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**NORTHEAST KINGDOM GEOTOURISM MAPGUIDE
DEBUTS AT VERMONT TRAVEL INDUSTRY CONFERENCE**

MapGuide Highlights Local Environmental and Cultural Experiences

STOWE, VT (Nov. 28, 2006)— Vermont's Northeast Kingdom premieres a National Geographic geotourism map at the Vermont Travel Industry Conference that is one of the first of its kind in the world. The Northeast Kingdom Geotourism MapGuide promotes distinctive visitor experiences following the principles of geotourism, defined as "tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents." Including tips from local experts on everything from maple-syrup making to covered-bridge lore, the MapGuide is the result of a partnership with National Geographic, the Northeast Kingdom Travel and Tourism Association (NEKTTA), the Nulhegan Gateway Association, the University of Vermont (UVM), and a local geotourism alliance of government and civic groups.

Community input was essential to the creation of the MapGuide, and residents of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom — Orleans, Caledonia, and Essex counties — were asked to nominate their favorite places and events in the Kingdom for inclusion. Entries best support the Northeast Kingdom's character of place and reflect visitor interests from historic landmarks and natural attractions to music venues and restaurants. For example, map users are encouraged to:

- canoe parts of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, a heritage waterway following ancient travel routes used by Abenaki and early European settlers;
- visit the oldest art galley in America at St. Johnsbury's Atheneum;
- join a "coffeehouse night" for music and nature lore at the NorthWoods Stewardship Center;
- shop at Wiley's General Store in Greensboro, an establishment owned and operated by the same family for four generations.

(OVER)

VERMONT MAPGUIDE (PAGE 2)

One side of the fold-out guide is a map of the Northeast Kingdom that showcases selected places — skiing peaks and scenic roads, birding trails and famed maple farms, an opera house and a planetarium, and even a great place to get locally brewed beer. Entry descriptions include Web site addresses and visitor centers where travelers can go for more detailed directions, schedules and trail maps.

The other side of the guide highlights seasonal festivals and geotourism tips, such as what to do if you want to buy property, how to be a responsible snowmobiler, and how your visitor dollars can most help the Kingdom retain its character.

"While the NEK Geotourism MapGuide aims to help protect the environment and culture of the region, it's also a surefire tool for planning a great vacation or weekend," says Jonathan Tourtellot, director of the National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations, which coordinated the project. National Geographic Maps prepared the MapGuide itself.

The geotourism concept has been adopted as the strategy of tourism development by NEKTTA, the regional marketing organization. Officially launched in March 2005, the geotourism project has produced a Web site (www.travelthekingdom.com/geotourism) in addition to the new hard-copy MapGuide. The Nulhegan Gateway Association, NEKTTA, and UVM have convened over 20 local organizations to form a permanent geotourism alliance that will continue serving the region. With these organizations, representing stakeholders from agriculture to education, the program — funded in part by USDA Rural Development — will develop a Geotourism Business Network, a Geotourism Heroes program and educational workshops.

Protection of distinctive places around the globe through wisely managed tourism and enlightened stewardship is the driving mission of the National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations. A major 2002 study by National Geographic Traveler magazine and the Travel Industry of America found that at least 55 million American adults can be classified as "geotourists," proving that geotourism is a strong incentive for regions to conserve and enhance these appreciated qualities for future visitors. Using Geotourism Charters, Geotourism MapGuides, and stakeholder toolkits, the Center helps community leaders strategically create a tourist experience that appeals to visitors with diverse interests, supports integrity of place, and is richer than the sum of its parts. For more information, visit:

The Northeast Kingdom Geotourism
www.travelthekingdom.com/geotourism

National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations
www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/

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