



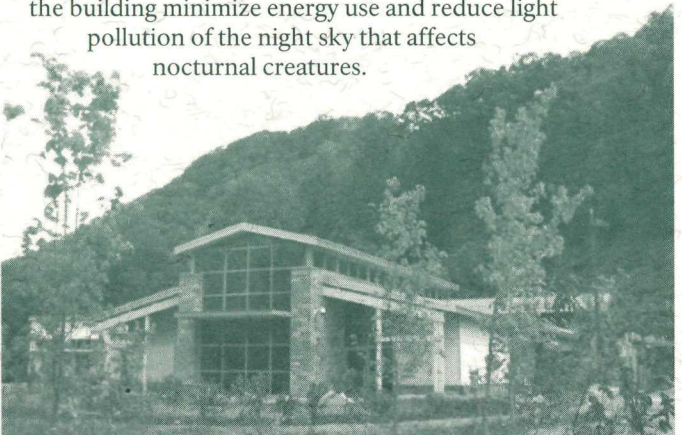
Sandstone Visitor Center: A Green Design

New River Gorge National River's Sandstone Visitor Center serves as a model for state-of-the-art green design and construction. The site, building, and educational exhibits illustrate ways each of us can practice an eco-friendly lifestyle, plus enhance our knowledge of the park, its resources and heritage, and the New River watershed.

Located in Sandstone, West Virginia, this 11,800-square-foot complex opened in September 2003 and represents a commitment to environmental sustainability. The design and materials used at this National Park Service facility reduce both the energy and maintenance required for operation. The building itself uses an estimated 60% less energy than the current industry standard. Landscaping with native plants reduces long-term maintenance of the grounds and restores wildlife habitat as well.

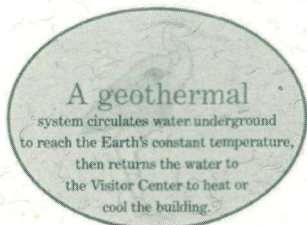
The Site:

- **Recycling this land** by building the Visitor Center on the site of a former quarry and school, means that undeveloped park lands remain as natural areas.
- **Storm water runoff** from the roof, road, and parking area is caught in planted islands and depressions where it is filtered and then seeps into the ground as natural irrigation.
- **Native plants** require less water, fertilizer, and pesticides than non-natives. Watering them with roof and storm water runoff eliminates using clean water out-of-doors.
- **Downward-pointing**, low-wattage lights used outside the building minimize energy use and reduce light pollution of the night sky that affects nocturnal creatures.



The Building:

- **The south-facing** building allows for maximum daylight and heating by the winter sun to minimize the use of energy for lighting and heating.
- **Using local materials** required less fossil fuel for shipping. Many of the building materials used are from regional sources.
- **The light-colored roof** of the Visitor Center reflects sunlight, eliminating the need to cool hot air that would be absorbed through a dark-colored roof.
- **The insulation** within the walls is ground up newspaper and other recycled cellulose, which traps air to insulate and control sound.
- **A geothermal** system circulates water underground to reach the Earth's constant temperature, then returns the water to the Visitor Center to heat or cool the building.
- **Lighting** within the Visitor Center is controlled by the sun. Sun sensors dim interior lights on bright sunny days to reduce the amount of electricity used.
- **Recycled** plastic was used to make the carpet. Upper wall panels are made from aspen trees, which are rapidly-growing renewable resources.
- **Certified wood**, which comes from trees removed in a manner that does not destroy the forest, has been used throughout the Visitor Center.



Green signs placed throughout the site identify sustainable design features.

The Educational Exhibits:

The educational exhibits at Sandstone Visitor Center offer visitors many opportunities to understand and appreciate the entire New River watershed, as well as New River Gorge National River. Interactive displays, touch-screen computer learning centers, and a film interpret the rich resources of this watershed, discuss human impacts upon the land, and review simple ways that each of us can lessen impacts on our environment.

Taking the LEED™

The Sandstone Visitor Center will obtain certification through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) Green Building Rating System. This voluntary point-rating system was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. The council rates sites on water efficiency, materials and resources, site sustainability, indoor environmental quality, and energy and atmosphere.

New River Gorge National River

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