



MAINE  
**Appalachian Trail**  
 LAND TRUST

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.



### 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.

Today the character and traditional use of Maine's woods is being 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.

# We're concerned about Maine's changing natural landscape

### 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). This pattern of ownership and traditional land use contributes greatly to the unique wild character of the land.

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. 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

### The threat to Maine's precious wildlife

Development reduces the habitat wild animals and plants need to thrive. The elevation changes in 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.

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

### Our #1 Priority: The High Peaks Region

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.

The High Peaks Region in western Maine offers remoteness, wildness and unspoiled natural beauty found 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.

# JOIN US

in creating a legacy...

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

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PO Box 761  
 Portland, ME 04104

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

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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).

# The High Peaks Region



## Remote recreational area with grand vistas

The Appalachian Trail lands in the High Peaks Region of Maine are widely regarded as one of the most spectacular sections of the entire A.T. system due to its remoteness and views.

## 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.

## 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. 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.

## 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.

## 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. 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.

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

*- Benton MacKaye*



Photo © Dan Busby



Photo © Hope Alexander

*"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*

## 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.

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.

The Appalachian Trail in Maine provides a way to advance a conservation strategy by connecting a network of protected preserves and 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.
- MATLT is leading a new initiative 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.

*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.*