

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Appalachian Mountain Club Initiates Legal Action Against New Hampshire DRED
and DOT on Proposed Snowmobile Route through Crawford Notch**

State and AMC Agree on Temporary Halt to Construction and Use of Trail

CONCORD, N.H. (Nov. 22)-- After attempts to reach a compromise with the State of New Hampshire, the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) today filed a petition for a temporary restraining order and preliminary and permanent injunction against the State's Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) and Department of Transportation (DOT), seeking to delay construction of a new snowmobile route through Crawford Notch until appropriate public input and consideration of alternatives is complete. The petition was filed in Merrimack County Superior Court. Superior Court Judge Fitzgerald has scheduled a hearing on the preliminary injunction request for November 30.

After the filing, the State and the AMC agreed that in the interim the State will immediately cease construction of the trail; advise the snowmobiling community that the trail is not open at this time; and construct a barricade to prevent access to the trail until further orders of the court.

The proposed route would bisect the AMC's 26-acre property surrounding the Highland Center at Crawford Notch, creating a ring around an environmental and education center that offers children's educational programs and is a hub for skiing, snowshoeing and winter hiking in the Notch. The AMC filed this petition based on its belief that due process was not followed by the State of New Hampshire in notifying AMC as an abutting landowner, in authorizing construction of the trail, and in considering the potential impacts of the trail on public safety, parking, and the historic and natural resources in Crawford Notch. The AMC believes that safer and less disruptive alternatives to the proposed route exist but were not considered, including the recently built snowmobile trail that parallels the Cog Railway Base Road.

The petition seeks a temporary restraining order and preliminary and permanent injunction based on the negative impact of the route on the operation of the Highland Center as an education and outdoor recreation center and safety of its users, and lack of due process and public input in considering the impact of the route on the nearby

Crawford Depot, listed in the National Registry of Historic Places; the Crawford Path, a designated National Recreational Trail; US Route 302, a designated National Scenic Byway; and the railroad right of way which cuts through the AMC's property. AMC hopes to work with both state agencies and the U.S. Forest Service to find an alternative route that is safe and does not compromise the natural and scenic qualities of the Notch.

The AMC is deeply concerned not only about the impact of the proposed route on natural and historic resources and non-motorized tourism in Crawford Notch, but also about safety issues related to the location of the dangerous highway crossing on US 302 and the impact on hikers, skiers and climbers needing to use the same rights of way to access trails. AMC is also concerned about parking along US 302 and impact on limited parking areas at the Highland Center and Crawford Path trailhead. The Highland Center is used as a center for winter hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, and is the base for family and teen programs throughout the winter.

The AMC recognizes the importance of snowmobiling to northern New Hampshire communities, and believes that with appropriate public input, planning and management, motorized recreation trails can co-exist with non-motorized recreation. For example, AMC has been generally supportive of the Warren to Woodstock snowmobile trail, and provided input to the U.S. Forest Service as part of a public review process.

Crawford Notch represents an important natural and historic resource, making public input into its use vitally important. The Notch has been valued for generations by walkers, hikers, skiers, and tourists as a place of natural beauty. Abel Crawford settled the Notch in 1792, and he and his son Ethan built the Crawford Path, now listed as a National Recreation Trail, in 1819. The Maine Central Railroad built the Crawford Notch Depot in 1891, which today is maintained and operated by the AMC as a visitor center. The AMC has been active in protecting land around Crawford Notch since the Club's founding in 1876.

The AMC recently filed a Right to Know Letter with DRED and DOT, which confirmed the route of the proposed trail. The proposed trail leaves from Fabyan's, crosses US 302 and proceeds southward along the former Maine Central railroad tracks west of US 302 and the Highland Center, crosses US 302 at Saco Lake, runs north along the DOT right-of-way on the east side of US 302 (between the lake and the road), crosses a bridge over Gibbs Brook, and then connects with the unplowed Mt. Clinton Rd., and then on to the Jefferson Notch Road. As part of the project, the State is in the process of constructing a snowmobile bridge across Gibbs Brook.

DRED started building the new snowmobile trail through Crawford Notch despite its own construction of an alternative trail parallel to the Cog Railway Base Road over the summer, which would continue to provide access to Jefferson Notch Road from Fabyan's. The AMC questions DRED's assertion that the alternative trail is now considered inadequate for anticipated traffic, and that there are no other alternatives to the Crawford Notch route.

The AMC has been involved in the conservation of natural and historic resources in Crawford Notch throughout its history, including its role in the formation of the White Mountain National Forest. In 1976, the AMC joined with the Nature Conservancy and Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests to purchase 466 acres surrounding the Crawford House site. The Club's motivation for purchasing the land was to supplement the protection of the Notch already provided by Crawford Notch State Park and the WMNF. This land was in turn transferred to the US Forest Service to become part of the White Mountain National Forest. In 1977, the AMC worked again with TNC and SPNHF to urge Congress to appropriate \$3.9 million for the purchase of 6,500 acres in the Bretton Woods area, which was later added to the WMNF.

In 1979, AMC purchased the 26-acre Crawford House site itself, which had been on the market for two years following a fire that destroyed the building in 1977. AMC performed a major environmental clean-up of the site, which had been neglected since the hotel's closing. It opened its Crawford Hostel in 1980 utilizing the former motel and cabins on the site. That year it also reopened the former Maine Central Railroad depot, built in 1891, as a visitor information center. The depot was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. In 1984, the AMC's construction crew worked to restore the Crawford Depot with a matching grant from the New Hampshire Historic Preservation Office and gift from BankNorth of Concord.

In 2002 The AMC completed renovations to the Crawford Depot site through a grant from the National Scenic Byways cost-share program. The Macomber Family Information Center at Crawford Notch Depot was dedicated in that year. AMC opened the Highland Center at Crawford Notch in the Fall of 2003.

The AMC used "green" construction techniques in building the Highland Center to help ensure this new lodge and learning center would have minimal impact on the environment and sit lightly on the land. The Highland Center is a major environmental education center where schoolchildren and people of all ages come to explore the outdoors and learn about nature. Once fully established, AMC believes its environmental education and natural history programs will serve 5,000 students per year from schools throughout New Hampshire and the region.

A map of the proposed snowmobile route is available in the press release area of AMC's website at: <http://www.outdoors.org/about/newsroom/newsroom-releases.cfm>

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With more than 90,000 members in the Northeast, including 10,000 members in New Hampshire, the nonprofit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers and trails of the Appalachian region.