

## **Workgroup Crafts Pennsylvania Wilds Artisans Plan**

For the last eight months, a Pennsylvania Wilds Artisans Development Workgroup has been crafting a plan to increase the profitability of artisans in the Pennsylvania Wilds Region. The project was launched after DCNR Secretary DiBerardinis visited the region in July 2006 to attend a meeting sponsored by the Lumber Heritage Region to determine the feasibility of developing a plan to support regional art-centric businesses. The initial focus of the effort was wood products but later expanded to a wide variety of artisans and artistic media.

Through the project more than 300 artisans were identified in the region and a survey of these artisans was conducted to gauge their interest in the effort. The response from the artisans was overwhelmingly positive. 88% of the artisans who responded to the survey indicated that they were interested in at least one of the proposed initiatives, and interest in each specific initiative ranged from 51% interested in being represented at trade shows, to 76% being interested in having their products sold through a shop the PA Wilds web site.

The plan includes an overview of regional strengths and weaknesses, demographic data, a brief economic profile relating to tourism and retail related industries, information on artisans in the region that have been identified and their survey responses and specific short and long term recommendations. Recommendations cover a gamut of proposed initiatives to assist artisans in the region: selling artisan products through a “Shop the PA Wilds” website, improving artisan access to regional physical retail facilities, marketing and branding artisan products using the PA Wilds logo and brand, providing artisans with workforce education and entrepreneurial development opportunities, establishing a PA Wilds certification & jurying process, and proposing special events to promote artisan products.

The Workgroup was chaired by Bob Veilleux, a Community and Economic Development Educator with Penn State Cooperative Extension and also Chair of the Lumber Heritage Region and Terri Dennison, Executive Director for the Route 6 Heritage Corporation. Other partners and active participants in the project included: The Pennsylvania Wilds Tourism Marketing Corporation, Local Tourism Promotion Agencies, PA DCED, The Pennsylvania Wilds Planning Team, PA DCNR, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Potter County Education Council, PA Council on the Arts, Local Development Districts, Northern Tier Cultural Alliance, Local Arts Councils, Local Economic Development Agencies, Local Artisans, Non-Profit Organizations, and Local Community Groups.

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