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Resolve, To Preserve the Saco River

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the Saco River flows through several municipalities and recreational use of the river has increased dramatically in the past decade; and

Whereas, a consistent approach to managing recreational use of the river is essential to maintaining the quality of the experience for users, as well as resolving conflicts between recreational users and owners of property adjacent to the river; and

Whereas, implementing a plan for appropriately managing recreational use of the river and providing law enforcement, sanitation and emergency services is essential; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1 Development of recreation management plan for Saco River. Resolved: That the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands within the Department of Conservation, referred to in this resolve as “the director,” shall, with assistance from the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, develop a plan to manage that portion of the Saco River between the New Hampshire border at Balch Pond and the Hiram Dam in the Town of Hiram as a recreational waterway of statewide significance. For the purposes of this resolve, this portion of the river is referred to as "the Upper Saco River Recreation Corridor" and includes the river and lands adjacent to the river as specified in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 38, section 953.

The director shall gather information on various approaches to address issues including, but not limited to, boating safety, law enforcement, environmental impact of recreational uses, conflicts among recreational users and the degradation of public and private property within the corridor. The director shall seek an approach that provides for consistent management throughout the Upper Saco River Recreation Corridor. The director shall consider potential effects of various approaches on local and regional economies.

The director shall contact the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Parks and Recreation. The director shall invite one or more representatives from New Hampshire to join in examining the management of the Upper Delaware River as a federally designated Scenic and Recreational River and assess the benefits and drawbacks to such a designation; and be it further

Sec. 2 Working group. Resolved: That the director shall convene a working group, including, but not limited to, representatives of the following:

1. The Saco River Corridor Commission;

2. The Saco River Recreational Council;
3. The Nature Conservancy;
4. Municipal officials or citizens designated by municipal officials from the towns of Hiram, Brownfield, Denmark and Fryeburg;
5. Law enforcement;
6. Owners of campgrounds within the Upper Saco River Recreation Corridor; and
7. Citizens who own land and reside within the Upper Saco River Recreation Corridor.

The director shall seek the advice of the working group and develop a management plan for the Upper Saco River Recreation Corridor in consultation with the working group; and be it further

Sec. 3 Recommendations and report; funding. Resolved: That the director shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over public lands no later than December 15, 2007. The report must include recommendations on the appropriate agencies or entities to implement a recreation management plan and enforce rules along the Upper Saco River Corridor. The report must contain recommendations for a budget to support administrative and enforcement activities. No later than December 15, 2007, the Commissioner of Conservation shall submit any legislation necessary to implement recommendations contained in the report.

The director shall seek funding from the land and water conservation fund under 16 United States Code, Section 4601-11, funds administered by the Director of Conservation, Bureau of Parks and Lands under Title 12, section 1825 and other private and public sources considered appropriate by the director for finalizing and implementing a comprehensive recreation management plan for the Upper Saco River Recreation Corridor.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This resolve directs the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands within the Department of Conservation to develop a plan for consistent management of recreation on the Saco River from the New Hampshire border to Hiram Dam.

The Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands is required to report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over public lands no later than December 15, 2007. The Commissioner of Conservation is directed to submit any legislation necessary to implement the report's recommendations.