

# JOIN US

in creating a legacy...

The Conservation  
and Protection of  
Permanent Public Access  
in the High Peaks Region  
of Western Maine

An assumption exists today that the land surrounding the Appalachian Trail corridor in Maine is already protected. It isn't.

We can no longer assume that this land will remain in its undeveloped and wild state.

The Appalachian Trail (A.T.) runs through the heart of the western mountains connecting the high peaks stretching from Saddleback Mountain to the Bigelow Preserve. As the only high mountain region in the state without significant protection, it has been identified as a critical ecological area and a priority conservation site.



We're concerned about

# Maine's changing natural landscape

## Why The High Peaks Region?

The High Peaks Region in western Maine offers remoteness, wildness and unspoiled natural beauty found in few places in the eastern U.S. The variety of terrain, diversity of ecological communities, high proportion of rare plants and animals, lack of habitat fragmentation, and its role in landscape connectivity makes this a special place in the state and region—and conservation of this region critical. These lands, which provide a true backcountry experience and support diverse ecosystems, are at risk.

As development creeps up into the mountain valleys, it is clear that a collaborative effort is needed to identify the most threatened land to bring about successful conservation to ensure preservation of the essential natural components and the backcountry experience for future generations.

The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust (MATLT) is committed to protecting the traditional ecological and recreational values of wilderness, wildlife and undisturbed scenic beauty that is most often associated with the Appalachian Trail in Maine. MATLT has identified the protection of the High Peaks Region of the western mountains to be a conservation priority. The initial goal is to preserve 85,000 high priority acres, a large portion of which lies in private ownership.

## Maine's northern forest is in danger

Our northern forest is a vast economic, ecological and recreational resource. Comprising 12 million acres, it offers rugged mountains, wild rivers, remote lakes and endless woodlands; provides habitat for wildlife such as moose, deer, bear, coyote, lynx, loon, eagle, trout and salmon; and contains outstanding recreation destinations.

Currently, the character and traditional use of Maine's woods is threatened. Large land sales, which can lead to development, subdivision and unsustainable timber harvesting, jeopardize the fragile ecosystems, recreational access, and traditional forest-based economies that make this region unique.

Traditional land ownership is giving way to investor-owned lands, which are less likely to be maintained sustainably, resulting in sprawl, loss of wildness, habitat fragmentation, restricted public access and ultimately, loss of the forest as a resource.

## Threatening precious wildlife

Development reduces the habitat wild animals and plants need to thrive. The elevation changes in the High Peaks Region create an ecological landscape with varied habitats and unique communities that bring animals and plants into proximity that are otherwise separated by hundreds of miles. Rare and vulnerable species thrive here and the extensive undeveloped tracts of land support wildlife that requires large areas of roaming range.

The region is home to rare, uncommon, and threatened birds such as the Bicknell's Thrush and is native for rare arctic-alpine and sub arctic-alpine plants.

*Please review MATLT's complete "Ecological Study of the High Peaks Region of Western Maine" available on our website, [www.matlt.org](http://www.matlt.org).*

## Shifting ownership and development pressures

Most of the forest in Maine is privately owned. Historically, the majority of private lands in this region that provide the wilderness experience to hikers and others along the Appalachian Trail had been owned and held in large undeveloped parcels (100,000+ acres) by traditional forest products, timber and paper companies who have allowed public access and retained the environment of the north woods in large contiguous tracts. This pattern of ownership and traditional land use has contributed greatly to the unique wild character of the land.

*Since 1998 more than 30% of the state's land area (7 million acres) has been sold.*

But that is changing. Globalization of the forest products industry and increased pressure for development is changing the ownership pattern. Huge blocks of forestland have been sold in recent years and land use patterns are shifting. Many of the new buyers are as interested in development potential and short-term revenue generation as they are in timber value. The conditions that have conserved the wild character of this region up to now cannot be counted on in the future.

*Public conservation acreage in Maine is the lowest percentage of any forested state.*

## Remote recreational area with grand vistas

The Appalachian Trail lands in the High Peaks Region of Maine are widely regarded as some of the most spectacular sections of the entire A.T. system due to its remoteness and views. From the treeless alpine tundra ridges of Saddleback Mountain, Mount Abraham and other mountains, visitors can enjoy some of the grandest vistas of mountain, forest, and lake landscape in the eastern United States.

