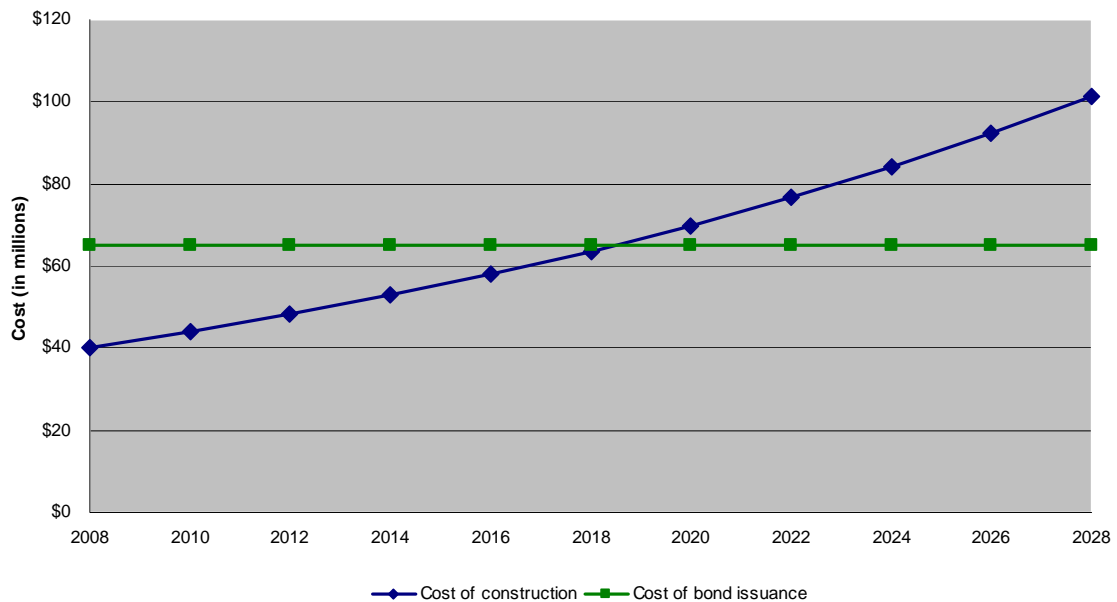


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Appendix 3

Financial Analysis

The clear merit of issuing a “parks bond”:
Borrowing \$40 million yields \$36 million of savings over twenty years



Source: Morgan Stanley municipal finance investment banking group, Turner’s Building Cost Index, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Overview

- The current estimated cost of addressing park system deferred maintenance of facilities and infrastructure is \$40 million; this particular analysis is based on the premise that the Department could reasonably pursue a portfolio of \$40 million worth of projects in the short term.
- The industry standard for inflation on construction costs is Turner’s Building Cost Index; the average rate of growth in the index has been 8.3% over the past five years.
- After review of the deferred maintenance schedule, and consultation with a leading construction firm, a conservative estimate was made as to the “implied cost of delay” – namely, the cost impact that continuing to defer maintenance will have on the degradation of the infrastructure. Due to the current stressed state of the infrastructure, each passing year will cause a further 5.0% increase in the cost of rehabilitation (note that this is a highly conservative estimate; in the

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case of transportation infrastructure, it is well-established that the “degradation curve” is far from linear, and can actually grow at an exponential rate).

- With these two factors applied, this portfolio of projects that would cost \$40 million today will cost \$101 million in twenty years.
- According to the municipal finance investment banking group at Morgan Stanley, the projected all-in true interest cost for a \$40 million bond issuance is 5.15%. (This assumes a twenty year level debt scenario, with a general obligation issuance.)
- With a total cost of the bond issuance of approximately \$65 million, issuing bonds to fund \$40 million of investment today would yield a savings of \$36 million over twenty years.

