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Staff:

**Tracie Sales**  
Program Manager

**Jen Drociak**  
Watershed Coordinator

**Mariah Mitchell**  
Program Assistant

N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program

# N.H. Rivers Management Advisory Committee

April 16, 2019

The Honorable Cathryn Harvey, Chair  
House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 307  
Concord, NH 03301

**RE: SB 160** *An act relative to swimming and non-motorized boating at public boat access areas.*

Dear Chair Harvey and Members of the Committee:

The Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 160, which would require the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to select five public boat access areas to temporarily permit swimming and non-motorized boat access to determine compatibility for these activities with motorized boat access. The RMAC opposes this bill.

The RMAC believes that allowing swimming at public boat ramps designed for motorized or non-motorized boats will impede boat access, promote congestion, cause injuries, and create user conflicts. Public boat ramps were not constructed with the intended purpose of swimming. Parking near boat ramps is usually limited. Permitting a second user group at existing boat access areas will further limit already challenged areas. This will result in recreational users parking along streets, with boaters required to carry their boats long distances. Parking with trailers along public ways is an added safety concern. Allowing swimmers at boat access sites will create a safety issue for those attempting to launch watercraft around swimmers, waders, children, and their gear.

Federal grants to construct and maintain public boat access areas under the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Act Fund cannot be used at access sites where other uses may interfere with the primary boat access use. Similarly, the Statewide Public Boat Access Fund established under RSA 233-A:13 may be used for construction and maintenance of "...facilities and amenities *necessary* (emphasis added) to carry out the statewide public boat access program" under RSA 233-A:5. "Swimming" *per se* is not a necessary use to launch or retrieve boats although limited periods of wading in the act of launching or retrieving is sometimes required based on site conditions.

The RMAC is a legislatively created body charged to work with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to administer RSA 483, the Rivers Management and Protection Program. The Governor and Council appointed Committee is comprised of members from business, agriculture, hydroelectric, municipal government, water supply, conservation, recreation, fish and game, and historical interests. Among its other responsibilities, the RMAC is charged with reviewing legislation relevant to the Program and with advising the NHDES

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Commissioner on the merits of such legislation.

In conclusion, the RMAC opposes SB 160 because swimming at public boat ramps will create a burden of additional access issues, congestion, and safety issues.

Should you have any questions regarding our testimony, please feel free to contact me at 603.796.2615 or [MLT@naturesource.net](mailto:MLT@naturesource.net).

Sincerely,



Michele L. Tremblay  
RMAC Chair

cc: Sen. Jeb Bradley  
Rep. Thomas Buco  
Rep. Harrison Kanzler  
Rep. William Marsh  
RMAC Representatives  
Robert R. Scott, Commissioner, NHDES  
Tom O'Donovan, Director, Water Division, NHDES  
Ted Diers, Administrator, Watershed Mgmt. Bur., NHDES  
Tracie Sales, Rivers and Lakes Programs Manager, NHDES  
Local River Management Advisory Committee Chairs  
Glenn Normandeau, Executive Director, NH Fish and Game Department