

31 Aug 2022

**TO:** [MtWashingtonComments@dncr.nh.gov](mailto:MtWashingtonComments@dncr.nh.gov)

**FROM:** Kate Hartnett, Lancaster NH ([nhkate98@gmail.com](mailto:nhkate98@gmail.com) )

**RE:** The need to protect Mount Washington's "Golden Eggs"

Page | 1

**SUMMARY:** I write to oppose the premature approval and construction of the Cog's proposed Lizzie's Station, just below the summit of Mount Washington. I understand that the proposed project is outside the 60 acre summit area that is the subject of the Master Plan. But it is inextricably linked to it, so must be seen in context of the necessity to protect this globally unique natural entity.

**MY BACKGROUND:** I write from my perspective as a Stage and Snow Coach driver for the Mt Washington Auto Road from 2009 to 2014. Over those five years, I made 1,400 guided round trips, in summer and winter. During those years, I asked every one of my 8,400 passengers, **from every continent**, how they knew of the mountain? I can confirm that Mount Washington has a **compelling international reputation**. I became very familiar with the complexities of operations by the many partners sharing daily access to the summit by foot, road, and cog railway. Over those five years, I also personally observed the increasing pressures on the engineered infrastructure, including food service, bathrooms, sewerage management, water supply, trash, telecommunications, parking, and trail use.

**NOT A HIGH ELEVATION DISNEY WORLD:** None of this is news to the Commission, or the stakeholders involved in management of Mount Washington. What is relevant is the language in the draft Master Plan:

*"...The purpose of this Master Plan is to provide for this experience while enabling the success of all Summit Partners<sup>1</sup> by ensuring that the summit of Mount Washington, featuring the Mount Washington State Park, continues to be a must-see destination for visitors to the region while also ensuring that resource values are protected. This will be achieved by: maintaining a high quality mountain experience that respects Mount Washington's uniqueness; recognizing the mountain's flora and fauna, its facilities, and its history; and, using a coordinated approach to address the capacities of the summit environment, buildings, sewage, waste, energy, and water systems, and transportation modes that must accommodate the full number of people expected or permitted to visit the summit each year...." (DRAFT 4, 7/5/22, page 3 on Purpose)*

**THE RELEVANCE OF THE GOLDEN EGGS:** What comes to mind when I read about the process underway is the 2,500 year old Aesop's fable of the goose that laid golden eggs. *Attachment 1* explores that fable from a modern business management perspective. That perspective also is clearly embodied in comments from Auto Road rep Howie Wemyss:

The Auto Road submitted the following comments after the last meeting: *"Before ANYTHING further is done on or near the summit, the Mount Washington Commission must see that a thorough environmental analysis is completed to gauge the current conditions on and near the summit. The purpose of this analysis is to make sure that any future expansion, development, or construction of any kind will not harm the environmental health of the summit. This may well mean that ALL entities must put their individual plans on hold in favor of the greater good of the summit of Mt. Washington. Rather than the current unfettered growth in guest numbers currently*

*happening, the numbers need to be controlled to what the current summit infrastructure can handle. This analysis will likely take several years but will be essential to the future health and success of Mt. Washington and the Mt. Washington partners.”*  
*(from Additional Commission Concepts 19 May 2022)*

**GETTING IT RIGHT:** Taking several years more seems prudent, given the complexity of competing demands. The update to the 1970 Master Plan began nine years ago, in late 2013. The notes from that meeting still are relevant to this discussion today, as they recognize up front that Mount Washington is “a truly unique recreational asset with a very fragile environment.” And that the core responsibilities have remained constant, at least since the 1970 Master Plan:

Page | 2

- Stewardship of the Summit (infrastructure, landscape)
- Visitor experience
- Carrying capacity

At the conclusion of that 2013 meeting, Commission members called for the creation of “an overarching vision for the future of the summit to guide short-and long-term decisions about improvements and infrastructure upgrades.” That has not yet happened.

(links at NH State Parks, Commissions & Committees, *Mt Washington Master Plan and Resources/Master Plan Activities* web page: <https://www.nhstateparks.org/about-us/commissions-committees/mt-washington-master-plan-and-resources> ).

**RECENT PARALLEL SITUATIONS:** Interestingly, similar pressures currently are being addressed at ski resorts, and in the New Hampshire outdoor recreation industry:

- **TICKETS LIMITED:** Vail Resorts has made the decision to limit ticket sales at 40 ski resorts across North America, including Wildcat, Attitash, Sunapee, and Crotched Mountain in New Hampshire, based on complaints about overcrowding during the 2021-2022 ski season. Vail has acted to “prioritize your on-mountain experience” by taking responsibility for stewardship of its assets. [*Attachment 2*]
- **PROTECT NEW HAMPSHIRE’S NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES:** Also in August, U.S. Representative Kuster convened state leaders in outdoor recreation to discuss the need to preserve and protect the year-round quality of outdoor recreation in the face of increasing demand and other pressures. [*Attachment 3*]

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. I urge the Commission and DNCR to act on the wisdom of the people and organizations of New Hampshire who so clearly understand the need to balance financial gain with protecting our Golden Eggs.

ATTACHMENTS:

- (1) “True Effectiveness,” Jeff Van Fleet, President & CEO, Lighthouse Technologies, Inc., <https://lighthouse technologies.com/2018/07/26/examining-effectiveness-a-lesson-from-the-golden-goose/>
- (2) “Vail resorts to limit ticket sales at ski resorts including Wildcat,” Paula Tracy, *InDepthNH.org*, in *Conway Daily Sun*, 24 Aug 2022
- (3) “Kuster, outdoor leaders hold recreation powwow,” Tom Eastman, *Conway Daily Sun*, 24 Aug 2022

## ATTACHMENT #1: TRUE EFFECTIVENESS

In Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Successful People*, he talks about building a principle-centered approach to improving your effectiveness. Here's an excerpt:

**Effectiveness Defined:** The Seven Habits are habits of *effectiveness*. Because they are based on principles, they bring the maximum long-term beneficial results possible. They become the basis ...to effectively solve problems, maximize opportunities, and continually learn and integrate other principles in an upward spiral of growth....

**And The Goose with the Golden Eggs:** ...This principle can be easily understood by remembering ...Aesop's fable of the goose and the golden egg: ...a story of a poor farmer who one day discovers in the nest of his pet goose a glittering golden egg.... Day after day, he awakens to rush to the nest and find another golden egg. He becomes fabulously wealthy; it all seems too good to be true.

But with his increasing wealth comes greed and impatience. Unable to wait day after day for the golden eggs, the farmer decides he will kill the goose and get them all at once. But when he opens the goose, he finds it empty. There are no golden eggs—and now there is no way to get any more. The farmer has destroyed the goose that produced them.

I suggest that within this fable is a natural law, a principle—the basic definition of effectiveness. Most people see effectiveness from the golden egg paradigm: the more you produce, the more you do, the more effective you are.

But as the story shows, true effectiveness is a function of two things: what is produced (the golden eggs) and the producing asset or capacity to produce (the goose).

If you adopt a pattern of life that focuses on golden eggs and neglects the goose, you will soon be without the asset that produces golden eggs....

Jeff Van Fleet, President & CEO, Lighthouse Technologies, Inc.

<https://lighthouse technologies.com/2018/07/26/examining-effectiveness-a-lesson-from-the-golden-goose/>