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### **AMC Announces Significant Progress on Maine Woods Initiative**

PORTLAND, Maine -- The Appalachian Mountain Club announced significant progress on its Maine Woods Initiative at the *Mainebiz* 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium in Portland today. The Maine Woods Initiative is a strategy for land conservation that integrates habitat protection, recreation, education, and sustainable forestry in Maine's 100-Mile Wilderness region.

AMC Deputy Director Walter Graff provided a progress report on the first six months of the project, announced in December 2003. Graff provided the audience details on community outreach efforts, forestry plans for AMC's Katahdin Iron Works tract, an ecological inventory for the parcel, and investments in trails and at AMC's Little Lyford Pond Camps designed to provide new recreational opportunities for visitors to the region.

Among the specific accomplishments highlighted during the symposium:

- AMC continues to engage local communities and user groups near the Maine Woods Initiative project area. AMC officials have presented details of the project to the Selectmen of Greenville, Brownville and Milo, the County Commissioners of Piscataquis County, and the Piscataquis County Economic Development Council. In March, 18 county officials, educators, and businesspeople visited AMC operations in northern New Hampshire, including the AMC's new Highland Center at Crawford Notch, to learn about AMC's programs and experience in working with local communities. AMC is working to support local community events, such as the Greenville Snowfest. AMC has also worked closely in the last six months with the Moosehead Riders Snowmobile Club to ensure both skiers and snowmobilers can safely enjoy the natural resources of the KIW property.
- AMC hired Huber Resources Corporation as its forest management consultant in March. Huber will work with AMC to complete a forest inventory and develop a sustainable forest management plan that ensures natural forest composition and structure, maintains and enhances biological diversity, protects water quality,

supports the integrity of reserve areas, and complements recreational uses of the property. AMC will conduct a harvest on a portion of its Katahdin Iron Works property this summer, providing wood to local mills, and will work toward certification of its management practices by the Forest Stewardship Council. Huber will hire a Maine-based contractor for the harvest this summer.

- AMC will also conduct an ecological inventory on the property this summer to more clearly define the extent and boundaries of a proposed ecological reserve, centered on the upper West Branch of the Pleasant River, and to develop a better understanding of the ecological characteristics of the entire property. AMC expects to set aside at least 10,000 acres -- an area roughly the size of the state's Bigelow Reserve -- as a non-motorized reserve with a focus on habitat protection. The ecological reserve would connect with land already protected around Gulf Hagas, the Appalachian Trail and The Hermitage.
- AMC has hired a Maine-based trail crew, as well as a trail supervisor who is currently laying out new trails to be created this summer. Current areas of focus include providing new ski and hiking trails from Indian Mountain to Horseshoe Pond, and creating a new ski trail to take skiers off a portion of the KI Road.
- Little Lyford Pond Camps completed its first winter under AMC management, with improvements including renovating the lodge and kitchen area, a new well and graywater system, and new cabin roofs. Little Lyford Pond Camps, opened in 1874, is a full-service sporting camp offering opportunities for hiking, fly-fishing, paddling and cross-country skiing. Little Lyford Pond Camps was recently named a 2004 Editors' Choice lodging destination in Yankee Magazine's *Travel Guide to New England*.
- AMC will be working this summer with the Maine Tree Foundation to host a training session for teachers focused on sustainable forestry practices. AMC will be working to provide additional educational programming and workshops over time.

AMC will continue to develop detailed conservation and recreation plans this summer, working with state agencies and local communities.

"I continue to support AMC's efforts to balance conservation, recreation and forestry in the region, consistent with my vision for a Maine Woods Legacy. The State of Maine looks forward to working with AMC to invite new hikers, paddlers and skiers into the area," said Gov. John E. Baldacci.

AMC will continue its work with local communities and share details of its plans as they evolve. "The AMC has done an excellent job of keeping the surrounding communities involved in the project," said Sophie Wilson, town manager of Brownville. "The AMC has shown it understands the need to support existing forest products jobs and recreational uses while bringing new sustainable tourism business into the region."

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 been active in Maine conservation efforts through the Northern Forest Alliance and Tumbledown Conservation Alliance. The AMC 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 Little Lyford Pond Camps near Greenville. All are open to the public.

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With members throughout the Northeast, including 3,300 members in Maine, the nonprofit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers and trails of the Appalachian region.

For additional details on the Maine Woods Initiative, see:

[www.outdoors.org/conservation/maine/](http://www.outdoors.org/conservation/maine/). For information on Little Lyford Pond Camps, see: [www.outdoors.org/lodging/lyford/](http://www.outdoors.org/lodging/lyford/).

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