## Geological features and ecosystem preservation

The lands encompass varied ecosystems from sub-alpine forests and alpine plant communities to large tracts of northern hardwood and spruce-fir forests to extensive wetlands and important aquatic environments as well as spectacular geologic features—glacial cirques, avalanche slides, falls, gorges, mountain ravines and headwaters of several important rivers. This is a unique ecological landscape with a rare combination of physical and biological conditions that collectively provide an unusually diverse variety of ecosystems within a relatively small geographic range.

## Eco-tourism protects and promotes our natural beauty

When most people think of tourism in Maine, they imagine rocky coasts, lobsters and ocean surf. A decade from now, they are also likely to envision Maine's magnificent forests, moose and birds, great fishing in crystal-clear rivers that flow through pristine woodland and outstanding hunting in untamed wilderness. With proper development and promotion, Maine can sell sights, smells and experiences seldom encountered by those who live in urban areas. Commitment to sustaining the ecological integrity of the environment for nature vacations and wildlife viewing opportunities by promoting responsible eco-tourism travel in Maine will bring greater prosperity to the region and enhance opportunities for the future.



# The High Peaks Region



The High Peaks Region with over 203,000 acres bounded by the communities of Rangeley, Phillips, Kingfield and Stratton includes the largest contiguous

block of land in Maine above 2,700 feet and a core section is one of the largest roadless areas in the state.

## A wildlife habitat haven

There are five distinct ecological zones on top of and interspersed between the mountains, each with their own set of plant and animal species. The area provides habitat to rare species of flora and fauna. Rare and vulnerable species thrive here and the extensive undeveloped tracts of land support wildlife, such as the Spruce Grouse, small passerines including warblers and sparrows, Barred Owl, Pine Marten, moose, lynx, fisher, and bobcat that require large areas of roaming range.

Maine has 23% of the appropriate breeding habitat for the Bicknell's Thrush in the United States whose worldwide population is at considerable risk of decline and conceivable extinction in the absence of aggressive conservation efforts in the near future.

## Connectivity

Migratory wildlife need adequate habitat to hunt and graze, meet mates and breed and raise young—needs that can only be met through connected habitat that provides safe passage among different areas. But expanding development has carved up many landscapes, making unbroken habitat areas increasingly critical for wildlife. Preservation in the High Peaks Region will provide contiguous protected lands from Rangeley to the Bigelow Preserve.

## Forestry

Land protection includes the very same uses that have contributed to maintenance of these contiguous tracts of land for over 200 years. Sustainable forest management is a legitimate conservation option that contributes to local economies as well.

## Quality of place

The western Maine High Peaks Region is, by most anyone's standards, a very special place. Its beauty, recreational opportunities and natural resource values have attracted tourists and outdoor enthusiasts of all kinds for nearly 200 years. Maine communities must safeguard their quality of place or risk losing what makes them a draw for entrepreneurs. The recent Brookings report asserts that Maine's quality places are scarce and valuable assets in today's economy.



Photo © Dan Busby



Photo © Hope Alexander

## WHY Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust?

# Collaboration, education, action.

The Appalachian Trail exists today because visionaries acted almost a century ago.

*Now it's our turn.*

Maine's mountain regions are important natural resources and their value is particularly important because of their scarcity. Mountain areas above 2,700 feet account for only 6/10th of 1% of the state's total land area. The High Peaks Region contains the largest contiguous block of land in Maine above 2,700 feet. Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission's current land use plan states "Mountains and the scenic, natural, recreational, economic, and other values they possess are a limited resource in Maine."

The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust was formed in June 2002 as an independent land trust for the purpose of acquiring and protecting the land surrounding the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) in Maine for public benefit. The trail lands in Maine represent some of the most diverse natural communities in the state and provide an important recreation resource.

## The Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.) was built in Maine in the 1930s.

While the footpath is continuous, the existing trail corridor, with an average width of 1,000 feet, provides relatively little protection. Unlike the other states the A.T. traverses, the footpath of the A.T. in Maine travels mostly through private land, much of it unprotected from development.

The A.T. in Maine traverses a rich and diverse landscape with grand vistas and is widely recognized as one of the wildest and most spectacular sections of the Appalachian Trail. The trail travels 281 miles across the state from the summit of Mount Katahdin southwesterly to the Maine-New Hampshire border. The trail lands encompass varied ecosystems from sub-alpine forests and alpine plant communities to large tracts of northern hardwood and spruce-fir forests to extensive wetlands and important aquatic environments.

