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AMC Holds Formal Groundbreaking for Highland Center at Crawford Notch

CRAWFORD NOTCH, N.H. – Appalachian Mountain Club members and supporters gathered in Crawford Notch today to mark a new chapter in the 126-year-old organization's history—construction of The Highland Center at Crawford Notch, the AMC's newest center for adventure, learning, and lodging in the White Mountains.

A formal groundbreaking ceremony commemorated the project.

“This is a wonderful moment for AMC's members, friends, and supporters, who have worked toward a common vision for the Appalachian outdoors. The Highland Center is our next exciting step in providing meaningful, lasting, and fun outdoor experiences for people of all ages,” said AMC Executive Director Andrew Falender. “The Highland Center will be a place for people to explore, enjoy, and care for the outdoors.”

The AMC's Highland Center at Crawford Notch is a new outdoor program center and lodge being built on AMC property in Crawford Notch at the site of the former Crawford House. The center will offer a variety of activities and skills training sessions that encourage participants to hone outdoor skills and learn about the natural world.

The Highland Center is the cornerstone of the AMC's current \$30 million capital campaign. A portion of the funds raised from the campaign will fund construction of the Highland Center, which will be open to the public, AMC member and non-member alike.

The center is being built on the site of the former Crawford House grand hotel and will offer learning opportunities for children, adults, and families. It will also provide a variety of lodging options, including shared rooms with shared baths and private rooms with private baths.

The campaign is designed to help the AMC achieve its organizational vision for the year 2010, which includes building and managing new trails for the public throughout the Appalachian region, and providing new educational opportunities for people of all ages.

During the ceremony, AMC Deputy Director Walter Graff read a letter from Gov. Jeanne Shaheen, in which she congratulated AMC members and supporters. “This new center, with lodging, classrooms, and multi-purpose meeting rooms will be a great addition to your organization's outreach for school programs, outdoor adventures, workshops, and seminars to outdoor enthusiasts,” she wrote. “I commend

the Appalachian Mountain Club, the contributors to the 125th Anniversary Capital Campaign, and the many others involved in this project for their hard work and dedication.”

Depot renovation includes new exhibits

The day’s events also celebrated the renovation of the club’s historic Queen Anne-style Crawford Notch Depot as part of a National Scenic Byways project. The AMC operates the depot for the public as a visitor information center. As a result of the recent project, the depot now features state-of-the-art displays and exhibits on the rich human history and natural history of Crawford Notch and the White Mountains.

In addition to the informational displays, the project included improvement of on-site and adjacent parking; much-needed improvement of public restrooms, which incorporate environmentally sensitive composting toilets housed in a replica of the bygone baggage-handler’s building that once stood on the site; and installation of a covered passenger platform, which also replicates the depot’s historic features.

AMC Deputy Director Walter Graff noted how the information and education services provided by the AMC at the historic Crawford Notch Depot help the organization achieve its public service mission, and he thanked supporters of the club’s Scenic Byways cost-share grant application.

“Thanks to the support of the Scenic Byways program, the AMC has been able to enhance its services to the public in a way that pays tribute to the intriguing history of Crawford Notch and encourages visitors to learn more about the notch and the White Mountains region,” he said. “We are truly grateful to all who have helped to make this project possible.”

U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) recognized the AMC for its work in the notch via a letter read by his aide, John Cavanaugh. “I congratulate the AMC for continued leadership in providing educational opportunities for the public to learn about the rich human and natural history of the White Mountains and the important role we play as stewards of this wonderful natural resource. I was pleased to play a role in securing a \$386,000 National Scenic Byways grant for the Depot renovation and share in your excitement as you break ground for the construction of the Highland Center,” the letter said. “The Highland Center at Crawford Notch,” the senator wrote, “will certainly represent a great asset for New Hampshire and the White Mountains for generations to come.”

The ceremony also marked the naming of the Macomber Family Information Center within the Crawford Notch Depot. The information center is named for the Macomber Family, long-time AMC members and supporters of the club who have made a significant contribution to the AMC’s work in Crawford Notch.

With more than 93,000 members in the Northeast and beyond, the Appalachian Mountain Club promotes natural resource conservation through responsible recreation, based on the philosophy that successful, long-term conservation depends upon first-hand enjoyment of the natural environment.

Founded in 1876, the nonprofit Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest and most experienced conservation and recreation organization in the United States. The AMC's programs and facilities are open to members and nonmembers alike. More information on the AMC is available on the web at www.outdoors.org.

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