



## **News for Immediate Release**

**Aug. 21, 2014**

### **DCNR, Partners Break Ground for Kinzua Bridge State Park Office/Visitor Center in McKean County**

**Mount Jewett, McKean County** – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Ellen Ferretti today joined local legislators and partners for a groundbreaking ceremony for a new park office/visitor center at Kinzua Bridge State Park, McKean County, in the Pennsylvania Wilds.

"About 158,000 visitors annually stop at Kinzua Bridge State Park to stroll out into the valley and peer through the glass bottom observation area on the remaining half of the railroad bridge impacted by a tornado," Ferretti said. "This new center will welcome them and help them understand the history of the bridge and the area, as well as share some things to do in the park and the region."

This project is part of ***Enhance Penn's Woods*** – a two-year, more than \$200 million initiative launched by Governor Tom Corbett to repair and improve Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

Site preparation at the park is just beginning. The work is expected to be complete by fall of 2015.

"The Kinzua Bridge Foundation is thrilled the construction will start soon for the Kinzua Bridge State Park Visitor Center," said Mary Ann Burggraf, executive director of the Kinzua Bridge Foundation. "This will be a real asset to the entire region and a significant positive impact with the visitors, marking another great moment in time for our Kinzua Bridge State Park."

The visitor center will house 2,800-square feet of space in two exhibit halls and a lobby; park administrative offices; public restrooms; and classroom space. The project also includes a maintenance building.

Interpretive exhibit installation is expected to be completed at the same time as the building. Themes include the geography of the Allegheny Plateau; the viaduct as a symbol of the engineering industry advances that supported the Industrial Revolution, and as an inspiring reminder of the inventiveness, resourcefulness and "can do" spirit of the people of the late-1800s; and the unique opportunities for experiencing natural beauty, observing wildlife and participating in recreational activities at Kinzua Bridge State Park and the greater Pennsylvania Wilds.

"The new Kinzua Bridge Park Visitor Center will become the northern gateway to the Pennsylvania Wilds and serve as a tremendous asset to our region," Senator Joe Scarnati (R-25) said. "Years of planning and preparations have been invested in this state-of-the-art facility. I am very pleased that the project will offer a new, four-season attraction within our region to promote tourism, foster economic growth and showcase the beauty of this area."

"I have visited the Kinzua Bridge many times, and I never get tired of its stunning views or of hearing about its history," said Rep. Martin Causer (R-McKean, Potter and Cameron counties). "The Kinzua Bridge State Park is a great asset to our region, and the addition of a park office and visitor center will only help enhance the experience of the visitors who come here."

The building will seek LEED certification and will include water efficient plumbing fixtures; geothermal heating and cooling system; regionally sourced materials with a high level of recycled content; sustainably certified wood; and diversion of construction debris and waste to recycling centers instead of landfills.

Kinzua Bridge State Park is one of DCNR's key investment areas in the Pennsylvania Wilds and along PA Route 6 heritage corridor.

Construction is estimated to cost about \$6.8 million allocated from the state's capital budget. The general contractor is JC Orr of Altoona.

"Just as the first excursion train, on the first viaduct, welcomed thousands of visitors in 1882, the new center will welcome a new generation of visitors, offering a picture into the 'can-do' spirit that first built the Kinzua Viaduct," said Linda Devlin, executive director of the Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau. "With over 3.5 million visitors annually in the Allegheny National Forest Region, and tourism currently generating over \$173 million dollars annually into the local economy of McKean County, we believe the new center will become a keystone attraction within the Pennsylvania Wilds, attracting an even greater number of visitors annually, acting as a northern gateway for our visitors from Canada and around the world."

The 339-acre Kinzua Bridge State Park features remnants of the 2,053-foot long viaduct that was first built of iron in 1882, and then rebuilt of steel in 1900. The viaduct, commonly referred to as a railroad bridge, is series of arches that carry the railroad over the wide valley.

The bridge was originally constructed as an alternative to laying an additional eight miles of track over rough terrain along the line leading to McKean County's coal, timber and oil lands.

The viaduct was toppled by a tornado in 2003. In 2011, DCNR opened a pedestrian walkway with a glass-bottom observation area down into the Kinzua Gorge on the remaining half of the bridge.

The bridge and observation deck will remain open during construction of the office and visitor center.

For more information about Kinzua Bridge State Park visit the DCNR website at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us) (choose Find a Park) or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS. For information about the Pennsylvania Wilds visit [www.pawilds.com](http://www.pawilds.com).

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