Appendix 4

Examples of workforce partnerships

- Engineering and architecture: Vermont Technical College, Norwich University and University of Vermont, for example, all have post-secondary engineering and architecture programs. Several of the Regional Technical Centers offer similar subjects to high school age students. All programs are interested in problem-based learning opportunities. With some creative collaboration, park system infrastructure rehabilitation needs that would serve these students could be identified. Small scale rehabilitation design work, civil engineering, landscape design, energy conservation efforts and alternative energy conversions are all examples of viable possibilities.
- Construction: Vermont Technical College has a construction management program and Regional Technical Centers and Job Corps train young people in the construction field. Vermont Works for Women has a number of construction related training programs which includes training women inmates at the Windsor Correctional Facility to construct modular homes. In addition to Vermont Correctional Industries which builds furniture and other facility related products, the Department of Corrections' Northeast Vermont Facility Work Camp has successfully assisted public and non-profit organizations with on-site construction, prefabrication of buildings and some day to day maintenance. Probation and Parole also has work crews to provide light construction and maintenance.
- Park operation, maintenance and administration: Because of the nature of some of the routine summer work that needs to take place in state parks and because they are spread geographically throughout the state, parks can serve as good workforce entry sites. Programs in the Department of Children and Families and Labor need work sites for many Reach Up participants. The Department of Labor issues grants to a number of youth programs such as those of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps for summer employment or to provide alternative educational opportunities. Possibilities exist for students of the New England Culinary Institute to learn and practice food service skills and for Technical centers and Job Corps to perform mechanical and body repairs on park vehicles. Agriculture, forestry and Natural Resource Management programs at some Regional Technical Centers can use parks as laboratories and classrooms related to their subjects. Finally, VDOL provides grants to develop relationships between secondary and post-secondary students and potential employers for internships. The Parks Division may offer internships for students interested in careers in parks and recreation.

Appendix 5

Examples of educational partnerships

- Investigate the creation of college internships with Vermont institutions of higher learning, whereby the State Park Interpretive Program could be run in the late spring and early fall, conducting educational interpretive programs for school children at the end and beginning of the school year, outside the “normal” State Park operating season.
- Establish working relationships with members of member institutions of Vermont SWEEP (Statewide Environmental Education Programs) where those that do not own or have ready access to land based “outdoor classrooms” could use State Parks for their educational offerings.
- Work with businesses such as Eastern Mountain Sports, Umiak, Climb High, and Outdoor Gear Exchange, whereby they could provide educational clinics at State Parks, demonstrating to the public how the equipment they sell is used, and can enhance outdoor recreational activities on state-owned land.
- Work with the Fish & Wildlife Department in offering Hunter Education programs at State Parks.
- Work with the Fish & Wildlife Department in offering Let’s Go Fishing clinics at State Parks.
- Work with Department of Motor Vehicles in offering Boating Safety educational programs at water based State Parks.
- Facilitate more Red Cross swimming and canoeing instruction offerings at water based State Parks.
- Encourage more use of State Parks by members of VOGA (Vermont Outdoor Guides Association) as places to take their clients to enjoy Vermont’s special outdoor places.
- Encourage VAST (Vermont Association of Snow Travelers) to conduct snowmobile safety programs and snowmobile clinics at State Parks.

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- Work with GMC (Green Mountain Club), CTA (Catamount Trail Association) and VMBA (Vermont Mountain Bike Association) to use State Parks as bases of operation for their growing offering of outdoor recreation related education programs.
- Make efforts to expand the offering of the Becoming an Outdoor Family weekend to more than one State Park more than once each year.
- Form partnerships with other organizations (Marsh-Billings Rockefeller National Historic Park, Green Mountain National Forest, Moosalamoo Association or others) to host recreation days for families with fishing, climbing, paddling, hiking and other outdoor recreational clinics in State Parks.
- Encourage Vermont's many sportsmen's clubs to use State Parks as bases of operation for programs designed to get more kids out in the woods to learn about hunting and fishing, who will hopefully develop a liking for these pursuits and will ultimately become Vermont's next generation of hunters and anglers.
- Work with the Department of Education, Vermont School Boards Association, Vermont State Board of Education, Vermont Superintendents Association and the Vermont Principals' Association, to significantly increase the opportunity for teachers to be able to take their students to State Parks for meaningful, outdoor educational experiences.
- Provide informational packets to schools to make it easy for teachers to use State Parks for teaching (packets could contain detailed information with sample activities, places to visit, and details about outdoor classroom spaces and hiking trails).
- Develop outdoor classroom areas in State Parks for use by school groups, scout groups, park interpretive programming, and other educational groups.
- Provide outreach and in-park educational programming to schools during winter months through partnerships and/or the employment of year-round park interpreters.