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June 21, 2002

CONTACT: Rob Burbank, Public Affairs Director  
(603) 466-2721, ext. 195  
[rburbank@amcinfo.org](mailto:rburbank@amcinfo.org)

### **AMC to Connect People with the Outdoors at the Highland Center**

CRAWFORD NOTCH, N.H., JUNE 21 – The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) today marked the next step in its long history as the nation’s most experienced conservation and recreation organization with a formal groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate construction of the Highland Center at Crawford Notch, the newest center for adventure, learning and lodging in the White Mountains.

The Highland Center is scheduled to open in fall 2003.

This new outdoor program center is designed to offer lasting outdoor experiences for day and overnight visitors of all ages through workshops, guided hikes, and other opportunities to experience the surrounding mountain environment. The center will be open to the public.

Throughout the White Mountains, the demand for outdoor recreation and environmental education far exceeds the offerings. “The Highland Center’s proximity to dozens of mountain peaks, hundreds of miles of hiking trails, and thousands of acres of the White Mountain National Forest provides a fantastic setting for outdoor learning and adventures for kids, adults, groups, individuals and families,” said AMC Deputy Director Walter Graff.

In addition to accessing trail and weather information, day-hikers, backpackers, school groups, and other visitors to the new Highland Center will also have the opportunity to increase their understanding of the natural environment and gain proficiency in outdoors skills, such as map and compass use and wilderness medicine.

The Highland Center will offer a number of lodging options, including shared rooms with shared baths and private rooms with private baths. Current plans call for 35 lodging rooms accommodating a total of 120 beds.

As the AMC promotes conservation to visitors, it is also practicing this ethic in the construction of the center. The AMC has been working with leading architects, Carlone, Dick, LaFleche of Cambridge, Mass., and leading landscape architects, The Halvorson Company of Boston. Both companies specialize in creating environmentally sensitive buildings that fit their surroundings. “We want to make sure the new facility blends with the surrounding landscape,” explained Graff. “We’re designing a center that not only complements the natural landscape, but also pays tribute to the area’s intriguing cultural history, while sitting lightly on the land.”

The 26-acre parcel owned by the AMC was once the site of the Crawford House, one of New Hampshire's historic grand hotels, which was destroyed by fire in the late 1970s. While the Crawford House dominated the landscape, the design of the Highland Center utilizes site topography and vegetation to help ensure the center will complement the landscape. The layout of the Highland Center will include meeting areas, interpretive educational displays, an exhibit hall, two dining rooms, and quiet spaces.

The Highland Center is the centerpiece of the AMC's ongoing 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Capital Campaign. Campaign donations will fund a number of AMC projects and initiatives throughout the Appalachian Region. A portion of the campaign's \$30 million goal is earmarked to fund construction of the Highland Center. Funding for the Highland Center is provided entirely by AMC members and supporters.

The AMC recently received a \$1 million challenge grant from The Kresge Foundation toward the construction of the Highland Center at Crawford Notch. "We're very pleased to receive this generous grant from The Kresge Foundation," said Andrew J. Falender, AMC executive director. "This gift will help AMC to realize its vision for a state-of-the-art environmental education center in a location where hands-on outdoor learning opportunities are unequalled."

The Highland Center is the cornerstone of the AMC's largest-ever fund-raising effort, a capital campaign that aims to raise \$30 million for a variety of purposes. Themed "Connecting Active People to Special Places," the campaign will fund the creation of new trails and outdoor centers and endowments for education, conservation, scientific research, and trail maintenance. The Kresge Foundation grant is contingent upon the AMC raising the balance of its capital campaign goal.

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](http://www.outdoors.org).

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