

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Despite Evidence of “Irreparable Harm” to Appalachian Mountain Club, State of New Hampshire to Open Crawford Notch Snowmobile Trail**

CONCORD, N.H. (Dec. 15)— Judge Edward Fitzgerald of Merrimack County Superior Court today found a new snowmobile trail through Crawford Notch would do “irreparable harm” to the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) by bisecting its Highland Center property.

The judge agreed that the trail would impact AMC’s guests, visitors and school programs by running within 300 feet of its lodge, conference center and outdoor recreation areas. The judge warned the state that it is proceeding “at its own peril” in light of AMC’s pending suit, which seeks both injunctive relief and damages. In its petition, AMC also raised concerns about public safety and the impact of the route on the natural and historic resources of the Crawford Notch.

The Court declined to issue a preliminary injunction. In response, the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) has chosen to open the trail, but with restrictions on its use near the AMC’s Highland Center, including posting this section of the trail as multi-use and in a residential area, setting a lower speed limit, and restricting use to daylight hours.

The AMC will file a motion for reconsideration, and will request a hearing on AMC’s position that it owns land under certain sections of railroad track used by the trail and that the state’s claim of property rights does not entitle it to use the railroad corridor for a snowmobile trail.

AMC also has asserted that the state’s plan to use the corridor without notice to AMC was a denial of AMC’s Constitutionally protected rights of due process of law.

“We are extremely disappointed in the state’s decision to move ahead on this project even after the court’s determination that doing so would cause AMC ‘irreparable harm,’” said Walter Graff, Deputy Director of the AMC. “The Highland Center opened only one year ago, thanks to contributions from individuals from around the country. This will severely impact the safety and outdoor experience of our guests and the general public.”

The proposed route would bisect the AMC's 26-acre property surrounding the Highland Center at Crawford Notch, creating a ring around an environmental and education center that offers children's educational programs and is a hub for skiing, snowshoeing and winter hiking in the Notch. The property is in an area recognized for its scenic beauty and historic significance. The area impacted by the trail includes the nearby Crawford Depot, listed in the National Registry of Historic Places; the Crawford Path, a designated National Recreational Trail; and US Route 302, a designated National Scenic Byway.

The AMC recognizes the importance of snowmobiling to northern New Hampshire communities, and has worked in the past to find ways for snowmobile trails and non-motorized recreation to co-exist. "With prior notification we might have worked out a better solution for this season. But we will continue to work with the State and the U.S. Forest Service to find an alternative trail that is acceptable to all parties," said Graff.

DRED started building the new snowmobile trail through Crawford Notch after spending \$225,000 in public funds on a new trail parallel to the Cog Railway Base Road. The State later claimed this new trail was inadequate for anticipated traffic, and that an additional trail was needed. Both trails were started due to the decision by the Mt. Washington Cog Railway to plow the Base Road for users of its ski train service this season.

Crawford Notch represents an important natural and historic resource, making public input into its use vitally important. The notch has been valued for generations by walkers, hikers, skiers, and tourists as a place of natural beauty. Abel Crawford settled the notch in 1792, and he and his son Ethan built the Crawford Path, now listed as a National Recreation Trail, in 1819. The Maine Central Railroad built the Crawford Notch Depot in 1891, which today is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is maintained and operated by the AMC as a visitor center.

A map of the proposed snowmobile route is available in the press release area of AMC's website at: <http://www.outdoors.org/about/newsroom/newsroom-releases.cfm>

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With more than 90,000 members in the Northeast, including 10,000 members in New Hampshire, the nonprofit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers and trails of the Appalachian region.