



FY 26-27 Budget Presentation to the Senate Finance Committee
Sarah Stewart, Commissioner
April 25, 2025

Good afternoon, Senators. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I'm here on behalf of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, which includes five essential divisions: Parks and Recreation, Forests and Lands, Historical Resources, the State Library, and the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts.

We've been developing our biennial budget for many months. Under former Governor Sununu, we were first asked to reduce our General Fund allocation by 4%. When Governor Ayotte advanced her version of the budget, that reduction deepened to 11%. I'm proud to say our team met that goal—through tough decisions and collaboration across all divisions.

To achieve the 11% cut, we acted creatively and nimbly. Of note, we:

- Reduced the Arts budget by 50%
- Forest and Lands reduced their need for general fund support by shifting generally funded positions to revenue-funded sources. (While not sustainable for the long term, this is a great example of our attempt to hold the line during a tough budget cycle.)

- Parks absorbed the Bureau of Historic Sites, even though that entity is, by statute, supposed to be funded from the General Fund
- And we left critical positions vacant for months

Our 11% budget plan was initially well received. Representative Ken Weyler gave us an “A+” for our responsible approach. But the budget passed by the House now calls for something much more drastic: a 22% cut to our General Funds.

That’s what brings me here today—to ask the Senate to help restore some of the House-level reductions and return to a more sustainable funding level.

Here’s what our budget looks like under the 11% reduction Governor Ayotte proposed in her budget presented in February:

- **Total DNCR Budget: \$65 million**
 - **Parks and Recreation** self-funds **\$41 million** through a combination of direct agency revenue and interagency transfers.
 - We receive **\$5.4 million** from other revenues like timber harvests and seedling sales, and another **\$3.2 million** from sources like the Conservation License Plate Fund and other dedicated programs.
 - Federal funding totals **\$6 million**.
 - That leaves **\$10 million** in General Fund support.

We use every one of those General Fund dollars strategically. For example, the NH State Library must show a state match to unlock federal support for services that benefit local libraries across the state including InterLibrary Loan and Talking Books for the visually impaired.

General Funds also pay for our Forest Rangers—law enforcement officers trained in wildfire protection, timber fraud investigation, and emergency response. We currently have **10 Forest Rangers and one Forest Chief**, with one position vacant. These are not paper-pushing bureaucrats. They are trained, armed public servants safeguarding our communities and natural resources.

Yet under the House budget, our General Fund allocation falls to **\$9 million**, and we're being asked to absorb a **back-of-the-budget cut of \$300,000 per year**.

Let me be blunt: should the House's proposal to eliminate the Arts Council happen, New Hampshire would become the only state in the country to eliminate all public arts grants.

Some lawmakers have dismissed these grants as "propaganda." But our process is nonpartisan, rigorous, and transparent. Grants are vetted by a Governor-appointed, Executive Council-confirmed advisory board, reviewed by the Department of Justice, and approved again by the Executive Council.

They support music in rural elementary schools, concerts in senior centers, projects that strengthen mental health outcomes, community theater that draws visitors to downtown businesses and so much more. These programs strengthen our economy and our communities.

To help visualize this, we've created a district-by-district map showing where these grants go. I will email that to you directly after today's hearing. You'll be able to see not only the organizations that received direct support but also make note of the surrounding businesses that benefit as well.

So, I ask: where should we cut another \$300,000 per year?

- Should we close the State Library and end the ability for all 234 of NH's public libraries to share their books and materials all across the state?
- Reduce our Forest Rangers and leave thousands of acres of woodland less protected?
- Let local economies lose cultural tourism and quality of life amenities?

We are ready to collaborate. We understand fiscal constraints and have worked within them. But there's a difference between responsible budgeting and cutting past the bone.

New Hampshire is a state that values tradition, preservation, and local pride. The work we do at DNCR reflects that. I urge the Senate to help protect this mission.

Thank you for your time. I welcome your questions.



State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES
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April 25, 2025

Chairman James Gray
Senate Finance Committee

RE: Budget Request Actions – Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR)

The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources respectfully requests the following additional budget adjustments and changes.

- I. Within the Division of Historical Resources (DHR), please change the position funding status of selected positions as follows:

Please restore funding for FY 2026-2027 to:

Position # 16618 - 19-3090 MISC SOC SCIENTISTS-3- 03-35-35-354010-14450000-010

This position is currently vacant and unfunded for FY 2026-2027 as 100% Federal Funds. Total funding cost is \$114,965 for FY 2026 and \$117,972 for FY 2027. We are seeking to fill this position immediately in order to maintain continuity of operations within DHR.

Position # 11446 - 43-6010 ADMIN ASSTS-5- 03-35-35-354010-14450000-010

This position is currently vacant and is unfunded for FY 2026-2027 as 100% Federal Funds. Total funding cost is \$103,386 in FY 2026 and \$109,060 in FY 2027. We are seeking to fill this position immediately in order to maintain continuity of operations within DHR.

Please remove funding for FY 2026-2027 to:

Position # 44901 - 19-3090 MISC SOC SCIENTISTS-3- 03-35-35-354010-14450000-010

This position is currently vacant and funded for FY 2026-2027 as 100% Federal Funds. Total funding savings is (\$127,390) for FY 2026 and (\$133,121) for FY 2027. This position will remain vacant and will not need to be filled for FY 2026-2027.

