Tupper Lake, NY - The Wild Center, a museum complex in Tupper Lake, New York, earned distinction as the first LEED certified museum in the State of New York in February 2008. At the time there were fewer than a dozen Silver Certified projects in the entire state. 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 percent and 30 percent of its normal operating costs, The Wild Center exceeded the base LEED certification to earn a Silver distinction. The LEED system provides a roadmap for measuring and documenting sustainability across six categories: sustainable site development; water efficiency; energy and atmosphere; materials and resources; indoor environmental quality; and innovative design practices.

“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 experience and less on the building itself.”

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

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

“The Adirondacks are a great model for how people can live with the natural world, and it’s exciting to see the future of sustainable building breaking new ground in the Adirondacks,” Ratcliffe said.

Visitors to the 54,000-square-foot Center experience the building through a journey that alternates seamlessly between the indoor and outdoor environment as they proceed through a well-choreographed progression of engaging spaces.
Donated by Tupper Lake school district voters, the original 31-acre site had previously consisted of an open cut sand quarry. Using a previously disturbed site meant minimizing disturbance of the existing natural habitat.

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 storm water and exhibit water discharge.

Around 10 percent of the Center’s power comes from a 40kW photovoltaic array on the roof of the BioBuilding. The rest of the electrical power is generated by Niagara Falls.

The Center’s design and orientation maximizes the use of year-round natural light. Energy-efficient lighting and controls combine with a well-insulated building envelope contribute to create a highly energy-efficient building. A building management system allows for constant monitoring and improvements.

Storm water 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.

The Center is designed in an indigenous Adirondacks style with locally available materials. White pine exterior siding was harvested and milled in Tupper Lake; Red Garnet and Champlain stone come from quarries in the park. The metal roofing, concrete and structural steel were supplied and fabricated in local plants. GreenSeal certified finish materials provide a healthy indoor environment.

For additional information on The Wild Center. For additional information on the U.S. Green Building Council and the LEED certification process.

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