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December 2009

“Granite and stone may be the backbone of the Appalachian Trail, but the people who use it and protect it form its soul.” This is a quote from “The Appalachian Trail” episode of *America’s Wild Spaces* that recently aired on the National Geographic Channel.

How true it is.

Those of us who come directly from the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) community, and those of us most connected to the special landscapes the A.T. travels through, realize that we have a responsibility to protect the wild lands surrounding the A.T. in Maine. The flora and fauna one sees from the A.T. don’t live on the footpath, they live in the wide variety of surrounding woodland habitats. What happens *around* the trail impacts the experience of walking *on* the trail and what you see *from* the trail.

Preserving these lands may be a greater challenge than hiking the trail itself! The Maine section of the A.T. is regarded as the most spectacular and remote of the entire trail, but it passes through land that is largely not protected from development. Once developed, there is no turning back the clock – we must be proactive in our conservation effort.

The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust (MATLT) has made protection of the western mountains High Peaks Region our highest conservation priority. This area that includes Saddleback, Sugarloaf and the Crocker mountains is one of the most breathtaking areas on the entire Appalachian Trail and it is *largely unprotected from development*. Under MATLT leadership, an effective partnership of conservation organizations is working to protect this vital AT region.

But our most powerful partner is you. It is people like you that protect the A.T. and “form its soul.” It is on you that MATLT depends to protect 35,500 acres of beauty, habitat, forest land, public access and recreation opportunities.

We need your continuing support to help us conserve one of the most beautiful mountain regions in Maine that includes the Appalachian Trail. Please contribute by mail or by credit card on our secure website, www.matlt.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Plouffe".

William L. Plouffe, President of the Board of Directors