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THE WILD CENTER RECEIVES FUNDING FROM THE
NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Tupper Lake, NY - The Wild Center visitors and community are winners in a new round of New York State funding announcements. The Wild Center’s planned Wild Walk experience was among the North Country projects named in the North Country Regional Economic Development Council’s (NCREDC) 2012 plan.

Today, the Governor announced that The Wild Center’s project is awarded $1 million in funding. The Empire State Development Council is the granting agency and has approved the $1 million grant toward the $4.5 million Wild Walk project. The Wild Walk will be a new outdoor experience that will take visitors on an eight hundred fifty foot walk up into the Adirondack treetops on the Center’s campus. The planned structure, designed by current staff and the team that developed the existing Wild Center, will include a network of bridges, raised platforms, tree houses, and other sometimes fanciful elements that the Center says are designed to deliver a fun and adventurous learning experience in the woods. By expanding the Wild Center’s offerings, the project will help attract tourism to the North Country and also provide temporary construction jobs and year-round employment to area residents.

“We all feel honored,” said Stephanie Ratcliffe, the Executive Director at the Center. “We know that the people who volunteer their time to guide the NCREDC care deeply for the region and its future. When they selected our project as one to recommend, it meant a great deal to all of us. The Wild Center has been a community effort. More than 20,000 people have supported the Center in one way or another, all with a goal of making The Wild Center important to the future of the region. Having the NCREDC refer to us in their Priority Project list as an “anchor” for the region’s economy means that all of that work by so many is being recognized in a way that really matters. We have worked on this Wild Walk project behind closed doors for five years, we designed it so it could become an iconic symbol for this inventive and creative region. We’re just thrilled that the North Country’s council embraced it.”

The Wild Walk idea was first conceived shortly before the Center opened. Since then the plan has been refined and a scale model constructed to help people see the details of the Walk. The Center has invested close to $500,000 in the planning and development phase, and expects the total project to cost roughly $4.5 million. The Center has raised the funds for the planning and development phase and is currently raising the funds from private donors for the construction and exhibit costs.

Hillarie Logan-Dechene, who leads the fundraising efforts for the Center, called the NCREDC support a huge step forward. “I am meeting with donors who want to make an impact on the Adirondacks. When the team at NCREDC led by Garry Douglas and Tony Collins, say that the Wild Walk will have an important impact, I can’t tell you how much that matters.”
Lynn Birdsong, President of the Center’s board, said the NCREDC support reflected “what so many of us love about the North Country. It’s this community where a new idea like The Wild Center can take root and flourish. They only way that happened was because thousands and thousands of people helped build this place, and filled it with their ideas.”

“We plan a big event when we open the Wild Walk, and hope that all of the people who gave time to the NCREDC effort that is making such an impact on the region will join us, and give us the chance to thank them in person for the difference they are making.”

For more information, please contact The Wild Center at 518 359-7800 or visit us online at www.wildcenter.org.

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