Dear friends,

As I look back on the challenges we faced in 2020 and the many ups and downs that came with it, there’s one truth that continues to remain clear—the outdoors is vital to maintaining our mental and physical health. Like me, you may have coped with statewide restrictions by rediscovering the beauty of the parks and green spaces close to home, or maybe picked up a new hobby like biking or snowshoeing to experience the outdoors in a new way. What remains clear is that the outdoors showed us how essential it is for our well-being, and in return, you were there for the outdoors.

At AMC, we had to make some difficult decisions in 2020, knowing full well of the significant financial hit we would take as a result. But thanks to donors like you, who stepped up to support us in this unprecedented time, we still have so much to celebrate. From the more than 1500 miles of trails our staff and volunteers maintain, to the reopening of the improved Camp Dodge training center in the White Mountains, to the passing of the Great American Outdoors Act, your generosity helped AMC protect the indispensable resources the outdoors has to offer and make it more accessible to everyone.

I appreciate your dedication to the outdoors, and for standing with us and supporting the work we do. You understand the importance of nature and how it impacts our happiness, and through this, AMC is able to thrive even in difficult times. Thank you for giving your time, your ideas, and your gifts in service to our mission on behalf of the outdoors, which never fails to give back.

With gratitude,

John Judge
President & CEO
Responding to the COVID-19 outbreak, AMC carefully monitored the changing state regulations to ensure we could welcome guests to our facilities safely. While we did make the heartbreaking decision to close our high huts to overnight guests for the 2020 season, we were able to reopen our lodges in Maine, New Hampshire, and New York under the leadership of our risk management teams, with stringent cleaning protocols, safety training for staff, and contact-free norms for guests.

This year brought a series of unexpected twists and turns, requiring AMC to establish safety protocols to curtail the spread of COVID-19, and the patience, understanding, and support of our donors, members, and participants like you to help us continue our mission.

For AMC’s programs—both volunteer and staff-led—finding a way to get people outdoors and remain safe required a little more planning. When stay-at-home orders were strictest in the spring, AMC established #BeOnlinewithAMC, offering online presentations on conservation topics, leadership training, adventure travel, hiking tips, and more. As states started to open up, AMC created its own phased rollout plan for volunteer leaders, which outlined safety protocols including keeping group sizes small, requiring participants wear masks and practice physical distancing, and contact tracing.

Through the guidance of AMC risk management and the dedication of staff and volunteers, we were able to welcome many of you and your families to our lodges, and look forward to seeing you in 2021.

NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUTH

When in-person programming with partner schools was put on hold, we stayed engaged with teachers throughout the spring season by providing weekly curricula that could be shared with students doing remote learning. In some instances, AMC created custom curriculum at the request of teachers. Your support allows us to remain committed to working with educators and their students as everyone adapts to new learning environments. While residential adventure programming was canceled this year, AMC staff were able to successfully pivot to offering summer day camp-style programming for local youth in rural communities like Coos County, NH. Nearly 40 middle and high school students engaged in climate change science and wilderness survival activities.
Adaptability and an abundance of caution shaped our trail work this year. At AMC, we understand the importance the outdoors provides for our mental and physical health, and continuing our work to create strong, resilient trails assures this access for generations to come.

AMC’s trail crews had already anticipated that 2020 would be a year of transition—with new buildings, new programs, and some new staff—but the added pandemic twist required us to restructure our summer plans. Even so, AMC was able to continue our trail work with more precautions. Every person—staff and volunteers—distanced, wore a mask, used their own tool kit, and was screened daily to assure we could continue our trail work in a safe manner. In the early season, when COVID-19 restrictions were the strictest, we ran staff-only trail workdays to help chip away at projects originally slated for volunteer crews. This work included creating drainages and stepping stones on the Grafton Loop Trail and removing blowdowns along Valley Way, Hi-Cannon, and Dodge Cut-Off trails in New Hampshire.

Also in New Hampshire, AMC ran two custom crews in 2020—one was a family of avid hikers who helped build checksteps on the Lonesome Lake Trail, and a second crew of longtime trail volunteers helped build a staircase along the Upper Manning Trail in Cardigan Reservation. We returned to these areas with six one-day volunteer events to accommodate the abundance of inquiries from interested volunteers. Dedicated trail adopters were also busy caring for trails across the region, maintaining nearly 160 miles of trail in 2020.
**HIGHLANDS TRAIL IN PENNSYLVANIA**

On November 19, 2020, AMC joined partners for the official opening of the Upper Bucks Rail Trail, a 3-mile-long multi-use trail and key section of the Highlands Trail in Pennsylvania. The 300-mile Highlands Trail in Pennsylvania was conceived of and spearheaded by AMC over a decade ago. AMC also completed the Unami Creek Trail Feasibility Study and continued to develop interpretive and directional signage along the Highlands Trail.

