

Town of Carrabassett Valley

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Testimony from the Town of Carrabassett Valley Concerning L.D. 1690 'To Modify the Deed for a Parcel of Property in the Town of Carrabassett Valley'

Chairman Senator Dill and Chairperson Representative O'Neil and members of the Legislative Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. My name is Dave Cota and I am the Town Manager of Carrabassett Valley and I'm submitting this testimony in favor of L.D. 1690 on behalf of our Board of Selectmen.

As the L.D. 1690 summary indicates, the purpose of this legislation is to remove the prohibition against commercial use (up to 25 acres only) on the 1203-acre parcel of land the Town of Carrabassett Valley purchased from the State in the year 2000.

In August of 2000, for the price of \$430,000 (based on a fair market appraisal) the Town purchased from the State what was the "Crockertown" Unorganized Territory Public Lot. This purchase included several restrictions as follows:

"The property must remain open and available for the use of and enjoyment of the public at large. Use of the property must be dedicated for purposes of public outdoor recreation, including, but not limited to: natural history study; hiking; camping, other than in motor vehicles; cross-country skiing; hunting; fishing; fisheries and wildlife management; skating; timber management and harvesting under a management plan prepared by a licensed professional forester; and attendant roads and parking.

The property must be maintained in an essentially natural and undeveloped condition, except that up to 25 contiguous acres in the aggregate, including any development in existence on September 19, 1999, may be developed for any municipal facility."

Currently, approximately seven acres of this lot are developed which includes the Town owned 'Sugarloaf Outdoor Center' building and facilities (lodge, out buildings, skating rink, stadium area, parking lots). This 1203-acre lot is contiguous with the Town's 930-acre original public lot which together comprise 2,133 acres of the Town's public Lot.

A recent concern has been expressed that although the Town has leased or subleased the Outdoor Center facilities to Sugarloaf for over thirty years, under the current language of these covenants, this may constitute a covenant violation because, while the facilities are owned by the municipality, they are leased to a for-profit entity. Many events including weddings are held there every year which can be considered "commercial" activities. In addition, while the Center has always been a prominent Nordic Ski venue the Center has now become the center point of a significant mountain bike destination. The Town does not wish to operate the facility and wishes to continue to lease the facility to Sugarloaf Mountain Corporation our major resort. Also, additional "commercial activity" may be desired by the Town to continue to assist the development of our four-season resort destination community. If this legislation is approved, it would legitimize commercial use on only up to 25 acres of this lot.

This is the third time that our Town has requested an amendment to the deed covenants of this 1203-acre public lot. The other two requests were approved by the legislature to allow the Town to lease two acres of this land to the non-profit 'Adaptive Outdoor Education Center' and to allow "camping within vehicles". We have worked closely with the Bureau of Public Lands in this request for a change in these deed covenants and are hopeful this language change will allow us to continue to allow commercial activity and, if desired by the Town, move forward with some potential additional commercial activity to enhance the experience of our citizens, many second home owners and guests to our area. This will supplement the over \$1M the Town has invested in trail development on these public lots which as led to a significant increase in public recreational use.

