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### **Appalachian Mountain Club Launches Maine Woods Initiative**

***AMC to make major investment in backcountry recreation while preserving unique natural resources of Maine's 100-Mile Wilderness Region***

AUGUSTA, Maine – The Appalachian Mountain Club today announced its Maine Woods Initiative, a strategy for land conservation that integrates habitat protection, recreation, education, and sustainable forestry in the 100-Mile Wilderness region of Maine. The strategy represents the most significant investment in conservation and recreation in the Club's 127-year history.

The initiative seeks to address the ecological and economic needs of the Maine Woods region by supporting local forest products jobs and traditional recreation, creating new multi-day backcountry experiences for visitors, and attracting new nature-based tourism to the region. AMC will draw on its long history in Maine and New Hampshire in developing new trails and a range of accommodations that are scaled appropriately for the natural resources of the area. The investment made by AMC will make paddling, hiking, skiing and snowshoeing experiences available to a broader range of visitors, while reducing overuse on some portions of the Appalachian Trail.

“This region offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not only protect an irreplaceable natural resource, but to also build strong local economies in this region of Maine,” said Andrew Falender, executive director of the AMC.

He emphasized that the organization will work in partnership with local communities, the state of Maine, forest products companies, conservation groups, and recreational organizations as it seeks to carry out its vision. “We will be making long-term investments in trails, overnight sites, and educational programming which will support sustainable, nature-based tourism in the region and protect sensitive lands,” Falender said.

AMC’s work in Maine dates back to 1876. AMC members were the first to map Katahdin, and AMC trail crews built many early trails in Baxter State Park. The AMC has also been active in Maine conservation efforts as a leader of the Northern Forest Alliance and member of the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance. The AMC currently manages Echo Lake Camp on Mount Desert Island, Knubble Bay Camp on Georgetown Island, Beal Island Campground in Georgetown, and Swan’s Falls Campground in Fryeburg, as well as the newly re-opened Little Lyford Pond Camps, near Greenville. All are open to members as well as the general public.

The strategy of the AMC is consistent with the goals laid out by Governor John Baldacci in his Maine Woods Legacy vision, announced on November 26.

“This agreement between the Appalachian Mountain Club and International Paper represents a new level of collaboration in the Maine Woods,” said Maine Governor John Baldacci. “I applaud IP and the AMC for their cooperative work in preserving this part of the 100-mile Wilderness for traditional Maine uses. The management plan to put part of this purchase into certified sustainable forestry is in keeping with our goal of increasing certified forest product production in Maine. The economic, recreational and conservation impacts of this agreement will be felt for generations.”

As an initial phase of the initiative, the AMC announced the purchase of 37,000 acres in the region from International Paper (IP), in a transaction facilitated by the Trust for Public Land (TPL). The parcel, also known as the Katahdin Iron Works (KI) property, includes outstanding ecological and recreational resources, and is traversed by the Appalachian Trail. The parcel lies 10 miles east of Greenville and includes Long Pond, Houston Pond, and Chairback Mountain.

The KI land purchase immediately protects important natural resources in the region from development, including the West Branch of the Pleasant River, a high quality natural fishery and a water source for Gulf Hugas Gorge; a wetland complex of over 1,000 acres, including a 300-acre bog; spectacular scenery in the Barren/Chairback range; the Baker, Whitecap and Little Spruce mountains, the three highest peaks between Mounts Bigelow and Katahdin. The river above Gulf Hugas has been described by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife as “an ecological treasure trove” and “as close to pristine as possible.” These resources will be carefully managed to protect their natural values. The transaction also preserves public access to the area.

The tract is traversed by 10 miles of the Appalachian Trail and is adjacent to the popular Gulf Hugas gorge. An additional 15 to 20 miles of Appalachian Trail border the east side of the tract near Gulf Hugas Mountain.

Also included in the initiative is the AMC’s earlier purchase of Little Lyford Pond Camps, which lie within the KI property. The camps have been in operation since 1874, and the AMC is continuing to manage the property as a traditional sporting camp, which offers such activities as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, paddling and fly-fishing. The camps offer an excellent base for exploring the region.

AMC has worked closely with local communities in the planning of the Maine Woods Initiative. “Our community looks forward to a long and productive relationship with the AMC, which has an excellent reputation for connecting people with the outdoors through its successful operation of backcountry facilities,” said Greenville Town Manager John Simko.

A management plan for the KI parcel will be developed within the next year that will determine which areas within the parcel will be managed specifically for conservation, recreation, forestry, or multiple use. A third party will certify sustainable forestry plans.

The purchase price of the tract was \$14.2 million. Short-term financing is being provided by Citizens Bank and the Open Space Institute, with technical assistance from TPL. “While we have secured initial financing for the purchase, over the coming months we must find public and private funding to pay off these loans,” said AMC Deputy Director Walter Graff. AMC intends to be the long-term owner of the property, he said.

“We are happy to have helped keep this land for all to enjoy,” said Whitney Hatch, New England regional director for the Trust for Public Land. “We look forward to a continued partnership with the AMC and the state of Maine on this project. Our goal is to maintain the traditional uses of this land in the heart of Maine’s ‘100-Mile Wilderness’ while preserving the unique natural resources, spectacular vistas, and public access opportunities of one of the most beautiful parts of the Appalachian Trail.”

The AMC will collaborate with local interests, public and private, to ensure public access and determine how best to steward the property and accommodate multiple

traditional uses, according to Graff. AMC currently plans to continue the relationship with KI/Jo Mary Multiple Use Forest to manage public access in the short term. AMC also intends to continue leasing agreements for several recreational camp lots on the property.

“We are pleased that many of the traditional uses of this property will continue,” said Dave Lieser, IP’s region manager for Forest Resources. “The sale of this particular tract is a part of our long-term strategy to divest several hundred thousand acres in Maine to forestry, conservation and State interests, while retaining about a million third-party certified forest acres to provide wood fiber for paper and wood manufacturing facilities in Maine. Our foresters have provided caring stewardship on this tract for several decades and are glad to see that it will continue to be in excellent hands,” Lieser said.

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With members throughout the Northeast, including 3300 members in Maine, the nonprofit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers and trails of the Appalachian region.

The AMC supports natural resource conservation while encouraging responsible recreation, based on the philosophy that successful, long-term conservation depends upon first-hand enjoyment of the natural environment.

International Paper businesses include paper, packaging and forest products. As one of the largest private landowners in the world, IP manages the woods in compliance with the standards of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program. In the U.S. alone, IP protects more than a half million acres of unique and environmentally important habitat on its forestlands through conservation easements and land sales to environmental groups. And, the company has a long-standing policy of using no wood from endangered forests. Headquartered in the United States, IP has operations in over 40 countries and sells its products in more than 120 nations.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit organization conserving land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. Since its founding in 1972, TPL has helped protect more than 1.6 million acres of land in 45 states, including more than 50,000 acres in Maine.

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