

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Appalachian Mountain Club's Regional Environmental Update

BOSTON, MA — The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) has created a monthly environmental update to serve as a resource for members of the media. You can sign up to receive these updates via email on a monthly basis through the AMC's Conservation Action Network (CAN). CAN provides information about environmental issues throughout the Northeast as well as sample letters and legislator contact information in an effort to encourage citizens to voice their opinions about the issues elected officials and other key decision-makers.

To sign up for CAN, visit the AMC Web site at www.outdoors.org. On the right hand side of the homepage, select the Conservation Action Network hypertext link. Please contact Anne Sharman at (617) 523-0655 ext. 321 with any questions.

1. Conservation Funding Caught in the Senate

The first day of the federal government's fiscal year (October 1) came and went, but the future for next year's conservation funding remains unresolved. Until Congress settles this issue, which is currently stalled by contentious debates on drought relief and timber harvesting, important conservation programs, including the Forest Legacy Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, remain in limbo. Unfortunately, Forest Legacy dollars needed to protect such places as the Connecticut River Headwaters in New Hampshire, the Sable Highlands in New York, and Lake Gerard in New Jersey hang in the balance, and could be reduced in the budget process. After passing a temporary budget to keep the government working, Congress will decide on the actual 2003 budget sometime in November or later. We will keep you informed on this issue as the budget debates continue.

2. Historic Conservation Deal Protects 240,000 Acres Near Maine's Mount Katahdin

In an historic conservation deal announced in late August, 241,000 acres of forestlands around northern Maine's Mount Katahdin and Baxter State Park will be protected from development. In this agreement The Nature Conservancy will purchase \$50 million in existing loans from Great Northern Paper, Inc., and in exchange the paper company will guarantee public access, traditional uses and sustainable forest-cutting practices while barring development on 200,000 acres of forest around Maine's tallest mountain.

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In addition, 41,000 acres in the Debsconeag Lake wilderness area is being transferred to The Nature Conservancy. The Debsconeag Lakes area includes New England's highest concentration of remote ponds, and has long been identified as one of 10 important wildland areas in the Northern Forest in need of protection.

3. Torne Valley Power Plant Plan

After a long-fought three-year battle by concerned citizens and conservationists to protect one of the Highlands' critical treasures, American National Power announced on September 5 that it is abandoning its controversial plan to build a 1,100-megawatt electric generating plant in Torne Valley adjacent to the Palisades Interstate Park. This power plant proposal would have been highly visible from heavily used trails and viewpoints in Harriman State Park, which surrounds the valley on three sides. It would have threatened the Ramapo River watershed, which provides drinking water to more than 2 million people in NY and NJ. Further industrial development in the valley would also diminish air quality and wildlife habitat in a region already threatened by sprawl. In early 2001 over 100 AMC Conservation Action Network members wrote their governors asking them to put a halt to this development and protect Torne Valley. The fight to save Torne Valley has been led by the Torne Valley Preservation Association as the Save Torne Valley Coalition.

4. AMC Completes 20-year Alpine Rescue

After 22 years of effort, the small, extremely rare alpine plant, *Potentilla robbinsiana*, also known as Robbins cinquefoil, or, dwarf cinquefoil has been rescued from the edge of extinction. On August 28 the plant was removed from the federal endangered species list as a result of work by the Appalachian Mountain Club in collaboration with the New England Wildflower Society, White Mountain National Forest and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The plant only lives in a few alpine locations in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and has faced threats from hikers and collectors as early as the 1800's. The plant was named to the endangered species list in 1980, an event that sparked the long recovery effort. A combination of research, transplantation, trail re-routing, and hiker education has led to the two-and-a-half-fold increase in the population since it was originally listed as endangered.

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With more than 92,000 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.

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