Dear friends,

When the time comes in each year to choose a collection of moments that can speak for the year before, there’s never a moment that deserves to be left out—not if we want a full and accurate accounting of the life we lived as AMC for all those days—nor is there ever a collection full enough to capture all the nuances of passion and loyalty that underlie our adventures as an organization. So a stitch of longing, however small, tails every celebration. Unseen but never undone, it helps us hold together what we know of ourselves in preparation for new adventures ahead.

If you’re like me, you remember nearly every turn on every trail of the year gone by. You remember who you were with and what you were talking about, the feeling of the sun or maybe the rain, the unique give and take between your body at work and the earth surrounding it. Looking back on 2019 from a 2020 that is profoundly different, each of our experiences outdoors, no matter how fleeting, stands as its own powerful monument to this organization’s calling—as durable as anything.

I appreciate everyone who has made AMC what it has been for so long and continues to be. Thank you for giving yourselves, your time, your ideas, and your gifts in service to our mission on behalf of the outdoors, which never fails to give back.

In gratitude,

John Judge
President and CEO
With tools honed first by your generosity, AMC’s professional and volunteer crews dug into trails new and old in 2019. From iconic summit routes to canoe-camping corridors and everything in between, we’re proud to maintain the paths that unite us all.

A long winter brought difficult trail conditions to the mountains of New Hampshire and Maine, where the effects of the 2017 Halloween Storm are being felt even still. Undaunted, AMC and partners crews took on a nine-week restoration of Mount Washington’s historic Crawford Path to mark its bicentennial, with the lion’s share of the work taking place above treeline. Alongside a dozen professional staffers, three separate teen trail crews, two volunteer vacation crews, and a wave of custom crews and day volunteers made it happen.

The Mount Willard Trail also saw significant investments of sweat and ibuprofen resulting in 38 new rock steps and better drainage, among other improvements. Many materials had to be quarried hundreds of feet off trail and then high-lined up steep embankments to the worksite.

Crews rebuilt the well-loved Guyot Shelter, on the edge of the Pemigewasset Wilderness, in its entirety in 2019. Over 42 years it’s housed more than 100,000 backpackers along the Bondcliff Trail. Here’s to many more!
Staff and volunteers together put more than 8,300 hours into trail projects across Southern New England in 2019. Among the many different teams out there getting it done were the first all-women spike crew in Massachusetts, and the inaugural paid Bay Circuit Trail youth crew. AMC formed the latter in partnership with the City of Boston and modeled it in part on an existing collaboration with New Hampshire Jobs for America’s Graduates. Throughout the mid-summer weeks, the team of six built a half-dozen bridges and 1,650 feet of new trail tread, with much of the work taking place at two major trail rerouting projects in Boxford and Rowley.

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Teen trail crew members work on Massachusetts’ Bay Circuit Trail (BCT), a permanent greenway linking parks and open spaces in 57 Boston-area communities.

Being able to come to the top of Mount Washington every single day and work on a path that’s so historic—that’s what makes it really special.”

—Tim, Mount Washington

The Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River Paddlers Trail is now complete following the 2019 construction of two new campsites by AMC crews—one on Elwell Island, in Northampton, and another on the Fannie Stebbins Unit of the Silvio O. Conte US Fish and Wildlife Refuge, in Longmeadow. The 410-mile trail is managed by the Friends of the Connecticut River Paddlers’ Trail, a consortium of dozens of organizations, with AMC coordinating the group’s work in Massachusetts and Connecticut.
The YOP team trained 133 new leaders through AMC’s signature Outdoor Leadership Training for Educators and welcomed 451 participants in all across the year’s series of trainings and workshops, which focus on how to take young people outdoors for camping, backpacking, pond canoeing, and winter exploration experiences.

Those experiences—1,669 in 2019—engaged nearly 23,000 participants in locations around New England and metropolitan New York City. Free equipment loans from our gear lending libraries were up 18%, indicating a growing comfort level among YOP-trained teachers and youth development professionals leading independent outdoor trips.

October 2019 welcomed the Wounded Warrior Project to AMC’s Highland Center in Crawford Notch, New Hampshire. Complementing their own therapeutic curriculum, participating veterans enjoyed guided hikes, canoeing, indoor rock climbing, painting, and an astronomy program. We’re proud, too, to have hosted our first event with The Mission Continues at Mohican Outdoor Center. Some 40 veterans joined the weekend program and have pledged they’ll be back for more.

