



## NEWS RELEASE

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# New Guidebook Features Northern Forest Artists and Traditional Craft Producers

## Heritage Tourism Increasingly Important to Regional Economy

A new guidebook, *HandMade in the Northern Forest: A guide to fine art and craft traditions in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York*, showcases the wide variety and high quality of the region's artists and craft providers. The book was designed as the cornerstone of a program to help Northern Forest artisans and crafts people, as well as other local business owners, capitalize on the growing heritage craft tourism market.

Heritage craft tourists bring an estimated half-billion dollars to the Northern Forest economy each year. Thousands of Northern Forest artists and crafters rely on heritage tourists for a major portion of their income and constantly seek new ways to increase awareness of both their business and the Northern Forest as a heritage craft tourist destination.

*HandMade in the Northern Forest* lists 365 artisans and craftspeople, galleries, craft marketplaces, special attractions, restaurants and historic inns, organized into 13 driving tours throughout the four-state Northern Forest region. Colorful maps of each route guide tourists on their way while giving them a sense of place. Underscoring the importance of heritage in the Northern Forest, each chapter includes a cultural heritage profile, sidebar articles and interesting "tidbits" about locations along the way.

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Two nonprofit organizations, the Northern Forest Center and Businesses for the Northern Forest, published *HandMade in the Northern Forest* with the support of a region-wide steering committee whose members include:

<u>Maine:</u>	<u>New Hampshire:</u>	<u>Vermont:</u>	<u>New York:</u>
Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce	Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire	Northeast Kingdom Enterprise Collaborative	Adirondack North Country Association
Maine Highlands Guild	Women's Rural		St. Lawrence County
Maine WoodNet	Entrepreneurial Network		Arts Council

In addition, the Appalachian Mountain Club used Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to create the 42 original maps for the guidebook.

“We’re very excited to help draw attention to these talented crafts people,” said Stephen D. Blackmer, president of the Northern Forest Center. “It is difficult for entrepreneurs to market themselves in a rural area. *HandMade* will boost awareness of the fine arts and crafts in the region.”

George Gay, acting director of Businesses for the Northern Forest, said, “Whether they’re working with raw materials from the forest—such as high quality wood to make beautiful furniture—or they’re drawing on the natural beauty of the landscape, each of these artists’ work is rooted in the Northern Forest.”

As part of the overall marketing plan, all *HandMade in the Northern Forest* participants are encouraged to work with each other as well as with other local businesses, bookstores, libraries, chambers of commerce and schools to create events that will raise the profile of the Northern Forest as a heritage craft destination.

Community events such as those proposed by the *HandMade in the Northern Forest* program can strengthen the local economy by creating shared experiences among the participating businesses, organizations and the public. Nadia Korths of the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) recently organized an exhibit of businesses featured in the “High Peaks & Flowing Waters” chapter of *HandMade in the Northern Forest*. Korths said that both the participating businesses and the public gained from the experience, noting that it “represented the best of the region and established important links for businesses across the Northern Forest.”

Several other events to promote the region’s craft heritage are planned throughout 2006. On June 3, several *HandMade in the Northern Forest* participants will exhibit at Northern Forest Canoe Trail Days celebrations taking place in Saranac Lake, NY; Newport, VT; Groveton, NH, and Greenville, ME. Other celebrations will also take place this summer in Bethlehem, NH; Bethel, ME and Potsdam, NY.

Private and public funding of the project will enable thousands of copies of *HandMade in the Northern Forest* to be distributed free to state agencies for the arts, tourism, economic and cultural development; chambers of commerce; libraries and others. The following foundations and programs helped to fund the project: the USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant program, the John Merck Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, Great Bay Foundation, Northern New Hampshire Foundation, Maine Community Foundation and the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts.

*HandMade in the Northern Forest* retails for \$19.95 and will be available from participating businesses, bookstores, Amazon.com and through Enfield Publishing & Distribution. Additional information and links to retailers is available at [www.HandMadeInTheNorthernForest.com](http://www.HandMadeInTheNorthernForest.com).

The **Northern Forest Center** was founded in 1997 to mobilize people to build healthy communities, economies and ecosystems by working together across the Northern Forest region. The Center believes that by building partnerships and working together, people and organizations can attract the resources, build the capacity, and take the actions needed to establish the Northern Forest as a model for living sustainably and well in a rural, forested place.

The purpose of **Businesses for the Northern Forest** is to strengthen long-term business opportunities in the Northern Forest by helping to improve the financial, social and environmental well being of the region.

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