

FOR RELEASE: May 8, 2007

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REI to Open a Store in Asheville, North Carolina

SEATTLE – Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), a national retail cooperative providing quality outdoor gear and clothing, today announced plans to open a store in Asheville, North Carolina in the fall of 2008 at Biltmore Park, a new lifestyle development.

REI is known for its broad product offerings, knowledgeable employees and involvement in the communities in which the co-op operates. The company is committed to promoting environmental stewardship and increasing access to outdoor recreation through education, volunteerism, gear donations and financial contributions.

The one-story 29,000 square-foot store will be located approximately 12 minutes from downtown Asheville at the intersection of Long Shoals Road and Interstate 26. Employing about 70 full- and part-time staff, the store will provide top brands for camping, climbing, cycling, paddling, hiking, travel and snow sports -- including its own line of award-winning branded gear and apparel and Novara bicycles. The store will also feature a community room with capacity for 50 people for classes, presentations and events.

“We look forward to opening our store in Asheville in late 2008 and being a resource to outdoor enthusiasts of all abilities,” said REI Retail Director Gail Kirkland. “The area boasts some of the most exciting recreation opportunities along the East Coast, in Asheville and more than 1.6 million acres of public lands within 50 miles.”

REI’s retail presence in North Carolina dates back to 1992 when the cooperative opened a store in Cary, N.C. Other REI locations in the state include Durham, Raleigh, Greensboro and Pineville, a suburb of Charlotte. Earlier this year, the co-op announced the opening of a second store in the Charlotte-area for spring 2008.

In addition to serving the outdoor community, REI’s programs support local tourism. The co-op’s Weekend Getaways has offered an Asheville-based cycling tour for the past two years. The four-day tour of the Blue Ridge Parkway includes local professional guides, accommodations at the Haywood Park Hotel, meals and transportation. Other REI Weekend Getaways occurring within a few hours of Asheville include an introductory rock climbing weekend in the Pisgah National Forest, backpacking trip in the Great Smoky Mountains and kayaking adventure along the Cape Lookout National Seashore.

In 2006 REI supported 14 conservation and outdoor recreation nonprofit organizations in North Carolina. One example includes a matching grant provided by REI to the Carolina Climbers Coalition to help preserve Laurel Knob, the tallest rock face in the eastern United States. With a mission to preserve climbing areas and promote education and safety, the coalition will open the recreation area to the climbing community and engage participants in stewardship efforts.

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While anyone may shop at REI, members pay a one-time \$15 fee and receive a share in the company's profits through an annual member refund based on their purchases. Earlier this year, the co-op returned \$58 million to its members through the refund. REI has more than 4,700 active members in the Asheville-area, and more than 81,000 active members in the state.

REI locations also offer a gear rental department to encourage customers to try new outdoor activities. Internet kiosks within the store provide access to REI.com and REI-OUTLET.com for product information and to order products not currently in stock. More than half of online customers choose REI Store Pickup, a service that allows customers to pick up online purchases at a store without a shipping charge.

Founded in 1938 by a group of Pacific Northwest mountaineers seeking quality equipment, REI is an outdoor retail co-op dedicated to inspiring, educating and outfitting its members and the community for a lifetime of outdoor adventure. REI operates 90 stores in 26 states, two online stores – REI.com and REI-OUTLET.com – and an adventure travel company, REI Adventures. For 10 consecutive years, REI has been recognized by FORTUNE magazine as one of “100 Best Companies to Work for in America.” In 2007, the company ranked 27th overall and first among companies that encourage employees to balance work and personal lives. For information about employment opportunities with the co-op, visit www.rei.com/jobs.

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