

HB 657-FN - AS INTRODUCED

2025 SESSION

25-0326

06/11

HOUSE BILL

657-FN

AN ACT relative to short-notice booking access for New Hampshire residents to state parks.

SPONSORS: Rep. Sellers, Graf. 18

COMMITTEE: Resources, Recreation and Development

ANALYSIS

This bill requires the department of natural and cultural resources to establish a short-notice reservation system (allowing reservations within 48 hours or less) for New Hampshire residents living near state parks.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
 Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough]~~
 Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Five

AN ACT relative to short-notice booking access for New Hampshire residents to state parks.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

- 1 1 Expansion of State Park System; Intent. Amend RSA 216-A:1, II to read as follows:
- 2 II. To continually provide such additional park areas, ~~[and]~~ facilities, **and booking and**
- 3 **reservation systems**, as may be necessary to meet the recreational needs of the citizens of all
- 4 regions of the state.
- 5 2 New Paragraph; Reservation System for Local Residents. Amend RSA 216-A:2 by inserting
- 6 after paragraph VIII the following new paragraph:
- 7 IX. The director shall develop and implement a reservation system for state parks that
- 8 prioritizes access for local New Hampshire residents for day-use reservations, ensuring that a
- 9 portion of day-use spaces are reserved for local residents. The system shall:
- 10 (a) Allow local residents, defined as New Hampshire residents aged 18 or older living
- 11 within a town connecting to the park or within a town that falls entirely or partially within a 5-mile
- 12 radius of the park, to book day-use reservations up to and including the day of park entry;
- 13 (b) Reserve a percentage of day-use spaces or a set number of day-use spaces specifically
- 14 for local residents, ensuring fair and prioritized access; and
- 15 (c) Apply to state parks offering walking, hiking, biking trails, beaches, and picnic areas,
- 16 excluding parks primarily providing overnight accommodations or camping facilities.
- 17 3 New Section; Local Resident Day-Use Reservation System. Amend RSA 216-A by inserting
- 18 after section 3- o the following new section:
- 19 216-A:3-p Local Resident Day-Use Reservation System.
- 20 I. In this section:
- 21 (a) "Day-use reservation" means a reservation for non-overnight use of state park
- 22 facilities, including but not limited to pavilions, picnic areas, and beaches.
- 23 (b) "Local resident" means a resident of New Hampshire who is at least 18 years of age
- 24 and lives within a town connecting to the park or within a town that falls entirely or partially within
- 25 a 5-mile radius of the park.
- 26 II.(a) The department of natural and cultural resources shall implement and maintain a
- 27 reservation system that allows local residents to book day-use reservations up to and including the
- 28 day of park entry.

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1 (b) The reservation system shall reserve a percentage of day-use spaces or a set number
2 of day-use spaces specifically for local residents, similar to the allocation of handicapped parking
3 spaces at commercial establishments.

4 (c) Reserved day-use spaces shall be made available to local residents on a first-come,
5 first-served basis.

6 III. This section applies to state parks that offer walking, hiking, or biking trails, beaches,
7 and picnic areas. It does not apply to parks that primarily provide overnight accommodations or
8 camping facilities.

9 IV.(a) The department of natural and cultural resources shall adopt rules, pursuant to RSA
10 541-A, to implement and enforce the provisions of this section.

11 (b) The department shall conduct periodic reviews to ensure compliance with the
12 requirements under this section and make adjustments as necessary.

13 4 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.

HB 657-FN- FISCAL NOTE
AS INTRODUCED

AN ACT relative to short-notice booking access for New Hampshire residents to state parks.

FISCAL IMPACT: This bill does not provide funding, nor does it authorize new positions.

Estimated State Impact				
	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Revenue Fund(s)</i>	None			
Expenditures*	\$0	Indeterminable Increase more than \$2,500,000	Indeterminable Increase	Indeterminable Increase
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	Parks Fund			
Appropriations*	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	None			

*Expenditure = Cost of bill

*Appropriation = Authorized funding to cover cost of bill

METHODOLOGY:

This bill requires the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to establish and implement a reservation system for state parks. This system shall prioritize day-use reservations for local New Hampshire residents 18 or older living within a 5 mile radius of a state park, ensuring a designated portion of these reservations are reserved exclusively for them.

The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) has stated that this bill would violate the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) regulations, which prohibit discrimination based on residence through preferential reservation, membership, or annual systems. The Department indicates that the state would need to find substitute property in exchange for converting affected properties out of the LWCF program. This process would involve appraisals, acquiring substitute property at fair market value, and securing approval from the Secretary of the Interior, as outlined in the LWCF program manual. However, to the extent that reasonable differences in admission and other fees are adjusted this provision would not be applicable. The DNCR estimates that the cost of converting such state park properties and acquiring substitute property would be indeterminable and exceed \$2,500,000.

Furthermore, the DNCR indicates that if priority scheduling were to be reserved exclusively for New Hampshire residents, it could result in an indeterminable increase in DNCR expenditures due to necessary system updates, the need to hire additional staff to man day-use tollbooths to confirm residency, and the costs associated with striping priority parking spaces for New Hampshire residents.

It is assumed that any fiscal impact would occur after FY 2025.

AGENCIES CONTACTED:

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources