



The Wilderness Society
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Washington, D.C. 20005

Coalition calls on US to buy land

By Robert Braile
Special to the Globe

CONCORD, N.H. — A coalition of 20 national environmental groups has called on Congress to spend at least \$16 million in the coming year to purchase thousands of acres of land across New England that is considered threatened by development.

But the president of one of the groups warned that without pressure from New England residents concerned about protecting the lands, Congress will be less likely to act.

Included in the request are lands abutting the White Mountain National Forest, Green Mountain National Forest, Acadia National Park, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, Lowell National Historical Park, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and Pettaquamscutt Cove National Wildlife Refuge.

Also included are parcels along the Appalachian Trail, which passes through every New England state except Rhode Island on its 2,100 mile stretch from Georgia to Maine.

The request, made in a report scheduled for release today, is part of a larger proposal seeking \$781 million, plus another \$200 million in matching funds, for purchases in 46 states. The groups say the purchases would be financed through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which

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was created by Congress in 1965 to protect natural resources and enhance recreational activities through land purchases.

The groups said Congress may appropriate up to \$900 million annually from the fund, which derives its revenues largely from royalties on offshore oil drilling. They also said that all the purchases they have requested involve willing sellers. But they said appropriations during the Reagan years averaged only \$222 million.

"You can't keep putting off these investments," said George T. Frampton Jr., president of the Wilderness Society, which coordinated the coalition. "You can defer buying a car, but a desirable piece of land is likely to turn into a shopping mall or become too expensive. Special areas bought today will pay enormous dividends for future generations."

But, Frampton added, "Constituent interest always makes an enormous difference in winning these appropriations. New Eng-

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The proposed New England appropriations would include \$1.7 million for 1,880 acres in New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest; \$1.74 million for at least 3,500 acres in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest; \$2 million for 500 acres in Maine's Acadia National Park; \$2.5 million for 1,300 acres in Massachu-

setts' Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge; and \$950,000 for 500 acres in Rhode Island's Pettaquamscutt Cove National Wildlife Refuge.

Also proposed are \$3.3 million for 1,200 acres in Maine's Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge; \$700,000 to complete Massachusetts' Lowell National Historical Park; \$400,000 to complete Massachusetts' Salem Maritime National Historic Site; and at least \$3 million for parcels along the Appalachian Trail in New England.

In addition to the Wilderness Society, the coalition includes such prominent environmental groups as the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society and Natural Resources Defense Council.

The groups said the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors recommended two years ago that \$1 billion be spent on land purchases each year, and that a trust fund be established to ensure the funding. They said President Bush has expressed support for the recommendation and that Congress is considering legislation to implement it.