

**From:** [Abby Theobald](#)  
**To:** [DNCR: Mt Washington Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Balance Conservation and Visitation in Master Plan  
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Dear Commissioners, Mount Washington Commission,

I have hiked Mount Washington numerous times throughout my 22 years and every time I have reached the top, I have been discouraged by the amount of visitors I have seen. One time in particular stands out, as I had to take the cog down due to heavy rain and unsafe hiking conditions. As I sat on the cog, drenched, I was given nasty looks by other passengers as the couple sitting next to me practically sat on top of one another to stay away from me. Why was I being shunned? I WORKED to get to the top!! Not to mention, I was only 12.

There are ways of balancing conservation and visitation, but the balance is highly unequal at the moment. I appreciate having systems, such as the cog railway, for instances such as the one I previously outlined. It was a safe route down for me. But the amount of people that congregate at the top of the mountain because of the seemingly limitless visitation possibilities is not healthy for the Mount Washington ecosystem, but also unfair to those who truly attempt to leave no trace and get to the top on their own two feet.

The Mount Washington Summit Master Plan is an opportunity to plan for the future of this unique and cherished place. The draft Master Plan outlines a variety of potentially competing goals, such as capital improvements, protecting sensitive vegetation, enhancing visitor services, and furthering weather and science work conducted at the summit. Overall, I urge the Commission to plan for activities that uphold Mt. Washington's critical ecological role in the northeastern alpine zone and its iconic place in the recreational and scientific fabric of our region.

The Commission should carefully consider the carrying capacity of the summit and plan for facilities that accommodate an appropriate number of visitors. Allowing for or encouraging a significant growth in the number of visitors would place an undue burden on the unique alpine ecology of this site, where sensitive plant species have already been significantly impacted by heavy use.


The Commission must plan for improving the physical accessibility of summit facilities and the visitor experience should be enhanced for all persons when considering any user fee proposals for future access.

The summit improvements should be informed by a comprehensive set of environmental studies that must be completed to understand potential impacts. A summit assessment should incorporate these environmental studies, to avoid, minimize and mitigate any potential impacts on Mt Washington's alpine ecology.

The Master Plan must seek to manage a sustainable footprint on Mount Washington that includes achieving net zero emissions and minimizing waste, noise and light pollution, and scenic impacts of current and future operations.

Finally, the Master Plan outlines additional studies, site plans, and operational plans that will need to be developed. These plans and their implementation should be done in close coordination with the United States Forest Service and other stakeholders to ensure the greatest degree of planning across a larger, integrated landscape.

Mount Washington is not a solely a tourist destination, but a cherished, NATURAL landmark. Lets reduce the amount of “This car climbed Mount Washington” stickers that we see on New England highways and start putting the health of the mountainous ecosystem first.

Regards,  
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