During the governor’s budget development phase, it was necessary to unfund two federally funded positions (#16618 & 11446) due to the lack of availability of federal funds projected to be awarded for FY 2026-2027.

Upon a recent evaluation of staffing support needs and review of current position vacancy status, it was determined that position #16618 should be **funded** for FY 2026-2027 and we will instead, **unfund** position #44901 which has recently become vacant and will remain so for FY 2026-2027.

This is essentially a swap of funding of equivalent positions but will allow currently filled position #16688 to remain filled for FY 2026-2027 offset by unfunding of position #44901 which is currently vacant.

With this change in position funding, we will see a net cost savings of (\$12,425) in FY 2026 and (\$15,149) in FY 2027

Next, we are requesting to restore funding for position #11446. While we do not have additional Federal Funding for this position, we will use other funds as eligible and available from the Conservation Plate Fund instead. No General Funds will be used.

Funding for this position should be incorporated as follows:

	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>
03-35-35-350010-34050000-029-500290	\$103,386	\$109,060
03-35-35-354010-14450000-004-408189	\$103,386	\$109,060

Respectfully Requested,



Sarah L Stewart, Commissioner
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Department:	035-DNCR						
Comare Page #	760	FY 2026			FY 2027		
Position Number:		House Budget	Change	Revised Budget	House Budget	Change	Revised Budget
Accounting Unit:	03-35-35-353510-4104						
Class	10	\$ 1	\$ 208,058	\$ 208,059	\$ -	\$ 213,385	\$ 213,385
Class	20	\$ -	\$ 1,900	\$ 1,900	\$ -	\$ 1,800	\$ 1,800
Class	37	\$ -	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ 100	\$ 100
Class	38	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 100	\$ 100
Class	39	\$ -	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000	\$ -	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000
Class	57	\$ -	\$ 100	\$ 100	\$ -	\$ 100	\$ 100
Class	60	\$ 1	\$ 134,860	\$ 134,861	\$ -	\$ 142,706	\$ 142,706
Class	70	\$ -	\$ 2,450	\$ 2,450	\$ -	\$ 2,450	\$ 2,450
Class	73	\$ -	\$ 600,000	\$ 600,000	\$ -	\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000
Class	102	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
	Total	\$ 2	\$ 966,368	\$ 966,370	\$ -	\$ 777,641	\$ 777,641
Funding Source:	00S - GENERAL FUNDS						

Reason:

Restore funding of State Council on the Arts

Department:	035-DNCR						
Comare Page #	761	FY 2026			FY 2027		
Position Number:		House Budget	Change	Revised Budget	House Budget	Change	Revised Budget
Accounting Unit:	03-35-35-353510-4111						
Class	10	\$ -	\$ 232,300	\$ 232,300	\$ -	\$ 236,302	\$ 236,302
Class	11	\$ -	\$ 96,531	\$ 96,531	\$ -	\$ 101,268	\$ 101,268
Class	18	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 500	\$ 500
Class	20	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Class	22	\$ -	\$ 31,241	\$ 31,241	\$ -	\$ 32,178	\$ 32,178
Class	26	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000

Class	30	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Class	38	\$ -	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,000	\$ -	\$ 13,000	\$ 13,000
Class	39	\$ -	\$ 200	\$ 200	\$ -	\$ 200	\$ 200
Class	40	\$ -	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ -	\$ 25,750	\$ 25,750
Class	41	\$ -	\$ 827	\$ 827	\$ -	\$ 827	\$ 827
Class	42	\$ -	\$ 26,307	\$ 26,307	\$ -	\$ 27,006	\$ 27,006
Class	50	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Class	60	\$ -	\$ 195,819	\$ 195,819	\$ -	\$ 207,006	\$ 207,006
Class	65	\$ -	\$ 14,000	\$ 14,000	\$ -	\$ 14,000	\$ 14,000
Class	66	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Class	69	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Class	70	\$ -	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	\$ -	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500
Class	72	\$ -	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Class	80	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Class	89	\$ -	\$ 10,813	\$ 10,813	\$ -	\$ 10,813	\$ 10,813
Class	102	\$ -	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
	Total	\$ -	\$ 1,192,038	\$ 1,192,038	\$ -	\$ 1,034,350	\$ 1,034,350
Funding Source:	000-FEDERAL FUNDS						

Reason:

Restore fuding of State Council on the Arts

Department:							
Comare Page #	729	FY 2026			FY 2027		
Position Number:		House Budget	Change	Revised Budget	House Budget	Change	Revised Budget
Accounting Unit:	03-35-35-351010-2104						
Class	10	\$ 74,474	\$ (74,474)	\$ -			\$ -
Class	20	\$ 3,800		\$ 3,800			
Class	29	\$ 136,558		\$ 136,558			
Class	39	\$ 540		\$ 540			
Class	40	\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000			

Class	41	\$ 190		\$ 190			
Class	50	\$ 21,500		\$ 21,500			
Class	59	\$ -	\$ 74,474	\$ 74,474			
Class	57	\$ 125		\$ 125			
Class	60	\$ 41,496		\$ 41,496			
Class	70	\$ 3,500		\$ 3,500			
Class	80	\$ 2,000		\$ 2,000			
Class	103	\$ 9,950		\$ 9,950			\$ -
Class	211	\$ 387		\$ 387			\$ -
	Total	\$ 304,520	\$ -	\$ 304,520	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Funding Source:							

Reason: