



## Saco River Corridor Commission

*"Communities Working Together To Protect Our Rivers"*

September 15, 2016

Dear Ossipee Planning Board

We have learned recently that the Ossipee Planning Board is reviewing an expansion to the Westward Shores Campground in Ossipee, N.H. The location of the proposed expansion caught my eye because this proposal is located entirely in the 100 year floodplain. If I may, I would like to offer just a bit of background.

The Saco River Corridor Commission (SRCC) Act was passed by the Maine State Legislature in 1973 following public concern over the type, intensity and location of residential and commercial development that was occurring along the rivers in the Saco River Basin. The Commission as a board was created to oversee the "Act" and administer the development standards that were a part of the legislation. The Act's standards are designed to protect the natural resources, the cultural, historic and scenic value of the lands adjacent to the rivers along with the recreational and drinking water quality of the Saco River and its tributaries.

The Saco River Corridor Commission regulates development of the land, up to 1,000 feet in the floodplain, adjacent to the Saco River starting in Fryeburg, Maine, the Ossipee River as it enters Porter and Parsonsfield, Maine as well as the Little Ossipee River beginning in Newfield and Shapleigh, Maine and protects these rivers to the ocean in Biddeford and Saco. There are 20 towns that make up the Saco River Corridor. The Saco River itself is joined by the Ossipee and Little Ossipee Rivers and is relied upon as a drinking water reservoir used exclusively for drinking water purposes in Biddeford and Saco. Seasonally, the communities of Old Orchard Beach and portions of Scarborough, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, and Wells are also clients of the Biddeford and Saco Water Company using the Saco River for drinking water when aquifer supplies are insufficient. All told, these municipalities withdraw 2 billion gallons of water from the river annually. The point of this introductory discussion is basically a loud shout out to our neighbors to the West that says "Hey folks, we live downstream".

The SRCC here in Maine routinely deals with floodplain requests for development. It is not an easy task to respond negatively to a person or company that is trying to exercise what they consider their God and Constitutional rights to use their land as they see fit. But the simple fact is that in some instances, the proposed use(s) represents a definite threat to public health and safety beyond the bounds of

the lands in question. We have been in a serious drought for some time now and under these circumstances, envisioning a river bank overflowing may not be easy. So at the risk of melodrama, let me call your attention to an event a few years back known as Hurricane Katrina. This was a tremendously powerful storm that destroyed lives and properties beyond all realistic valuation. FEMA standards did not help, city ordinances were useless against the floodwaters and the only areas that were relatively unharmed were those areas outside of the floodplain. Does this example really need more explanation? Floodplains act as floodwater storage areas. They are a country side's buffer against the ravages of water that exceed the bank that normally holds it in. Placing manufactured homes, septic systems and other facilities on these areas simply makes no sense. A one hundred year flood essentially means that there is a 1% chance in any storm event that the water will not be contained by the river bank. According to FEMA, there is a 10% chance (10 year flood plain) of flooding at the elevation of 412.2 (Carroll County Flood Insurance Study Vol. 1 of 2 33003CV001A) which includes portions of proposed development. With changes to our area's meteorology and climate, which seems self-evident at this point, allowing development in areas that may represent a threat to public health and safety on a regional basis runs counter to common sense. As regulators of land use, we am constantly told that if only a little common sense would be allowed in the equation, there would be no need for so many regulations. We would hope that the many issues surrounding the placement of this campground would give pause for concern; concern for water quality, for destruction of property and for the potential for threats to public health and safety.

Submitted with respect,



Michael Robinson,

SRCC Chair



Dennis J. Finn

Executive Director