

NEWS

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THE
WILD
CENTER

The Wild Center's Exhibits Are 'Rock' Solid!

TUPPER LAKE, NY - The exhibits that will transform the inside of the new Wild Center's main hall into a real Adirondack forest are 'rock' solid thanks to the experts at COST of Wisconsin, Jackson, WI. The exhibit fabrication is in preparation for the official public opening celebration of the Wild Center scheduled for Tuesday, July 4, 2006.

"COST began in the fall of 2005 creating several dozen molds from rock formations found in the Adirondacks by our architect Chip Reay, from Hellmuth Obata + Kassabaum," said Stephanie Ratcliffe, head of visitor experience for the Wild Center. "Chip made repeated hikes in the Adirondacks looking for just the right rock faces to make the exhibits match the ideas he had in his head for cliffs, waterfalls and rock trout pools."

Once the exact rocks were identified and permission was granted by a private property owner to make the casts, the molding process started with the application of a thick, latex-type material brushed onto sections of rock. The latex seeped into every nook and cranny of the underlying rocks, and dried to a rubber consistency in about a day. The rubbery material was then peeled off the rocks.

"With this materials application process, very little subjective hand carving is necessary," said Dave Petersen, COST project manager. "Instead, the Wild Center exhibits will feature an exact replica of what appears in nature." COST has fabricated rocks and other displays for a variety of museums, theme parks and zoos, including the Bronx Zoo in New York City, the Fort Fisher Aquarium in North Carolina and Universal Studios Islands of Adventure in Orlando, Florida.

Once removed from the rocks, the rubbery casts were sent to COST's Jackson fabrication shop, and a fiber-glass/concrete material was applied to the molds to turn them into rock panels. When dry, the concrete was peeled out of the molds, allowing the casts to be used many times. The lighter weight concrete forms were then loaded onto trucks and shipped to the Museum for installation onsite in various Wild Center exhibits.

At the Wild Center, the panels were assembled onto supports. Shotcrete - a quick-setting concrete sprayed through a hose -- was applied between the panels and COST's artists hand carved the joints to complete the rock walls.

Using a different process, COST is also fabricating The Creation Ice Wall that is part of the Wild Center's commitment to describing the vast time scale of natural history in the Adirondacks. The towering glacier will be visible from the Museum's Great Hall, and will be complimented by exhibits describing the titanic ice age events that shaped the modern Adirondacks.

The Museum's Opening Celebration is scheduled for July 4. The event will celebrate the Adirondacks as a major American environmental success story, and as a model for the world, and will include music by noted bands from the United States and other nations. There will be food, a children's interactive theater event, and opportunities

for visitors to tour the Museum. Visitors can participate in opening activities such as stocking the Museum's new pond, to helping plant its new forests, and building a giant stone cairn with rocks brought from around the state and globe, that will mark the entrance to the Museum's outdoor exhibits. The grounds will open at 9:00 a.m., and the brief official Opening Celebration will take place at 10:30 a.m.

About the Wild Center

The Wild Center, built in the heart of New York's 6-million acre Adirondack Park, is a major new museum that mixes up the indoors and outdoors in some unusual ways. There are waterfalls inside, and exhibit labels in the woods outside. Hiking trails through the Center's 31-acre campus are like museum exhibit halls, except they're in the forest, with labels that trained staff can change daily. Indoors there's a marsh that looks as if it flows into a real wetland outside the building and the calls of live owls and otters will mix with the splashing cascade of falling water from a trout-filled stream. Cameras miles away will import views from the top of a mountain and from the wild and scenic river that flows by the grounds. Films from inside beaver lodges and from field scientists doing research in the Adirondacks will showcase the world that surrounds the Museum.