Families gather in urban parks and green spaces like Anita’s Garden, in Chelsea, Massachusetts, to enjoy the benefits of Outdoors Rx. The program engaged 2,827 participants in 2019, the most we’ve ever served, representing more than a 30% increase in total attendance over 2018. A year-long evaluation conducted by the Education Development Center found that 97% of participants felt “very welcome” at Outdoors Rx events, while 92% “strongly agree” that their local park is an important part of their community.

Your philanthropy shines at the center of AMC’s collaborations with regional educators, health care professionals, and non-profit partners. Together we’re dedicated to sharing the vigor and good cheer that only being outdoors can deliver.
Our Maine Woods team completed five new fish passage projects in 2019, improving critical stream habitat in the upper reaches of the West Branch of the Pleasant River watershed. Removing three culverts and decommissioning two bridges reconnected 9.75 miles of waterway all told, mostly to the benefit of the region’s brook trout and Atlantic salmon populations, which rely on free and safe passage for reproduction. These five sites represent the latest in a portfolio of fish passage projects that to date has restored ecological connectivity to some 12,000 acres across AMC’s landholdings in the Maine Woods—one of the largest fisheries restoration projects in the nation.

MARCH
LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND PERMANENTLY REAUTHORIZED
The first quarter of 2019 saw the Land and Water Conservation Fund permanently reauthorized as part of sweeping public lands package that was signed into law. The legislation had passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in the House (363-62) and the Senate (92-8) in February. This historic victory for public lands and recreation was the culmination of a years-long effort by Congressional champions on both sides of the aisle, and by a nationwide group of stakeholders led by AMC, to preserve the unique character of this program created as a conservation offset for energy development.

JULY
NORTHERN PASS DEFEATED
The New Hampshire Supreme Court ruled to uphold the state’s decision not to move forward with the Northern Pass transmission project, delivering a final, fatal blow to the proposal first put forward by Eversource in 2010. Northern Pass as proposed would have fragmented forests, destroyed rare natural habitats, and placed more than 1,800 transmission towers up to 165 feet tall in some of the state’s most essential ecological and recreational areas.

AUGUST
OZONE VICTORIES
AMC Staff Scientist Georgia Murray was featured by The Southern Maryland Chronicle for her work on defeating portions of the EPA’s ozone standard that were not protective enough for forests. The ozone victory will require EPA to develop a new approach to meet Clean Air Act standards regarding ozone as it affects forest ecosystems.

SEPTEMBER
SOLAR ADVOCACY IN MASSACHUSETTS
AMC led a coalition of diverse stakeholders in advocating that the Commonwealth include solar siting guidelines in an update to the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) program. Since the program’s inception, close to 6,000 acres of forests have been cleared in Massachusetts for large, ground-mounted solar projects. Proposed guidelines would incentivize brownfield, rooftop, and other community solar development over further greenfield expansion.
I’m kind of amazed I made it up. I’m sore, I’m tired, I stink, but I’m feeling kind of awesome right now!"

—Ashley, Highland Center

AMC is in the midst of a $25 million fundraising campaign to enable us to take ownership of the 26,740-acre Pleasant River Headwaters Forest within the next five years, and permanently conserve and steward this critical working landscape deep in the Maine Woods.

This acquisition is an especially high priority for AMC because it is situated in the center of the 100-Mile Wilderness that stretches along the Appalachian Trail corridor from Monson to Baxter State Park, featuring some of the largest areas of undeveloped forests, lakes, and ponds in the eastern United States.

Restoring connectivity within the headwaters will ensure the protection of more than 150 square miles of forest and add to watershed protection of both the West and Middle Branches of the Pleasant River, which serve as a critical designated habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and native brook trout. Restoring aquatic habitat on the property will allow salmon to return to native spawning grounds in the headwater streams of the West Branch for the first time in nearly two centuries—making it one of the only places in the country where this will be possible.

The Pleasant River Headwaters Forest also adds area to a climate-resilient landscape. As species begin to shift their ranges due to climate change, they seek landscape diversity and interconnectivity. Keeping forests intact is crucial to keep pace with a warming climate, and it is through active forest management that AMC is looking to increase the forest’s ability to sequester and store carbon. This multi-use forestland is the ideal stronghold for ecological resilience and climate adaptability. We can also provide more and higher quality wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC) to nearby mills while simultaneously improving habitat and doubling carbon sequestration on AMC’s Maine lands.

Our fundraising efforts continue apace. Please join us in protecting this valuable natural resource.

To learn more about this campaign, contact Jennifer Norris at 617.391.6620 or jnorris@outdoors.org.
The mission of the Appalachian Mountain Club is to foster the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the outdoors. We envision a world where our natural resources are healthy, loved, and always protected, and where the outdoors occupies a place of central importance in every person’s life.