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Appalachian Mountain Club releases Ecological Atlas of the Upper Androscoggin River Watershed

The Appalachian Mountain Club recently released "An Ecological Atlas of the Upper Androscoggin River Watershed." The 88-page document, authored by AMC Senior Staff Scientist Dr. David Publicover, presents a history and detailed description of the natural landscape of the watershed upstream of the confluence of the Androscoggin and Webb rivers in Dixfield, Maine.

This 2,300-square-mile area (twice the size of the state of Rhode Island) encompasses parts of Coos County in New Hampshire and Oxford and Franklin counties in Maine. It stretches from the remote northern tributaries at the Canadian border, across the Rangeley Lakes region and the Mahoosuc Range, to the northern White Mountains and the mill cities and small towns along the river itself, to Rumford, Maine. The atlas focuses on the "north woods" part of the watershed -- an area of vast, undeveloped forests, where human settlement and agriculture occupy just a few percent of the land.

"The AMC developed this atlas to provide an educational resource and planning tool for those with an interest in the area, both to help people understand the landscape and to help foster a 'sense of place' based on natural rather than political boundaries," Publicover explained.

"The upper Androscoggin watershed is a magnificent place. It encompasses the rich and complex story of the Northern Forest -- its ecological character, its history, and the social and economic pressures facing the region. It is a place where people embrace the past, but where citizens are coming together to build a future based around sustainable use of the natural landscape," said Publicover, noting the formation of the Androscoggin River Watershed Council as an example.

The atlas's 20 chapters and 35 full-color maps cover the ecological characteristics of the region (including geology, soils, vegetation, wetlands, lakes, rivers, and wildlife), human impacts (such as dams and timber harvesting), land-use history, and land conservation.

Information is presented on a wide range of topics, including old-growth forests, the development of bogs, extirpated wildlife (wolf, cougar and caribou), and soil development. A detailed appendix provides information about many sources of additional information for those wishing to pursue specific topics in more detail.

“AMC has been working for several years to develop a database of geographical and ecological information on the Northern Forest region of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York, and we want to share this information with the public and make it more widely available,” Publicover said.

The atlas will be distributed to a wide range of public officials and agencies, local schools and libraries, land trusts, non-profit organizations, and citizens’ groups. The atlas is available at no charge in Adobe PDF format on CD-ROM. A limited number of printed copies are also available by contacting Dr. Publicover at (603) 466-2721, ext. 200, or via email at dpublicover@amcinfo.org. Extensive geographic information covering northern New England and New York is also accessible through AMC’s Web-based mapping site at <http://appalachia.outdoors.org/mapping>.

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