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**Appalachian Mountain Club Supports Additional Wilderness,  
ATV Ban in White Mountain National Forest**

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) today applauded the U.S. Forest Service for issuing its new management plan for the White Mountain National Forest. “The AMC commends the U.S. Forest Service for the extensive work it has put into developing the new management plan for this multiple-use forest, and for actively seeking public involvement and considering the views expressed by thousands of forest users throughout the planning process,” said Susan Arnold, director of conservation for the AMC, the nation’s oldest conservation and recreation organization.

“Following an initial review of the plan released today, we are pleased to see new Wilderness areas proposed for the national forest. New Wilderness designation for the Wild River Valley and the Sandwich Range will provide outstanding opportunities for backcountry recreation and the chance, over time, to restore unfragmented, mature forest habitat. We look forward to working with our Congressional representatives to help pass a New Hampshire Wilderness Bill in the United States Congress,” Arnold said. Congressional representatives are expected to propose legislation providing new WMNF Wilderness in the coming months.

Wilderness denotes areas on public lands that have been officially designated by Congress to be managed in perpetuity for their wild character. The Wilderness Act of 1964 notes that in designated Wilderness areas, the public is afforded “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” Non-motorized recreation such as hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, snowshoeing are allowed in wilderness areas.

Arnold noted the AMC has recommended broadening the boundaries for proposed Wilderness areas in the Wild River Valley and Sandwich Range.

“We are pleased with the opportunities for primitive recreation and mature forest restoration that this new Wilderness acreage can provide, though we believe somewhat broader boundaries for each area would benefit habitat protection, backcountry recreation opportunities, and the Forest Service’s own goals for Wilderness Area management,” said Arnold.

In its earlier comments on the Forest Service's draft management plan, issued in 2004, AMC recommended a greater amount of acreage be considered for Wilderness designation, including lands in the Dartmouth Range and Wild River Valley, and expansion of the existing Sandwich Range and Pemigewasset Wilderness areas.

Arnold said the organization would also have preferred to see the new forest plan provide stronger protection for existing roadless areas on the national forest. "Large natural areas represent a small fraction of our landscape, yet they provide critical ecological, recreational, spiritual and economic values that cannot be provided by roaded or harvested forests," said Arnold. "While the new forest plan doesn't provide for increased conservation in the management of roadless areas, we are encouraged by the opportunities to realize these public benefits through the proposed designation of new Wilderness acreage in the Wild River and Sandwich Range areas," she said.

"We also commend the Forest Service for maintaining its existing ban on all-terrain vehicles in the White Mountain National Forest in its new forest management plan," Arnold said. "Given the noise, pollution, and erosion these vehicles cause, and the Forest Service's lack of resources to police their use, ATV use is clearly inappropriate in the national forest."

Arnold said AMC supports the forest plan's general direction with regard to recreation management and the balance of recreational uses. "AMC supports the overall goal of emphasizing concentrated use and protecting lower use areas through appropriate management. We believe this will allow some increase in use while avoiding degradation of both the quality of the recreational experiences and the natural environment that is integral to these experiences," she said.

In the White Mountain National Forest, the AMC provides trail maintenance, educational programs, scientific research, backcountry lodging, search and rescue assistance, and a wide range of visitor and information services for national forest visitors. AMC operates seven mountain huts, 12 backcountry campsites, the Camp Dodge volunteer center, and Pinkham Notch Visitor Center for use by the public, under special-use permits from the Forest Service. "We look forward to continuing our long partnership with the Forest Service as it implements the new forest plan," Arnold said.

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With 90,000 members in the Northeast and beyond, 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.

