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Keystone Elk Country Alliance receives Grant from West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund

Benezette, PA. The West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund (WPPSEF) provided a grant for \$25,000 to the Keystone Elk Country Alliance (KECA) in support of phase II construction of KECA's new outdoor classroom on the Elk Center campus. Phase II construction will soon be underway to fully enclose the outdoor classroom with highly energy efficient folding glass doors.

Construction of the 40 x 80 ft. outdoor classroom began last spring as phase I was completed in August 2014. KECA contracted phase I construction of the \$548,000 outdoor classroom with Dagher Construction, Inc. 554 Rock Street, St. Marys, PA. The facility was opened for the Elk Expo in 2014. The WPPSEF contributed \$100,000 to the construction of phase I. The phase II bid was awarded to M&R Construction of Lock Haven, PA.

"Last year, more than 410,000 guests mostly from the eastern seaboard visited the Elk Center to observe elk and to learn more about one of Pennsylvania's most watchable wildlife," stated Rawley Cogan, CEO of the Keystone Elk Country Alliance. KECA is a Pennsylvania based 501 (c) (3) wildlife conservation organization that operates the Elk Country Visitor Center in partnership with Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

"The WPPSEF provided funding for the facility's energy savings components such as the highly efficient biomass boiler during phase I. WPPSEF is once again contributing to complete phase II as we install energy efficient folding doors, stated Cogan, and we are very appreciative for WPPSEF's continued support." The high tech biomass boiler, designed in Sweden, will be used to heat the classroom using cord wood readily available on site. "As a demonstration and education site, the outdoor classroom will expose the benefits of biomass energy to hundreds of thousands of West Penn Power ratepayers each year," says Joel Morrison, Director of the WPPSEF. "Biomass is a highly efficient but a relatively unfamiliar alternative energy source

and WPPSEF is very interested in educating visitors to Pennsylvania's Elk Country about biomass energy," stated Morrison.

"Radiant heated flooring is highly efficient and will extend the usefulness of the facility to 7-9 months a year," stated Morrison. Phase II construction and the addition of highly energy efficient folding glass doors will provide the heat retention necessary during cold weather as well as allow guests to enjoy the outdoors and the spectacular panoramic views of Pennsylvania's elk country, stated Morrison.

The classroom was designed by Moshier Studio, Architect, from Pittsburgh, PA. Moshier Studio was also involved in the Elk Center design back in 2008 and 2009. "My firm was contracted to oversee the LEED aspect of the Elk Center during the design and build stages," said Gary Moshier partner in Moshier Studio. "The Elk Center achieved a LEED Gold certification so the bar was set high and we needed to design the new classroom to continue the same look and quality of the Elk Center," said Moshier. Moshier stated the new classroom may reach the Silver certification once completed.

Additional funding for the phase II construction of the Keystone Elk Country Alliance's outdoor classroom facility was also received from the Commonwealth Financing Authority's (CFA) Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program in the amount of a \$165,000 grant. The funds were a part of the \$28.5 million made available over the past two years to fund six Marcellus Legacy Fund programs administered by the CFA and created by Act 13 of 2012.

The Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) owns the land and the facility. The Keystone Elk Country Alliance manages, operates and funds the facility's daily operation. "The Elk Center represents a true private/public partnership between the Alliance, a private non-profit organization and the Commonwealth," stated DCNR Acting Secretary Cindy Dunn. "We are pleased to work with our many partners on this worthwhile investment in Pennsylvania's Elk Country."

"The model KECA/DCNR private/public partnership has clearly demonstrated the economic value of our outdoor recreation and land conservation investments, a central goal of the Pennsylvania Wilds nature tourism and business development initiative," said Dunn.

"Since opening the Elk Center in September 2010, attendance has increased more than anyone predicted and we needed to expand our Elk Country Campus to better accommodate the large school groups and group tours. Since opening the Elk Center in September 2010 more than 1.1 million guests have visited the Elk Center spurring multiple new business openings or expansions in the immediate vicinity," stated Cogan. "The Alliance is very appreciative to Joel and the WPPSEF for their financial and educational support of this project," said Cogan.

The **West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund (WPPSEF)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that invests in the deployment of sustainable energy technologies throughout the West Penn Power service (WPP) region in Pennsylvania. WPPSEF investments are focused in three broad categories:

- ✓ Deployment of sustainable and clean energy technologies;
- ✓ Deployment of energy efficiency and conservation technologies; and
- ✓ Facilitating economic development, environmental betterment, and public education as they relate to sustainable energy deployment in the WPP service region.

Visit <http://www.wppsef.org> for further information.

The **Keystone Elk Country Alliance** is a Pennsylvania based 501 (c) (3) wildlife conservation organization. KECA's mission is to conserve and enhance Pennsylvania's Elk Country for future generations. KECA operates the Elk Country Visitor Center. Visit www.ExperienceElkCountry.com for more information.