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**SEBAGO-HARRIMAN**

Based on the strong demand the Stephen & Betsy Corman AMC Harriman Outdoor Center (CHOC) has seen since opening in 2016, AMC is now developing plans to open a second, even larger outdoor center in Harriman State Park to serve the greater New York City region. Under a 40-year lease from the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, AMC will renovate and reopen the historic Baker Camp, located on Lake Sebago, just 3 miles southwest of CHOC. Originally used as a getaway for bank executives in the 1930s and more recently serving as an overnight destination for city dwellers looking for a quick escape, Baker Camp fell into disrepair under different management and closed in 2017. Now, AMC is raising funds and refining our vision to renovate the camp and reopen it as a multisport, low-barrier oasis for families and groups to get outdoors during Harriman State Park’s season, from May to October. A $1 million lead gift, which includes a $500,000 challenge, has jump-started our fundraising efforts for this exciting project.

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**NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL**

Work has begun on a project to create an accessible portion of the trail in Southwick, Mass., and is on track to be completed by end of 2021. The City of Easthampton secured Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities grant funding for Mount Tom North Trailhead Park, where AMC will assist with the trail and parking design. Construction is anticipated to start this coming July, with an opening fall 2021. At the recent meeting of the Western Mass Chapter’s New England Trail Committee, volunteers reported a tally of more than 1,000 hours this year, a tremendous contribution amid restrictions necessitated by COVID-19.

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**BAY CIRCUIT TRAIL**

As people stayed close to home in 2020, many discovered and developed a deeper appreciation for the 200-mile-long Bay Circuit Trail and Greenway extending through 34 towns encircling Boston. With the help of 31 volunteers—made up of two volunteer custom crews and small groups of dedicated volunteers, AMC was able to build 2,600 feet of new trail, blaze 21 miles of existing trails, build new bog bridges in Weston and Concord portions of the trail, and construct a new boardwalk in Ashland. AMC also produced an online Bay Circuit Trail Story Map in 2020, which brings to life little known cultural, ecological, and historical gems along the trail. The map also highlights indigenous experience along the trail and acknowledges traditional/ancestral lands throughout the landscape.

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**CAMP DODGE**

This year marked the grand re-opening of Camp Dodge, AMC’s trails program training center, all made possible by generous funding through AMC’s Leadership Giving Initiative (LGI). This project included new staff housing, additional restrooms, the new Highland Trails Training Pavilion (which recognizes the Highland Street Foundation’s leadership support through LGI), an upgraded kitchen, and more. While COVID-19 restrictions prevented plans for some trainings to take place, AMC made the most of this new space in 2020. Among the groups living and training at Camp Dodge this year were: AMC’s Roving Conservation Corps, AMC backcountry campsite caretakers, researchers, NH-JAG crew leaders, Camp Dodge crews, a WMNF trail crew member, an artist in residence, and the Access Fund Conservation Team. By mid-summer we were able to open the facility to AMC Trail Adopters to offer them a place to stay while they worked on their section of trail.

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AMC is moving ever-closer to its $25 million campaign goal to purchase and permanently protect the 26,740-acre Pleasant River Headwaters Forest (PRHF) parcel in Maine. By the end of 2020, AMC passed the threshold of raising more than $17 million. This total includes more than $1 million awarded through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant program, $100,000 through Walmart’s Acres for America program administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and $75,000 through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Wild East Action Fund. We are thrilled these prestigious partners share AMC’s sense of the importance of our land protection work in the Maine Woods.

Our fundraising efforts continue. Please join us in protecting this valuable natural resource. To learn more about the campaign, contact Jennifer Norris at 617.391.6620 or jnorris@outdoors.org.

