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Highland Center Construction Utilizes ‘Green’ Building Techniques

CRAWFORD NOTCH, N.H. - From the Appalachian Mountain Club's (AMC) environmentally sensitive huts to its newest outdoor program center, the Highland Center at Crawford Notch, the AMC aims to practice and promote wise stewardship of the Northeast outdoors.

The nation's most experienced and active conservation and recreation organization believes that the Highland Center at Crawford Notch will help meet the region's rising demand for outdoor adventure and learning opportunities.

The Highland Center at Crawford Notch, uniquely situated in the heart of the White Mountains, is the AMC's newest center for adventure, learning and lodging. It incorporates several design innovations to minimize environmental impacts and to help ensure environmentally sustainable operations.

As the AMC promotes conservation to visitors, it is also practicing this ethic in the construction of the center. The club's longstanding commitment to environmentally sensitive operations was recognized recently when the AMC was awarded the New Hampshire Travel Council's Sustainable Business Award in early June.

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. For example, one of The Halvorson Company's notable successes is Boston's celebrated Post Office Square, an urban effort to invite green space into the city.

“We want to make sure the Highland Center at Crawford Notch blends with the surrounding landscape,” explained AMC Deputy Director Walter Graff. “We’re designing a center that not only complements the natural landscape, but also pays tribute to the area’s cultural history, while sitting lightly on the land.”

The exterior elements of the Highland Center pay particular attention to these concepts. Trees and other plantings on the site will be native species and will be incorporated as teaching tools in the center's natural history workshops. The Highland Center will be oriented with more than 60 percent of its windows facing south in an effort to maximize the benefits of solar energy. The windows of the building will be triple glazed to help conserve energy. In addition, the earth-tone external features of the Highland Center at Crawford Notch will help the building complement the natural landscape.

Inside the Highland Center, recycled steel, provided by Isaacson Structural Steel of Berlin, N.H., will serve as the skeleton of the Highland Center. A central biomass wood-burning boiler will help take the

chill off crisp New Hampshire days, and a state-of-the-art ventilation system will conserve heat while maintaining the highest standard of interior air quality. A variety of recycled-content materials will be used throughout the Highland Center, along with environmentally sensitive carpets, glues and paints. The Highland Center will also incorporate the use of low-flow toilets and composting toilets.

The Highland Center at Crawford Notch is being built on a site with a long history of human use. The Crawford House, a 19th century grand hotel, occupied the spot until the late 1970s. The AMC led the fight to protect the notch after the Crawford House sold at auction and subsequently burned.

“The Highland Center will encourage people to enjoy the outdoors through recreation; to learn more about the beauty and intrinsic value of the outdoors; and to actively care for and advocate for the outdoors,” said AMC Deputy Director Walter Graff. “Through the Highland Center, we will be communicating AMC’s conservation values by reusing the site of a former grand hotel in an environmentally sensitive way, and helping visitors to the White Mountains better understand this special place.”

The Highland Center at Crawford Notch is slated for completion in September 2003.

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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