

# Appalachia

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Volume 74  
Number 2 *Summer/Fall 2023: Risks and  
Adventure*

Article 17

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2022

## News and Notes

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### Recommended Citation

(2022) "News and Notes," *Appalachia*: Vol. 74: No. 2, Article 17.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia/vol74/iss2/17>

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# News and Notes

## Nicole Zussman Appointed President of Appalachian Mountain Club

The Appalachian Mountain Club, the nation's oldest conservation and recreation organization and publisher of this journal, announced on November 22, 2022, that its Board of Directors appointed Nicole Zussman as president and chief executive officer, effective January 1, 2023.



Zussman, a seasoned executive with decades of experience building and leading high-performing teams, most recently served as chief people officer for Rue Gilt Groupe. The appointment follows an eleven-month national search, during which time Susan Arnold, AMC's former vice president for conservation, served as interim president.

"As a member and a lifelong outdoor enthusiast, I am thrilled to bring my decades of leadership experience to serve the mission of the Appalachian Mountain Club," said Zussman, who lives in Stamford, Connecticut. "I know the strength of the AMC community comes from the commitment of its many

members, volunteers, partners, and supporters who believe in the enduring power of the outdoors. I am so grateful to the Board of Directors for the opportunity to serve this community and to Susan Arnold for her leadership and guidance as I begin this new role."

Yvette Austin Smith, chair of the AMC Board of Directors, said AMC needs "a strong leader capable of both building on the organization's past success and engaging broader audiences in its work for the future. Nicole brings with her tremendous business acumen, a history of success in helping large teams and membership organizations grow, and a passion for the outdoors. She has the vision and skills AMC needs to reach broader audiences and grow in its mission."

Austin Smith praised Arnold, who served as vice president for conservation for nineteen years before leading AMC during the search process. "As AMC's interim president and CEO, Susan has thoughtfully steered the AMC through the past year. In this time, Susan helped grow AMC's leadership in protecting

the outdoors from Maine to the Mid-Atlantic Highlands. Conservation will continue to be a primary focus for AMC under Nicole's leadership."

Zussman will oversee the day-to-day operations of this organization that owns and manages 48 properties and backcountry sites, builds and maintains nearly 2,000 miles of trails per year, hosts thousands of volunteer-led recreation activities and outdoor education programs, publishes books and maps, and has more than 90,000 members. She will oversee key strategic programs, such as the 100,000-acre Maine Woods Initiative, and continued expansion of programming in New York's Harriman State Park. Zussman will also work closely with the Board of Directors, AMC's regional chapters, and staff to increase the organization's membership and set strategic goals for conservation and sustainability initiatives.

"For more than a century, AMC has been driven by thousands of members, volunteers, and a dedicated staff," said Austin Smith. "Nicole brings the ideal mix of expertise in engaging teams, fostering a diverse workforce, and driving strategy in membership-model organizations to help AMC's mission reach more people and to focus efforts on conservation and outdoor recreation for even greater impact."

Zussman has been a key strategist and change agent at globally recognized brands. From the Rue Gilt Groupe to Condé Nast and the Yankees Entertainment and Sports Network, she played pivotal roles in building and leading teams and was charged with developing programs to appeal to large audiences. Her work focused on creating inclusive environments in which teams could thrive and best serve members. Notably, she proved adept at building relationships to tackle challenges that required collaborative efforts, a key to AMC's expanding conservation, recreation, and outdoor education efforts.

"Nicole has a lifelong love of the outdoors and believes deeply in the mission of AMC," said Stephen Rushmore Jr., vice chair of the Board of Directors and chair of the search committee. "Nicole understands the importance of AMC's conservation work—to protect our land and waters and address the climate change emergency. Combined with her demonstrated experience growing and diversifying organizations, her skills and vision will be key elements in expanding the organization's reach and increasing participation and appreciation of the outdoors for years to come."

Zussman holds a master of business administration from the University of Maryland and a bachelor of arts in political science from the University of Miami.

—*Nina Paus-Weiler*

## **Bears Close Busy New Hampshire Campground for Twelve Days**

In the height of the 2022 summer tourism season, from August 11 to August 24, the U.S. Forest Service closed its popular Hancock Campground after a bear began making regular visits. The reason was that campers had not been storing food properly, and the bear expected to find food there.

New Hampshire's bear population is healthy, with the highest density of bears in the White Mountains and central part of the state. These areas offer the best black bear habitat for foraging and hibernating and the state's lowest density of people per square mile. Given the density of bears and the number of visitors, the average number of human-bear conflicts throughout the White Mountain region is relatively low, about 10 to 20 conflicts a year, New Hampshire Fish and Game estimates.

And yet, the White Mountains receives the greatest number of seasonal visitors of any region in New Hampshire. "The highest human-bear conflicts are the places with the greatest number of people, not the greatest number of bears," said Andrew Timmins, a bear biologist for NHFG. What tends to drive bears are the foods at individual campsites, Timmins said.

Bear behavior is tied to conditions they find in their habitat, too. In years with low wild food production, the number of human-bear conflicts rises. Recent droughts and the changing climate have reduced bears' usual summer and fall food sources.

Hancock Campground is located in an area where NHFG, USFS, and the town of Lincoln have worked together for decades trying to minimize human-bear conflicts. If a bear becomes aggressive, NHFG is responsible for capturing or killing the bear. In 2003 Lincoln passed an ordinance regulating how garbage and food attractants would be stored, and although compliance has varied, NHFG believes the lack of reported incidents in Lincoln in 2022 represents the success of the ordinance.

The decision to close the campground last summer came from USFS, and NHFG supported the closure. In previous years the Tripoli Road recreation and campground area has been closed because of bear conflicts. Tripoli Road is a dispersed and unstaffed camping area without enforcement of food storage, leading to higher risk of bear conflicts.

NHFG said the best way to prevent human-bear conflicts is proper food storage and adhering to campground policies for food storage. The USFS loans bearproof cans to hikers, and the Appalachian Mountain Club's back-country campsites are equipped with bear storage boxes.

—*Sally Manikian, with thanks to New Hampshire Fish and Game*

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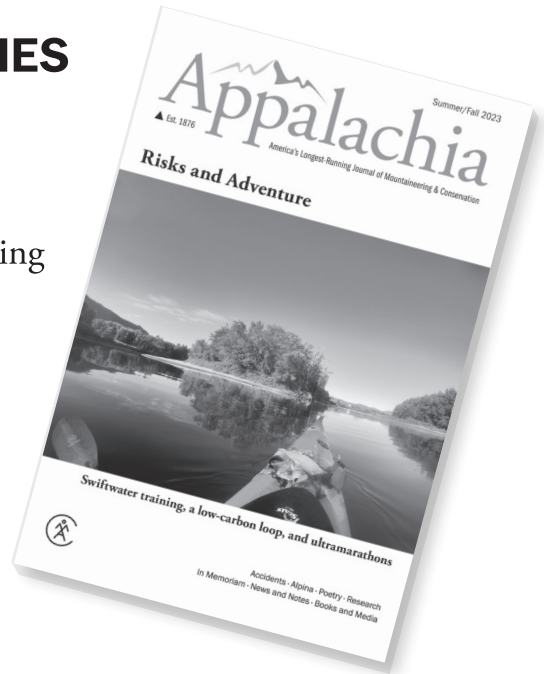
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