

## MEDIA ADVISORY

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### **September 3 to Mark 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wilderness Act**

September 3 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Wilderness Act, public policy that enables the U.S. Congress to designate certain public lands as official Wilderness areas, which are to be enjoyed by the public and maintained in their natural condition.

The Wilderness Act was signed by President Lyndon Johnson on Sept. 3, 1964. The 5552-acre Great Gulf Wilderness in the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) was among the 54 places nationwide that were recognized as official Wilderness areas in that inaugural year of the Wilderness Act.

Since that time, 109,380 additional Wilderness acres have been designated in the WMNF in Maine and New Hampshire. Those lands include the Pemigewasset, Presidential-Dry River, Sandwich Range, and Caribou-Speckled Mountain Wilderness areas.

Wilderness is defined under the act as those wild places “where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” The purpose of the legislation was to ensure future generations wilderness experiences that retain “primeval character” and provide “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.”

Wilderness is relatively rare in the eastern United States. Throughout the 12 northeastern states, there are fewer than 300,000 acres of Wilderness—about three-tenths of one percent of the nation’s total.

The U.S. Forest Service is set to announce its proposed management plan for the WMNF at a public meeting Sept. 18. As part of that plan, the Forest Service is expected to consider the addition of Wilderness acreage to the WMNF.

The Appalachian Mountain Club supports proposals under consideration by the U.S. Forest Service to expand the Pemigewasset and Sandwich Range Wilderness Areas and to add new designated Wilderness in the Wild River Valley and the Dartmouth Range. AMC expects to provide specific comments to the Forest Service regarding additional Wilderness in the WMNF after the draft plan is released.