

CONTACT:

Mr. Tai Freligh, Communications Manager
NH Division of Travel and Tourism Development
Phone: (603) 271-2343, Option #2 / **Cell:** (603) 545-4840
URL: www.visitnh.gov

Email: tai.freligh@dred.state.nh.us
Twitter: VisitNH / VisitNH_Intl
Facebook: www.facebook.com/VisitNH
Flickr: VisitNH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**7.8 MILLION VISITORS EXPECTED TO NEW HAMPSHIRE THIS FALL,
FORECASTED TO SPEND \$1 BILLION**

*Governor Lynch Kicks Off Season at Special Ceremony Held at Entrance to Loon Mountain
Announcing that Route 302 Will Open Tomorrow*

Lincoln, New Hampshire, September 16th, 2011 – Governor John Lynch kicked off the fall tourism season this morning at the entrance to Loon Mountain at a special ceremony with members of the tourism industry.

"This has been a tremendous effort by many people and a number of agencies. Because of DOT's coordination and commitment to opening the Kancamagus Highway, and the efforts of many men and women who worked around the clock on the road, we were able to open the Kanc days ahead of the ambitious schedule I had set," Gov. Lynch said. "I am also very pleased to announce today that Route 302 will be open by tomorrow, ahead of our important fall foliage season here in New Hampshire. This is tremendous news and it means our people and our visitors will be able to travel freely across the Kanc, through Crawford Notch and on to Conway if they choose."

Also in attendance at the event were Executive Councilor Ray Burton, DOT Commissioner Chris Clement, DRED Commissioner George Bald, DTTD Director Lori Harnois, Executive Director of the Mount Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce Janice Crawford, and Jim Jalbert, President of C&J Trailways.

"The fall season in New Hampshire attracts the second largest number of visitors of the four seasons, with summer being the first," said Commissioner Bald. "The outlook for this upcoming fall season is fantastic, as we expect almost eight million visitors to New Hampshire to spend an estimated one billion dollars here."

According to a report prepared for DTTD by the Institute for New Hampshire Studies, the fall season of 2011 is projected to attract one percent more visitors than the fall of 2010, with over 7.8 million visitors expected. Spending is anticipated to be three percent higher than the spending for the fall of 2010 and reach \$1 billion.

Compared with other seasons, the fall has the largest percentage of visitors from outside of New England. Fall also has the largest percentage of people who are on group tours of the four seasons. It is anticipated that the number of overnight visitors from the Mid-Atlantic region and New England will increase.

Resorts, hotels, motels, B&B's and campgrounds should see a one percent increase in average occupancy rates, with many accommodations likely to be filled for the Columbus Day weekend. Business travel and conferences are important during the fall season and such travel will likely be up by at least two percent from last fall.

“There are so many ways to view the changing of the leaves in New Hampshire, including scenic drives, foliage trains, bike, boat and bicycle, or by foot!,” said Harnois. “This time of year is just beautiful here, and we want to encourage visitors to explore the many harvest festivals and pick-your-own farms for freshly grown fruits and vegetables.” Check out www.visitnh.gov for more great ideas.

For the do-it-yourself kind of person, DTTD offers a **foliage tracking map** on its website where visitors can track what stage of color the leaves are in for a given region or the entire state...and do it by date. Visitors can also sign-up for **mobile text alerts** about the best places to see foliage on a weekly basis to help plan leaf-peeping excursions. The new **fall-themed homepage** debuted this week, which is colorful, easy to use, and has all the information a visitor needs, whether it is fall itineraries, videos or the **events calendar**. Go to www.visitnh.gov to order a visitors guide or view an electronic version.

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ABOUT THE DIVISION OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The Division of Travel and Tourism Development, as part of the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, works with the state's seven travel regions to increase visitation, travel and visitor expenditures in order to expand business activity and employment throughout the state. The division is responsible for domestic and international advertising and public relations, literature publication and distribution, www.visitnh.gov administration, grant administration and research to monitor and measure the impact of travel and tourism to the state. For more information about New Hampshire tourism, call 603-271-2665 or visit www.visitnh.gov.