

Mount Washington Commission
Summary of January 29, 2008 summit tour
Mount Washington State Park, Sherman Adams Building

Members in attendance:

Paul Fitzgerald, Public (Chairman)
Walter Graff, AMC
Jack Middleton, MW Observatory

Tom Wagner, WMNF designee
Howard Wemyss, MW Auto Road

Members absent:

Senator John Gallus, Senate
Guy Gosselin, Public
Paul Ingersoll, Public

Rep Martha McLeod, House
Wayne Presby, MW Cog Railway

Others present:

Scot Henley, MW Observatory
Ken Rancourt, MW Observatory
Tom Seidel, MW Observatory
Wayne Peterson, MW Observatory
Gail Scott, Berlin Daily Sun
Edith Tucker, Coos County Democrat

Tom Mansfield, DRED Architect
Mike Housman, Supervisor of Park Operations
Mike Pelchat, MW State Park Manager
Diane Holmes, MW State Park
Torene Tango-Lowy, Commission Clerk
Bob Perry, Citadel Communications

The assembly began at 11:00 a.m. in the Sherman Adams Building, following arrival by Snowcat. MWC Chairman Fitzgerald welcomed everyone, commenting that this is the first tour to occur during the winter. The schedule is to hear presentations by Mount Washington State Park (MWSP) Manager Mike Pelchat and by Mount Washington Observatory (MWO) Scot Henley, and to tour the winter operations.

MWSP. Mr. Pelchat provided an update to current major projects. Electrification The State is in the last phase of the project; 11 months ahead of schedule. Power went live the day before Thanksgiving with the help of Bob Perry. Summer completion will include power distribution to the summit buildings. The PUC will assist the State in setting the electric rate, to include recoup of project costs. T1 connection will also be available through the fiber optic cable that was laid.

Septic The State is investigating an above-ground, “package” septic system commonly used in Alaska. Housed within a tractor trailer that would be located below the Adams Building, treated output exceeds State standards and would be discharged to the eastside fields within the Cutler River drainage. Discussion is ongoing with DES and USFS. Installation is scheduled for August-September 2008. MWSP will also conduct a water efficiency audit with DES and set up recycling of trash. Mr. Pelchat hopes to become a showpiece “green” park.

Dartmouth acquisition The State is working with Dartmouth College to close on the eight acres remaining within the summit radius, possibly by end of March. Payments currently made to Harron for the communications facilities and leases will end in 2009 and payments to Dartmouth will begin in 2010; funding will come from communications leases located at the summit. The State will continue to clean up and consolidate communications equipment that is no longer used.

Mr. Pelchat thanked the Commission for their support and assistance with these major projects.

MWO. Mr. Henley provided a copy of their annual report. He introduced staff scientist, Tom Seidel, who presented his research on temperature and snow cover trends on Mount Washington. The research is supported by grants from the National Weather Station through UNH. Temperatures have increased by 1.5 degrees and snow cover has decreased, with snow arriving later and ending earlier. Mr. Rancourt mentioned that MWO is digitizing its historical research data and discussed MWO’s media efforts. Mr. Henley discussed the \$432,000 NOAA grant that will be used for a snow tractor and for the virtual classroom project scheduled to launch in Fall, 2008.

Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the three major State projects: permanent power, septic system and Dartmouth acquisition, are projects that have been discussed by the Commission since the 70’s, but are culminating during this Commission’s watch – it is remarkable!

Attendees toured the winter operations, including the ancillary buildings and communications facilities.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy.