

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



New River Gorge National River

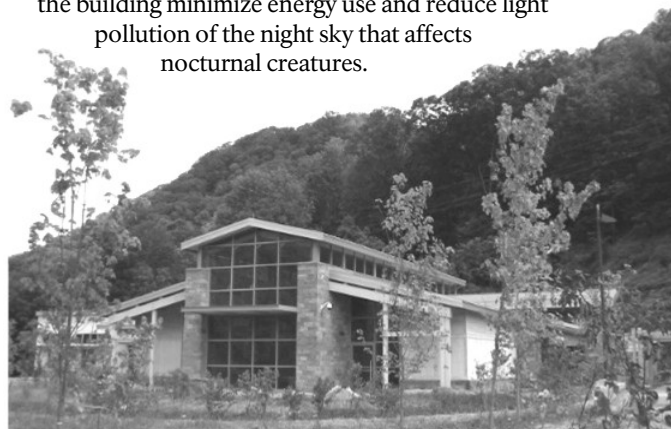
Sandstone Visitor Center: A Green Design

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 people can practice an eco-friendly lifestyle, plus enhance their 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 will reduce both the energy and maintenance required for operation. The building itself will use an estimated 60% less energy than the current industry standard. Landscaping with native plants will reduce the amount of long-term maintenance required of the grounds, as well as restore wildlife habitat.

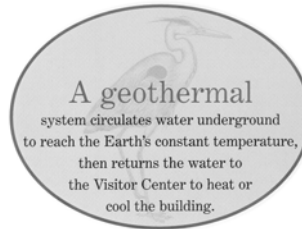
The Site:

- **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. The wall panels are made from aspen trees, which are rapidly-growing renewable resources.
- **Certified wood**, which comes from trees cut down 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:

Designed to highlight the entire New River watershed, as well as New River Gorge National River, the educational exhibits at the Sandstone Visitor Center offer visitors opportunities to learn and grow. The interactive displays, touch-screen computer learning centers, and media program interpret the rich resources of this watershed, discuss human impacts upon the land, plus review simple ways that each person can lessen impacts on our environment.

Taking the LEED™

The Sandstone Visitor Center is obtaining 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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