

Economic Recovery

Investing in Vermont's Outdoor Recreation Assets

Increasing Sheltered Camping Activity by Funding Rustic Cabin Construction



- **WHAT:** The Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation proposes to construct 16-21 additional rustic camping cabins on existing state park campsites, and four cabins on recently created sites (for a total of 20 to 25). Following established designs, these units offer a sheltered camping experience with greater “creature comforts” including electricity, a futon, bunk beds and a table with chairs -- with a porch, a picnic table, and fire ring as well. Because the cabins are unplumbed, campers utilize shared park amenities such as showers and restrooms.
- **WHY:** Over the past fifteen years, Vermont State Parks has constructed small rustic cabins on existing campsites in select campgrounds across the park system. Reflecting the changing public interests in camping, the 45 cabins are extremely popular with both seasoned and inexperienced campers. The cabins have an occupancy rate over 80 percent which is nearly double the occupancy rate for tent sites. Each cabin generates approximately \$4,500 of net revenue per year beyond what is generated by a tent site. Units placed on newly established sites are estimated to generate over \$5,600 in additional revenue.

Rustic cabins achieve increased occupancy and enhance revenue because of several factors:

- They command a premium fee (2x the lean-to rate)
- They expand the customer base, appealing to beginning, experienced, and mobility challenged campers.
- They insulate against less desirable weather, both within and on the shoulders of the camping season.
- Cabins encourage a longer stay which help increase weekday occupancy.

Because demand for cabins is high, this investment in additional rustic camping cabins is anticipated to increase revenues to the Parks Fund by more than \$100,000 annually.

- **WHO:** Vermont's State Parks provide an important, affordable opportunity for Vermonters and out-of-state visitors to vacation at our 55 staffed parks. The construction of these rustic cabins will enhance park revenue, expand offerings, and increase access to the camping experience for Vermonters and guests who wish to enjoy all the Vermont outdoors has to offer. This can be especially true for those who may lack the equipment for traditional camping or desire the comforts and security of these cabins to make the leap into or come back to camping.

- **HOW:** A Capital Bill appropriation will provide the funding to execute the site improvement and building construction; completion of this work will rely heavily on local private contractors. Rustic cabins will be constructed at Quechee (including 4 newly established sites), Lake Carmi, Branbury, Ricker Pond and New Discovery State Parks. Additional sites around the state are already selected and stand ready to accept cabins should favorable construction pricing allow expansion of the program.

The Department will seek to leverage this funding for improvements to support facilities adjacent to these additional cabins, such as bathhouses and dishwashing stations. By engaging Federal Land and Water Conservation Program grant funds (50% state capital and 50% federal), the Department could leverage up to \$1,000,000 in additional funds, further enhancing the visitor experience and overall visitation.

- **FUNDING:** A capital construction appropriation of \$1,000,000 to the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

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