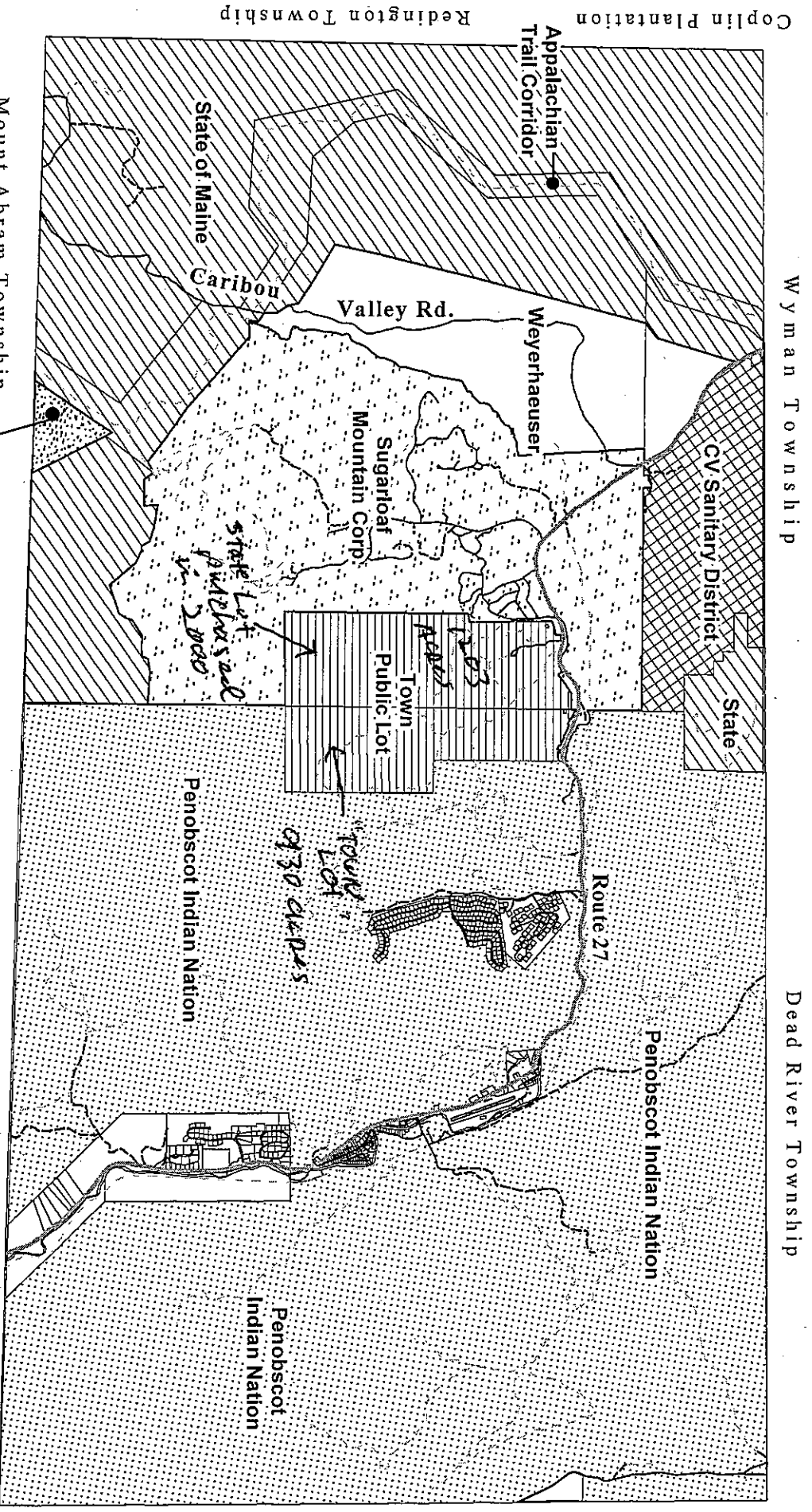
Since the Town's acquisition of this 1,203-acre public lot in the year 2000, with strong support from the Town of Carrabassett Valley, the State of Maine acquired over 9,000 acres of land in Carrabassett Valley in the form of the 'Crocker Mountain Conservation Project' which is being managed for recreation and forestry. In addition, the Town has recently purchased 250 acres of land for conservation, forestry and non-motorized recreation. With all this public land directly within the Town of Carrabassett Valley and thousands of acres of public land directly abutting Carrabassett Valley in the Bigelow Preserve there is a significant amount of acreage of "public lands" in our area for recreational opportunities. It would seem reasonable that our Town should be allowed to develop up to 25-acres of the Town's combined 2,133 public "Outdoor Center" lot for commercial activity should the voters of the Town decide to allow such additional commercial activity.

We ask you to please support L.D. 1690. Please let us know if you have any question. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dave Cota
Carrabassett Valley Town Manager

Cc: Board of Selectmen



Large Landowners

Carrabassett Valley, Maine

2019