*"A realm and not merely a trail, marks the full aim of our efforts."*

*- Benton MacKaye*

The potential of the Appalachian Trail to advance a conservation strategy by connecting a network of protected preserves represents a huge opportunity to advance conservation planning in Maine on a statewide basis. It also provides exceptional opportunities for surrounding communities to capitalize on this outstanding resource.

## Conservation Efforts

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) acquired land on southeastern slopes of Mount Abraham in 2002 that became part of Maine's first ecological reserve. This acquisition was an important step in a larger conservation plan for the region linking Saddleback to Bigelow.

In 2004, MATLT continued this effort by assisting the state in the purchase of the remaining Mount Abraham summit and ridgeline which has now become part of the ecological reserve. MATLT currently holds a 1,159-acre easement on the land. MATLT also purchased 1,183 acres on the southeast slopes of Saddleback Mountain.

Following the campaign to acquire the ridgeline and summit of Mount Abraham and a portion of Saddleback Mountain, two of the 4,000-foot peaks in Maine's western mountains, MATLT embarked on a new initiative to conserve the unique ecological qualities and sense of remoteness of the Maine High Peaks Region.

In 2007, MATLT completed the first Ecological Study of the High Peaks Region of western Maine providing findings about habitat, wildlife and ecological characteristics of the region. These findings are shared with partners, interested parties in surrounding communities, state government, and others in an effort to develop land conservation in the region. We did the science to document that the region is unique and important for reasons unrelated to the Appalachian Trail.

*"It is our task in our time and in our generation, to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours."*

*- John F. Kennedy*

The High Peaks Region is not special because the Appalachian Trail goes through it. The Appalachian Trail goes through the region because the region is special.

Currently, MATLT is leading efforts to establish conservation of the High Peaks Region focusing on 85,000 acres. Protection of this economically and ecologically important area, with opportunities for forestry, recreation, and natural resource based tourism, is a priority. By protecting the ecological integrity of the High Peaks Region, we will ensure protection of the traditional recreational values of wilderness, solitude, remoteness, and undisturbed scenic beauty that is most often associated with the Appalachian Trail.

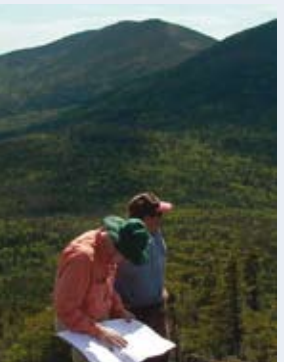


Photo © Hope Alexander



## Interesting Facts:

- MATLT's conservation focus is the 203,400 acres roughly bounded by the communities of Rangeley, Phillips, Kingfield and Stratton.
- In this region, there are about 21,000 acres above 2,700 feet.
- It is one of only three areas in Maine where the mountains rise above 4,000 feet. The other two are the Mahoosuc Range and Baxter Park.
- Eight of the 14 mountains above 4,000 feet in Maine are in this region (Sugarloaf, Crocker, South Crocker, Saddleback, Abraham, The Horn, Spaulding and Redington Peak.)
- The 32.2 miles of the Appalachian Trail traversing the High Peaks Region, from Route 4 in Rangeley to Route 16/27 in Carrabassett Valley, is the most difficult three-day backpack on the entire Appalachian Trail, with an elevation gain that totals more than 10,000 feet.



PO Box 761  
Portland, ME 04104

[www.matlt.org](http://www.matlt.org)

### **DIRECTORS**

William Plouffe  
*President*

Christopher Beach  
*Vice President*

Milton Wright  
*Secretary*

Richard Leslie  
*Treasurer*

Tony Barrett  
Stephen Bien, M.D.  
Jodi Carton  
Bob Cummings  
John Dolloff  
Lloyd Griscom  
Amy L. Grohman  
John Gunn, Ph.D.  
Thomas D. Lewis  
Peter McKinley, Ph.D.  
Lester Kenway  
Richard Marino  
Sue-Ellen McClain  
Dain A. Trafton  
Vera H. Trafton

### **ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Honorable Thomas H. Allen  
Richard E. Barringer  
Dean B. Bennett  
David B. Field  
William Ginn  
Leon A. Gorman  
Edward R. Guyot, CPA  
Sherry Huber  
Honorable Mike Michaud  
Ray "Bucky" Owen  
Neil Rolde