AMC’s Maine Woods Initiative (MWI) has been working to protect and enhance the habitat of native Eastern Brook Trout and endangered Atlantic Salmon, one of the largest fisheries restoration projects in the nation. The centerpiece of this conservation effort is the watershed of the West Branch of the Pleasant River—one of the state’s most valuable native brook trout fisheries. In 2020, AMC removed the last remaining five barriers to fish passage spanning 8,700 acres of the Roaches Ponds Tract Ecological Reserve. AMC also reopened a total of 6.5 miles of upstream spawning habitat for native brook trout populations at the far northern end of the Kennebec watershed through four bridge installations and one culvert decommission. An additional culvert removal and bridge installation on the KI tract reopened 1.6 miles of brook trout habitat within AMC’s responsible forest management area. As part of the Pleasant River Headwaters Forest acquisition effort, AMC worked with partners like The Conservation Fund, Trout Unlimited, Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Maine Forest Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to implement 0.75 mile of large woody additions work in the Middle Branch Watershed. By adding large trees from stream banks strategically in the spawning habitat of the Middle Branch, AMC is working to restore both the nutrient loads and structure types needed for Atlantic Salmon to spawn in portions of the river that were once cleared for log driving in the mid-20th century. This innovative approach is being conducted as a pilot project to develop both a tool kit and funding mechanism for the work to be replicated at a national scale. During the winter of 2020, sea run Atlantic Salmon were identified by DMR staff for the first time in 180 years in the West Branch of the Pleasant River above Silver Lake. These fish were hatched onsite from eggs planted in the river in 2016 and had returned to naturally spawn four years later as adults after having traveled to their native habitat range off the coast of Greenland.

AMC is committed to protecting undeveloped landscapes, healthy mountains and forests, clean air and water, and awe-inspiring trails in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.
In line with the most recent recommendation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, AMC is committed to reaching net zero in carbon emissions by 2050. A first step has been the hiring of Arcadia Lee as AMC’s Kenneth Kimball Research Fellow. The fellowship is funded through the Leadership Giving Initiative. Her primary responsibility involves working closely with Dave Publicover, AMC senior staff scientist and assistant director of research, to lead the development of the net zero portion of AMC’s strategic plan and identify decarbonization pathways and provide recommendations on the most realistic and effective actions (both near-term and long-term) that AMC can take toward this goal. Her work also involves identifying upgrades to existing AMC infrastructure to create significant carbon reductions.

AUGUST | GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

On August 4, 2020, a historic bipartisan piece of legislation, the Great American Outdoors Act, was signed into law. This victory for conservation establishes a National Park and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund that will provide up to $1.3 billion annually over the next five years to fix deferred maintenance at national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and other federal public lands, as well as full, permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Over the last decade, AMC has served as a leader in the national LWCF Coalition, coordinating more than 1,000 conservation organizations, state and local landowners, small businesses, and outdoor recreationists to protect America’s public lands and safeguard our shared outdoor heritage for future generations. Our efforts have included AMC Chapters and volunteers across the entire region, who led trips to places that have been protected by LWCF to raise awareness and advocacy for its permanent reauthorization and funding. You should take pride in this major conservation victory—your support of AMC helped secure this exciting win for all Americans.

OCTOBER | TRANSMISSION LINE OPPOSITION

AMC continues to oppose the proposed 145-mile New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC) transmission line. In late 2020, AMC, along with the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) and the Sierra Club Maine filed a federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of Maine challenging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for its failure to rigorously assess the significant environmental impacts of the transmission corridor. The lawsuit challenges the Corps’ Environmental Assessment (EA) and “Finding of No Significant Impact” and argues that Maine residents deserve a thorough and open environmental review of the NECEC. One 53-mile stretch of this proposed transmission line, named Segment #1, runs through the heart of the Northern Appalachian-Acadian Forest, which is the most intact, unfragmented ecoregion east of the Mississippi. This includes 139 rare plants and animals only found in the northern Appalachians, crucial habitat for 34 northern woodland songbird species, and core habitat for martens, lynx, moose and a host of other iconic Maine animals. Its cold headwater streams and lakes comprise the last stronghold for wild brook trout in the eastern United States. Most recently, the First Circuit Court of Appeals issued an injunction, halting clearing of Segment #1 while the lawsuit moves forward.

A SNAPSHOT OF AMC’S ENVIRONMENT POLICY ADVOCACY

AMC’s deep roots across the region, long history of collaboration, and passionate membership base made AMC especially well-equipped to play a leadership role in passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. It’s a conservation victory we can all be proud of—and build on.

GETTING TO NET ZERO

In line with the most recent recommendation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, AMC is committed to reaching net zero in carbon emissions by 2050. A first step has been the hiring of Arcadia Lee as AMC’s Kenneth Kimball Research Fellow. The fellowship is funded through the Leadership Giving Initiative. Her primary responsibility involves working closely with Dave Publicover, AMC senior staff scientist and assistant director of research, to lead the development of the net zero portion of AMC’s strategic plan and identify decarbonization pathways and provide recommendations on the most realistic and effective actions (both near-term and long-term) that AMC can take toward this goal. Her work also involves identifying upgrades to existing AMC infrastructure to create significant carbon reductions.
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.