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HOK NY completes 54,000 s/f museum complex for $25 million in Tupper Lake

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The Wild Center/Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks, a new museum complex designed by HOK NY, has earned distinction as the first LEED certified museum in the State of New York. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) system is the recognized international benchmark in green building design and construction.

Through a series of integrated sustainable strategies that are expected to save between 20% and 30% of its normal operating costs, The Wild Center exceeded the base LEED certification to earn a Silver distinction. The LEED system provides a road map for measuring and documenting sustainability across six categories: sustainable site including construction activity pollution prevention; water efficiency; energy and atmosphere; materials and resources; indoor environmental quality; and innovation and design process.

"We looked really hard at every choice that LEED defined," said Wild Center executive director Stephanie Ratcliffe. "It became clear to our team that through every choice, we could get more by using less. That means that we can spend more of our future budget on building the museum experience and less on the museum building itself."

The Wild Center collaborated with the architectural firm HOK to address many of the LEED criteria in the museum's original main building and campus design. While planning its new solar-powered BioBuilding, which houses administrative offices, the museum employed the same LEED priorities with assistance from HOK, the Office of Charles P. Reay, and Phinney Design Group. The cost of the project was $25 million.

The 54,000 s/f Wild Center also represents the first LEED certified project in the entire 6 million-acre Adirondack Park. Larger than the state of Massachusetts, the park is unique in its bio-diverse ecological composition, epic natural events, glacial formations, and as a sociopolitical model that showcases how humans and nature can coexist.

A three-acre pond provides a backdrop to the building and creates an indigenous wetland that attracts birds, amphibians, small mammals and insects that can be viewed within close range. The pond also manages the site's stormwater and exhibit water discharge.

About 10 percent of the museum's power comes from a 40kW photovoltaic array on the roof of the Bio Building. The rest of the electrical power is generated by Niagara Falls.

Stormwater from the roof is collected and channeled into the pond next to the building. Composting toilets help reduce water consumption.

A well-insulated building envelope, low VOC materials, efficient air filtration, air quality monitoring, staff and visitor surveys and a digitally controlled building management system combine to create a productive, healthy indoor environment.