



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DCNR Secretary, Others Mark Official Opening Of Patrick J. Solano Environmental Education Center

Wyoming, Luzerne County, PA - Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today joined other state officials in celebrating the official opening of the Patrick J. Solano Environmental Education Center at Frances Slocum State Park, Luzerne County.

Dedicated in early December, 2013, the center is so-named because of Solano's exemplary life of leadership and service to Pennsylvania's state parks and forests. Significant improvements to the facility and its programs have been made to meet increasing public interest and involvement.

"Just as Mr. Solano's name is synonymous with environmental leadership, this environmental education center, and so many others across the state, are linked directly to our state park visitors better knowing and respecting the lands and waters they value so much," said Dunn. "They, their programs and their and their dedicated staff are one of the major reasons Pennsylvania is a recognized leader in conservation and outdoors recreation."

Located near the park's 165-acre Frances Slocum Lake, the Patrick J. Solano Environmental Education Center promotes strong community and school involvement. It provides natural, cultural, historical and recreational programs for more than 15,000 visitors and educators who help swell the park's attendance to almost 576,500 annually.

"When park visitors, especially the younger ones, see an osprey feeding on the lake, or sunfish guarding their nests in the shallows, they enjoy it," Dunn noted, "but when they leave the Patrick J. Solano Environmental Education Center they are better equipped to understand what they saw here, and more strongly motivated to protect what they found."

In addition to many other roles, Solano, who attended and spoke at today's event, served as deputy secretary for Parks and Forests with the former Department of Environmental Resources (DER) and as acting secretary when the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was first created in 1995. Throughout his career, Solano held numerous prestigious positions, including senior counselor to former governors Tom Ridge and Mark Schweiker. He has served as friend and advisor to numerous public officials and community leaders.

During World War II, Solano completed 23 combat missions with the Eighth U.S. Air Force Heavy Bombardment Group. For his service, he was awarded the Group Presidential Citation, the Air Force Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, and the European Combat Theatre Medal with two Bronze Stars.

The environmental education center named in his honor is overseen by an environmental educator from March through November. Curriculum-based environmental education programs and teacher workshops are available to area schools.

The building features exhibits on American Indians and ecological topics, and improvements to the facility and its programs are ongoing.

Frances Slocum State Park consists of 1,035 acres in Luzerne County. The park is named for Frances Slocum, a young girl who was kidnapped by American Indians in 1778. Frances Slocum Lake is the focal point of the park and forms a horseshoe covering 165 acres.

Details on Frances Slocum and Pennsylvania's 120 other state parks can be found at www.dcnr.pa.gov.

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