



NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER

NOC NEWS RELEASE

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For Release: Immediate

NOC CEO TO TESTIFY BEFORE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS; ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR GATLINBURG FLAGSHIP STORE

Gatlinburg, Tennessee – May 19, 2009 –Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC) President and CEO Sutton Bacon will testify before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Small Business at Wednesday’s “Heroes of Small Business” hearing scheduled for 10am. At the hearing Bacon will discuss NOC’s \$48 million impact on western North Carolina’s economy and the company’s plans to open NOC’s Great Outpost, an 18,000-square-foot LEED certified flagship store in Gatlinburg, TN bordering the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

NOC’s Great Outpost is a rare example of dynamic small business expansion during the current economic slowdown, and Bacon will testify on the importance of innovation and new product development through tough times. The new store will occupy an anchor position in Gatlinburg’s downtown shopping and entertainment district, one of the most popular vacation destinations in the Southeast with over 14 million visitors annually, and will feature a wide selection of top outdoor apparel, camping, climbing, cycling, paddling, hiking and travel brands. When it opens it will become the largest retail store in Gatlinburg, creating approximately 55 jobs.

Vicki Sims, Executive Director at the Gatlinburg Chamber of Commerce commented “We are sure that NOC will be a tremendous addition to the activities our visitors are looking for when they chose Gatlinburg as their getaway, and we are thrilled to add them to our membership.”

As Gatlinburg’s outdoor activity center, NOC’s Great Outpost will serve as a launching pad for Smokies recreation, offering a diverse range of affordable, family-oriented outdoor activities in the National Park like whitewater rafting, whitewater and flatwater kayaking, fly-fishing, guided hiking, mountain biking, outdoor education classes and nature tours. It will also feature educational exhibits on outdoor education, the environment, and connect guests with outdoor clubs and conservation groups that help protect the Smokies.

Bacon also hopes to discuss NOC’s commitment to green development. Given the store’s common border with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NOC’s Great Outpost has been registered for LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a third-party national certification program for green design, construction, and energy efficiency. It will be the first retail store in Gatlinburg and Sevier County to be LEED-certified, and will hopefully ring in a new era of green development in the Smokies gateway communities.

David Ogle of the Sevier County Economic Development Council remarked, “The building, built in the early 70’s is reminiscent of a mountain lodge and played host to millions of visitors when it was operated by the famous Miller family. With its close proximity to the National Park, we envisioned transforming this building into a retail destination with a focus on the outdoors and a primary goal of enhancing the visitor experience to the Park. The Great Outpost will be a must stop for all those traveling to and vacationing in the Smokies.”

Bacon will also emphasize NOC’s passion for reconnecting youth with nature and the importance of outdoor recreation as an essential component of physical, emotional and psychological childhood development. He will discuss NOC’s role as a leading youth recreation provider and NOC’s new youth outreach foundation.

At the hearing Bacon will present his testimony and will then respond to questions from committee members. For more information please contact NOC's Marketing Director, Charles Conner, at 706.853.9242 or send an email to media@noc.com.

The Nantahala Outdoor Center is the nation's largest outdoor recreation company. Over a half million guests visit NOC annually to embark on a diverse collection of over 80 different whitewater rafting and land-based itineraries, learn to kayak at NOC's world-renowned Paddling School, travel to 12 foreign countries with NOC's Adventure Travel program, test the latest outdoor gear and shop at its five retail stores, or enjoy NOC's resort amenities such as its four restaurants and multi-tiered lodging. A privately-held, employee-owned company, NOC is one of the largest employers in Western North Carolina, and 22 Olympians and Olympic coaches have called NOC home. NOC has been recently recognized by The New York Times as the "Nation's Premiere Paddling School," "The Best Place to Learn" by Outside Magazine, and as "One of the Best Outfitters on Earth" by National Geographic ADVENTURE.