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## **Governor Cuomo celebrates opening of new Adirondacks Welcome Center**

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Queensbury, NY Governor Andrew Cuomo celebrated the opening of a new Adirondacks Welcome Center rest area in Warren County. The Welcome Center will serve as a comfortable, modern gateway to the Adirondacks region, promoting local attractions and providing a family-friendly respite for travelers heading into the states' six-million-acre Adirondack Park, the largest publicly protected park in the contiguous U.S.

“Tourism is a key economic driver for New York, and the new Adirondacks Welcome Center

will attract even more new and returning visitors to enjoy the unparalleled views and countless outdoor activities offered in this region,” governor Cuomo said. “This new gateway will provide millions of Northway travelers a warm welcome as they arrive to the beautiful Adirondack Park, driving tourism and promoting economic growth across our great state.”

The new Welcome Center features an Adirondacks Walk of Fame leading to a new, 8,615 s/f, LEED certifiable building—more than four times the size of the buildings that serviced the rest area for decades. The new building is designed in a classic Adirondack theme and offers expanded parking and restroom facilities. The building has a host of environmentally friendly features, including geothermal water source heat pumps for both heating and cooling the building, LED light fixtures, electric car charging stations, recyclables collection, water efficient landscaping, and energy efficient windows and doors. Additionally, in time for boating season next spring, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation will open a boat inspection and washing station at the facility to help prevent the spread of invasive species and preserve biodiversity within the Adirondack Park.

The Adirondacks Welcome Center is located on a 22-acre lot on the northbound side of Adirondack Northway (I-87), just over the Saratoga County line between the Hudson River and exit 18. The Adirondack Park includes the Lake George region and Lake Placid.

Empire State Development president, CEO and commissioner Howard Zemsky said, “The Adirondacks Welcome Center will offer an inviting taste of the food, beverages, attractions and culture that make the region a New York State treasure and a top destination for visitors who drive our thriving tourism industry.”

Food and beverages sourced from the region and other locations in New York will be showcased in nine vending machines.

The new Welcome Center contains I LOVE NY interactive kiosks, which highlight regional attractions and tourism destinations. The Welcome Center has an Adirondacks floor map and an I LOVE NY selfie wall with a decommissioned ski chairlift from Gore Mountain Ski Resort. For family travelers, an outdoor children’s play area with a zip line is available, along with a pet comfort area, free Wi-Fi, cell phone charging stations, picnic tables and Adirondack

chairs.

Queensbury Town Supervisor John Strough said, “The Adirondacks is one of most beautiful, exciting regions in our state. This new state-of-the-art Welcome Center will be a modern gateway for both new and returning visitors, providing information relating to local attractions, places to visit and things to do. I thank governor Cuomo for this important investment in our region.”

Matthew Simpson, president, Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages said, “This new Welcome Center will highlight so much of what our incredible region offers, showcasing our breathtaking outdoor spaces and recreational activities. It is a great enhancement to our state’s tourism industry that will continue to attract more and more visitors to our great state. I commend governor Cuomo for his commitment to enhancing tourism in our region and all of New York State.”

Since taking office in 2011, governor Cuomo has made unprecedented investments in the tourism industry throughout the State, resulting in historic levels of visitors and direct spending. Last year, New York welcomed a record 243.8 million visitors who spent \$67.6 billion, generating a total economic impact of more than \$100 billion for the fourth straight year. Tourism is now the state’s third largest employer, supporting 938,800 jobs annually.

More than 12.4 million people visited the Adirondacks region last year—over 460,000 visitors more than 2016, and a nearly 20% increase since 2011. Regional tourism generates more than \$1.4 billion in direct visitor spending, including \$178 million in State and local taxes, and supports more than 21,300 jobs across six counties.

The Taste NY program has played a considerable role in helping to increase tourism across New York State. Through vending machines located on the premises, Taste NY will have an important presence at the new Welcome Center.