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**Mountain Rescue of an Alpine Plant
Recovery Effort Aids Rare Alpine Plant on Mt. Washington**

MOUNT WASHINGTON, N.H.-- The Appalachian Mountain Club is well known for rescuing hikers in the White Mountains. A much longer and unique rescue by the AMC, working in collaboration with the New England Wildflower Society, White Mountain National Forest and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, was the rescue of a small, extremely rare alpine plant, *Potentilla robbinsiana*, also known as Robbins cinquefoil, or, dwarf cinquefoil.

The plant only lives in a few alpine locations in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. It began experiencing human threats upon completion of the historic Crawford Path, in 1819. Inadvertent trampling by hikers and collection of the species by plant collectors caused a rapid decline in dwarf cinquefoil numbers. The plant was named to the endangered species list in 1980, an event which sparked a 22-year recovery effort. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the plant from the federal endangered species list Aug. 28.

“When rescuing humans, the victims are carried off the mountain. In contrast, this plant was rescued from humans and carried back up the mountain to be transplanted, and left to fend for itself,” explained Dr. Ken Kimball research director for the AMC . “Each year, seeds are collected in the wild by the AMC and then sent to the New England Wildflower Society to be propagated. Adult plants are then backpacked up the mountain by researchers to form new colonies,” he said.

AMC researchers also spent many hours over more than two decades in the harsh alpine zone, often on their hands and knees in strong winds, collecting biological and population data on the species. The plant’s reproduction and mortality rates were analyzed and a population model developed to determine if the plant was meeting objectives established in a Recovery Plan.

To remove threats to the plant’s recovery, AMC trail crews, working with the U.S. Forest Service, relocated major hiking trails out of the plant’s prime habitat on Mount Washington. In addition, a major education program was initiated to keep hikers from walking on the fragile alpine habitat that these plants occupy.

“After 22 years, the results are most encouraging,” said Kimball. “The population has increased over two-and-a-half-fold, and we now have two additional colonies that are reproducing successfully. An added benefit” he said, “is that by saving this plant ,we learned much about the ecology of the alpine zone, and how to better manage this unique, above-treeline area that is sought out by tens of thousands of hikers each year. This

success also represents how non-profit and government organizations, when working in partnership, brings meaningful results.”

Founded in 1876, the non-profit Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest and most experienced conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With 93,000 members in the Northeast and beyond, the AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers, and trails of the Appalachian Region.

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