



Pennsylvania Wilds Elk Country Visitor Center Fact Sheet

Vision

Develop a premier elk watching and conservation education facility in the Eastern United States, through a unique partnership between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and establish it as a key destination within the heart of the Pennsylvania Wilds.

Location

245-acre site on Winslow Hill, Benezette Township, Elk County, Pennsylvania. Adjacent to the Elk State Forest and State Game Lands 311.

Center Features

- ❖ A 7000 sq. ft. “green” building designed to lessen environmental impact with: siting to minimize impact on landscape and habitat; rainwater collection and reuse; night sky-friendly light fixtures; use of locally available materials and certified wood from sustainably harvested timber; and use of low emitting materials like paints, adhesives, carpets, etc. Building will be eligible for LEED certification with a “Gold” designation.
- ❖ A stone fireplace to greet visitors upon entry, a “Great Room” with high ceilings supported by large wooden trusses and a panorama of windows looking out on elk viewing areas and food plots.



Design rendering of Elk Center by Habiteria Architecture and Landscape Architecture, P.C.

- ❖ A “Story Theatre” presenting a multimedia experience complete with fiber optic star ceiling, a ‘smoking’ campfire and other techniques to immerse the visitor in the sights, sounds and smells of a mixed hardwood forest, the natural world of the elk and native wildlife and the heritage of the region.
- ❖ State-of-the-art interpretive and interactive exhibits that inform and educate the public about elk and wildlife conservation; sustainable building design, meeting space to support school and other programming; display space to showcase work of local artisans; and a country store/gift shop.
- ❖ Public year-round restrooms and a series of wildlife watching trails, observation areas and viewing blinds accessible from the Center.

Project Financing

The Commonwealth has provided a \$5 million capital budget authorization for the design and construction of the building, observation trails, roadways and parking. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will be responsible for development of all interpretive exhibits, education programs and all operational and maintenance costs for the term of the 30-year agreement, which are projected to be \$5.7 million. The partnership is expected to save the Commonwealth approximately \$5.6 million in operation costs.

Project Schedule

Late Summer/Early Fall 2008 – Construction Begins
Fall 2009 - Grand Opening

Projected Impact

Annual attendance at the Elk Center is estimated to reach 160,000 visitors per year by 2016. Today, visitors engaged in nature-based tourism, including elk viewing, spend an average of \$138 per day. By 2012, daily expenditures for these visitors are projected to increase to nearly \$200 per day. The Center will both draw and extend the stay of visitors to the region.

Information Contacts

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