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Dr. Michael Wall Takes the Reins at Balsam Mountain Trust

The Board of Trustees of Balsam Mountain Trust, located on Balsam Mountain Preserve near Sylva, is delighted to announce the arrival of Michael Wall, Ph.D., as new Executive Director of the Trust. A nationwide search was held to replace the pioneering and recently retired Executive Director Michael Skinner, who led the Trust since 2002.

Dr. Wall, a distinguished leader in the field of environmental conservation and education, came to the Trust from the San Diego (CA) Natural History Museum where he most recently served as Vice President of Science and Conservation. Upon his leaving, the museum's president and his boss Judy Gradwohl shared, "To say that we are grateful for his outstanding leadership, scientific skills, camaraderie and kindness, and his many professional talents is an understatement. We're excited for him and so appreciative that his almost two decades of dedication leaves us in a position of strength."

Wall received his bachelor's and master's degrees in botany from Auburn University and Ph.D. in entomology from the University of Connecticut. While at UConn, he was selected as a Visiting Fulbright Fellow at the Australian Museum in Sydney, Australia. He was also an Adjunct Professor at San Diego State University for many years.

Describing his own work ethic, Wall said, "My first and unending love is teaching about the wonders of nature. Though a scientist, I've always leaned more into science communication than research...to not just tell people about nature, but to give them gateways to experience it. In short, my mission is to deepen community involvement in the science and practice of conservation."

"We're thrilled to have Dr. Wall lead the Trust," said Balsam Mountain Trust Board Chair Sheri Wiltshire Straw. "His background and ideas will benefit our community at large in so many ways. It's thrilling to imagine the next chapter of the Trust!" she stated.

"It's such an exciting time for Balsam, the Trust and the surrounding communities because of Michael Wall's engaging and approachable personality and his passion for the environment. He helps bring about "fresh eyes" to nature and re-enthuses everyone he meets to the wonder of the amazing mountains, streams and valleys that surround us," shared Brian McMahan, BMP's Community Association Operations Manager. "He's a great ambassador for the Trust," he added.

From Steven Carter, president of the North American Land Trust (NALT), "In 2001, Balsam Mountain Preserve signed a Conservation Easement with NALT to protect over 3500 acres of open spaces - a park, if you will - within the development, forever preserving the unique natural habitat of these acres from future development. The arrival of new Executive Director Michael Wall promises an

exciting future through inspiring environmental education programming, timely scientific research projects and the continued conservation of these thousands of pristine acres.”

Coming to Western NC fulfilled Wall’s desire of returning to his roots, as most of his formative years were spent in the south. His father was employed by Michelin Tires and thus young Wall primarily attended schools in Greenville with stints in Winston-Salem, the south of France, Dothan (AL), and Nova Scotia. Now, extended family is not far for he and his wife, Allison Teem, a pre-school teacher, except for their son and daughter who are completing college in California.

Established in 2000, Balsam Mountain Trust is a 501(3)(c) non-profit organization that inspires people to be responsible stewards of the natural and cultural resources of the southern Blue Ridge Mountains through education and conservation leadership. The Trust is headquartered at the Nature Center on Balsam Mountain Preserve.

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