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Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center sponsored by Trustco

Awarded LEED® Gold Rating

February 9, 2010, (Albany, NY) -- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Pete Grannis announced today that the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Discovery Center sponsored by TrustCo has been awarded a LEED® Gold rating, established by the U.S. Green Building Council and verified by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI). LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is the nation's preeminent program for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. Commissioner Grannis said, "Since this project began, the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center has been led by a team of dedicated and innovative partners that developed a plan for this green building -- which eventually exceeded even their initial expectations. They've done a fantastic job. The features incorporated into the LEED Gold design of this re-used space will enhance Pine Bush resources, reduce numerous environmental impacts, and serve as a valuable educational tool to visitors and the surrounding community."

Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Executive Director Christopher Hawver added, "The planning and design of the Discovery Center, which ultimately included the LEED program element, began in 2004. During the next 5 years of planning, design, implementation and review, the LEED program had become the key guiding principle for the transition of a bank building to the development of the Discovery Center. What initially began as an effort to achieve a Basic LEED level rating, soon, with an energetic design team, turned to a goal of Silver and ended in Gold. It was the dedicated team effort and attention to detail that lead to the discovery of additional LEED points and ultimately the higher rating. The team that was charged with this responsibility included,

but was not limited to, the Envision Architect team, the New York State Office of General Services, Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission staff, and each and every contractor that worked on the project.”

New York State OGS Commissioner John C. Egan commented, “The Office of General Services is pleased to have had the opportunity for collaboration with the state Department of Environmental Conservation, the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission and Envision Architects on this project. The Pine Bush Discovery Center takes its place among the portfolio of state-owned buildings designed to LEED standards with the goals of lowering energy costs, improving air quality, reducing waste and curbing greenhouse gases.”

“The work to attain LEED certification demonstrates the Pine Bush Commission’s commitment to protecting not just the ecology of the Pine Bush Preserve, but the environment as a whole,” said Francis J. Murray, president and CEO of NYSERDA. “NYSERDA is proud to have worked collaboratively with the Pine Bush Commission and its design team to make the Pine Bush Preserve Discovery Center an exemplary green building. I congratulate them on their milestone and look forward to further environmental achievements in the future.”

Since 2004, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) has provided the Pine Bush Commission with nearly \$103,000 to help make this building sufficiently energy efficient and environmentally responsible to achieve LEED Gold certification. NYSERDA’s funding has supported energy and green building analysis, as well as incentives for installing energy efficiency measures including high efficiency lighting, an energy management system, high efficiency motors and a high performance building envelope. In addition, NYSERDA provided the Discovery Center with incentives for installing a solar photovoltaic system.

“The Discovery Center’s LEED certification demonstrates tremendous green building leadership,” said Rick Fedrizzi, President, CEO & Founding Chair, U.S. Green Building Council. “The urgency of USGBC’s mission has challenged the industry to move faster and reach further than ever before, and the Discovery Center serves as a prime example with just how much we can accomplish.”

Michael Venuti, Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center Director concluded, "To get a better understanding of what this level of LEED certification means, one just needs to look around both inside and outside this Center. You will find examples of recycling, energy reduction, water reduction, renewable resources, renewable energy, indoor air quality and restoration of the native Pine Bush landscape. This has been a truly significant outcome of the Discovery Center project."

Located within the Capital District Region, the Albany Pine Bush represents one of the best remaining examples of an inland pine barrens ecosystem left in the world. This gently rolling sand plain is home to a variety of rare plants and animals, including the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. The 3,100-acre Albany Pine Bush Preserve also creates a special habitat for a number of other rare and unique plants and animals, while providing visitors with an assortment of non-motorized recreational opportunities including hiking, jogging, nature study, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking and hunting.

The **Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center** transforms this globally unique destination into an exciting adventure where learning comes naturally through hands-on activities. As the gateway to the Pine Bush, the Discovery Center introduces visitors to everything that makes the Preserve rare and adventurous. With the help of many volunteers, the Discovery Center offers monthly outings and programs about the ecology, natural and cultural history of the pine bush area. Admission is free. The Center is open Tuesday-Friday 9AM-4PM, Saturday and Sunday 10AM-4PM. Closed on Monday.

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission was created by the New York State Legislature in 1988 to protect and manage the unique and endangered natural communities and species of the Albany Pine Bush for ecological, recreational and educational benefits. For more information, please visit www.albanypinebush.org or call 518-456-0655.

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