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The Trust for Public Land and Appalachian Mountain Club Praise Administration Support for Maine Woods Initiative

WASHINGTON – The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national conservation organization, and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), the nation's oldest conservation and recreation organization, today expressed enthusiasm for a White House proposal to fund the 37,000-acre Katahdin Iron Works (KIW) project in northern Maine, a key component of the AMC's Maine Woods Initiative. The President's budget for Fiscal Year 2006 proposes \$5 million for the project from the USDA Forest Legacy Program, which provides financial assistance to states to help keep forestlands from being developed, and is slated to receive a total of \$80 million nationwide under the White House plan. The KIW project is number four in the Administration's priority list of 44 projects.

“Maine will benefit greatly from the President's commitment to provide funding in the USDA Forest Legacy Program budget for this outstanding project,” said Whitney Hatch, TPL New England Regional Manager. “The Forest Legacy Program is little more than a decade old, but in that brief time, it has become an important, popular tool to protect local economies and open space. This budget proposal wisely recognizes the value of the program nationally and of this particular conservation effort in Maine.”

“This budget recommendation is critically important to our effort to secure the necessary funds to complete this project,” said Walter Graff, AMC's Deputy Director. “We look forward to working with the Bush Administration, Maine's Senators and Representatives, and the state of Maine in the coming months to ensure passage of this proposed funding and the successful protection of this property.”

Governor John Baldacci and the Maine Department of Conservation have recommended the KIW project as Maine's top Forest Legacy priority for the coming year, and the project has been strongly supported by U.S. Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins and Congressman Michael Michaud. In addition to the proposed federal funds, AMC and TPL are working to secure matching funds from other public and private sources. The Land for Maine's Future program has already committed \$1 million to support the property's protection, and if another land bond is successful in Maine additional state funds will be sought. Private fundraising, targeted at \$15 million, is underway to support recreational infrastructure, stewardship, monitoring and educational programs on the property.

The property is located 10 miles east of Moosehead Lake, Maine, near the towns of Greenville, Brownville, Milo and Dover-Foxcroft. In 2003 the AMC, with assistance from TPL, purchased the KIW tract from International Paper. The property is a cornerstone of the AMC's Maine Woods Initiative, a land conservation effort that integrates habitat protection, recreation, education, and sustainable forestry in the 100-Mile Wilderness region of Maine, which stretches from the town of Monson north to Mt. Katahdin along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. A 17-mile portion of the federally protected Appalachian Trail runs through the property, which also includes a 12.5-mile stretch of the Class A West Branch of the Pleasant River, and numerous remote ponds, streams and mountain peaks.

A fundamental goal of the Katahdin Iron Works Project is to protect the property's significant natural resources, strengthen the economies of communities in the Greenville/Moosehead Lake region through the sustainable harvest of the property's timber resources, and manage the property's wide variety of recreational opportunities to attract additional nature and recreation-based tourism. With its close proximity to the Appalachian Trail and abundance of lakes, streams, and ponds, the property holds great promise to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for local communities and visitors alike. The vast sweep of forests within its 37,000 acres also ensure a reliable source of timber for local markets. Within the KIW tract, the AMC has also purchased and is operating Little Lyford Pond Camps, which serves as the recreational hub for the project and base for exploring the region. The Camps are open to the public and offer opportunities for hiking, paddling, fly-fishing, snowshoeing and skiing.

The KIW project is part of a long-term investment by the state in public protection of forest resources. In the past several years alone, partnership efforts in Maine have resulted in the conservation of over one million acres of forestlands, bringing to the state permanent protection of valuable natural resources, public access to renowned recreation lands, and continued harvesting of timber resources in a sustainable fashion. The USDA Forest Legacy Program has been a crucial element in this broader protection effort, providing nearly \$10 million in federal matching funds to Maine through allocations secured by the Maine congressional delegation.

The Trust for Public Land, established in 1972, specializes in conservation real estate, applying its expertise in negotiations, public finance, and law to protect land for people to enjoy as parks, greenways, community gardens, urban playgrounds, and wilderness. With funding from the Forest Legacy Program, the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund, state and local open-space funds, and other public and private investments, TPL has helped to protect more than 2 million acres across the country. For more information, visit TPL on the web at www.tpl.org

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With 3,600 members in Maine and more than 90,000 members in the Northeast and beyond, the nonprofit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers, and trails of the Appalachian region.

For more information on AMC's Maine Woods Initiative, see: www.outdoors.org/mwi.