



## ***Appalachian Mountain Club Supports National Monument and National Park in Maine's North Woods***

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) supports the creation of a National Park and adjacent National Recreation Area on lands east of Baxter State Park, and designation of a National Monument as a step toward that outcome. The lands proposed for designation, which would be donated by Elliotsville Plantation, Inc. (EPI), especially those between Baxter State Park and the East Branch of the Penobscot River, have long been recognized for their ecological, recreational, and cultural importance to Maine and beyond.

AMC has decades of on-the-ground experience with a variety of federal land units in Maine and across the Northeast, in addition to AMC's own Maine Woods Initiative. Our experience has shown that conserved lands combined with investment in recreational and visitor infrastructure brings long term economic benefits to local communities.<sup>1</sup> A new National Monument in the Katahdin region with appropriate investment in recreational infrastructure is one of the best opportunities in recent years to address the serious economic challenges of the region. The forest products industry has and will continue to play a dominant role in the local economy. Federal lands can co-exist with private forestlands and timber harvesting, even providing an opportunity to educate visitors on the history and role of the industry in Maine.

This generous gift of land and endowment by EPI is a first step toward realizing the potential ecological, economic, and community benefits of these lands. To achieve those benefits, it must be followed by ample opportunity for public input, especially from local stakeholders, and sound planning, investment, and management.

We believe that conservation is best when done with the support of local communities. While not unanimous, a multitude of local organizations, businesses, and residents have come to support the national park concept, including the Penobscot Nation, local snowmobile clubs, Chambers of Commerce, and many stakeholders in communities that would be gateways for these new public lands.

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<sup>1</sup> See AMC's *Contributions to the Maine Woods Economy* at <http://news.outdoors.org/2016/03/amc-maine-woods-initiative-contributes.html> and *Economic Impact of the Appalachian Mountain Club's Huts and Lodges in New Hampshire* at <http://www.outdoors.org/about/newsroom/press/2015/statement-economic-impact-report.cfm>

AMC uses the following principles to guide our approach to large land proposals—conservation or development--in the Maine Woods region:

1. The Maine Woods is the largest undeveloped forested tract in the eastern US, and has long been a focus of AMC conservation efforts. It is also the wood basket for the region's forest products industry. We support strategic fee and easement conservation of large undeveloped parcels especially to conserve important ecological, recreational, cultural, timber, and community resources. Working forest easements, private land conservation, and new public lands are all important conservation tools that can be used depending on the goals and interests of the private landowner and the conservation outcomes being sought.
2. Protection of recreation corridors that provide high-quality multi-day waterway and forest backcountry trips, an extremely limited resource in the Northeast today, is paramount.
3. Long-term planning and predictability are critical to ensuring the on-going economic vitality of local communities. Large development and conservation proposals should reflect the values of local communities, and their primary economic benefits must accrue locally.
4. Development should be contiguous to existing development, maximizing the economic benefits and minimizing the infrastructure costs to local communities.