

## Labbadia, Bonnine

---

**From:** Barbara R. Beitch <sgpa@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 10, 2014 1:04 PM  
**To:** Program Review and Investigation  
**Subject:** Open letter on behalf of the Sleeping Giant Park Association and the Sleeping Giant State Park

### Open letter on behalf of the Sleeping Giant Park Association (SGPA) and the Sleeping Giant State Park:

I understand that there is talk in the State Legislature in Hartford about legislation that could have a huge impact on the future of at least some of the state parks in Connecticut. I write at this time as (a) a long-time volunteer (over 40 years) for the SGPA, (b) a lover of the Sleeping Giant State Park, (c) an outdoors person (hiker, backpacker, nature lover, photographer), and (d) a biologist, and (e) an environmentalist.

I strongly support any legislation that, rather than diverting all funds collected from entrance fees to Connecticut state parks to the General Fund, would earmark such funds for salaries of state park employees and for maintenance (and needed improvements) of these state parks.

To my knowledge, the Sleeping Giant Park is unique in Connecticut by virtue of its having been established through the efforts of a small group of volunteers, 90 years ago, who came together to stop the quarrying on (and destruction of) the Giant's "head", back in the 1920s, in the Mt. Carmel area of Hamden. Through the tireless and determined efforts of these strong-minded individuals, the SGPA was born, the quarrying came to a halt, and the long process of land acquisition was begun. The SGPA throughout these 90 years has worked unceasingly to buy up property in and contiguous with the Sleeping Giant and then to turn it over to the State "for safekeeping." The intent of these volunteers in the SGPA has always been to preserve this open space, for the flora and fauna that reside there and also for the enjoyment of nature lovers in the surrounding urban environment. Thousands of visitors come to the Sleeping Giant State Park each year, to picnic with friends and family, to hike, to fish, and to enjoy nature.

The SGPA has grown to a handful of volunteers back in the 1920s to over 1400 members today, all avid supporters of the Park. Many of these members volunteer their time in maintaining more than thirty miles of trails (constituting what has been described as one of the best such trail systems in the country), working tirelessly to prevent invasive species from taking over the Park's ecosystem, and putting forth huge amounts of effort throughout the year—all out of love for the Sleeping Giant State Park. In the past, we have mobilized our SGPA members whenever there was a danger of encroachment from the outside—whether that involved attempts to put up a cell tower upon the ridges of the Giant, or to lumber perfectly healthy trees, or to pursue commercial development in the environs that would adversely affect the biodiversity as well as the peace and harmony of the Park. A group of committed volunteers actually carries out an annual "Bioblitz" to measure this biodiversity by identifying and posting on our website ([www.sgpa.org](http://www.sgpa.org)) all of the species seen in the Park. Finally, we publish a newsletter (entitled the *Giant News*) three times a year—archived on our website.

We hope that as the State Legislature comes together to discuss the future of Connecticut's state parks, you keep in mind such uniquely citizen-created and volunteer-supported oases as the Sleeping Giant State Park—and that you move heaven and earth to join with us in our efforts to maintain this natural gem in our midst.

Respectfully,

Barbara R. Beitch, Ph. D.

SGPA Director for over 30 years

Editor, *Giant News*

Coordinator, Giant Master Program