



# **Rib Mountain State Park**

# **Conceptual Master Plan**

**for an Education and  
Interpretive Center**

***July, 2009***



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# **Conceptual Master**

# **Plan**

## **for an Education and Interpretive Center**

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## Chapter 1:

# Introduction



*The 60-foot high observation tower on the summit of Rib Mountain, offering a spectacular 360-degree view of the surrounding landscape, is a destination for most state park visitors. July, 2008*



Fall colors on Rib Mountain. 2004

## A Wisconsin Icon

Rib Mountain is a Wisconsin icon towering over the surrounding landscape of Central Wisconsin. Each year about 150,000 people visit the park to experience the magnificent views, walk the forested trails, and climb on the rock formations near the summit.

For several years, the Friends of Rib Mountain State Park have expressed a need for an education/nature center at the park where visitors and school groups can learn about the unique geology of the park, its natural features, and human history. This expressed need was formally adopted in the 2005 *Rib Mountain State Park Master Plan Revision and Environmental Assessment* as an action under the Recreation Management Objectives:

*Construct a nature center building on the western end of the Scenic Recreation Zone in the vicinity of the existing observation tower that serves as an educational and recreational focal point for the park. The building will be sited to provide access to the park's highest concentration of interpretive and educational features and to provide scenic vistas if possible. The nature center building will include: public restrooms, a nature center exhibit area and an outdoor deck with table seating. The building may also include a modest Friend's concession space for the sale of pre-prepared food, beverages, nature literature and merchandise, a winter sports equipment rental area and a meeting/classroom space to accommodate groups up to 80, with a sink, projection screen, audio-visual equipment and an equipment/storage room. Use of or rental of the meeting/classroom space will be limited to: interpretive/educational gatherings, Department and State Agency meetings, non-profit recreational/park events and use by park related organizations, including the Friends of Rib Mountain.*





In March of 2007 the Friends of Rib Mountain State Park entered into a contractual agreement with Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, to develop an Interpretive Master Plan for the proposed Rib Mountain State Park Education Center.

## Purpose of this Plan

This plan provides a conceptual framework to guide the development of an Education and Interpretive Center at Rib Mountain State Park near Wausau, Wisconsin.

The conceptual plan has four primary purposes:

1. It will guide decision makers by documenting the vision of the planning team and provide a course of action to help future staff achieve the mission and goals of the facility.
2. It will serve as a catalyst for fundraising, marketing, and communicating the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center vision to the community and the state.
3. It will provide a record of the rationale and parameters that will guide the development of the education center facility.
4. It will serve as a visual and narrative communication tool for future consultants, architects, program designers, and staff.



*A hardy polypody fern emerges from the talus slopes of Rib Mountain. July, 2008*

## Planning Process

Planning is the process of consensus development, of achieving a shared perspective by all stakeholders of why this facility is needed, who it will serve, and what significant stories it will tell. Effective planning answers the following questions:

### Why?

Establish the vision and goals of the Rib Mountain State Park stakeholders for the development of an Education and Interpretive Center.

*Chapter 1—Introduction*

### Who?

Determine who the visitors are (or will be) and the experiences they are (or will potentially be) seeking.

*Chapter 2—The Audience*

### What?

Examine the tangible resources of the park and describe their intangible meanings. Then, distill these tangibles and intangibles into unifying themes and messages.

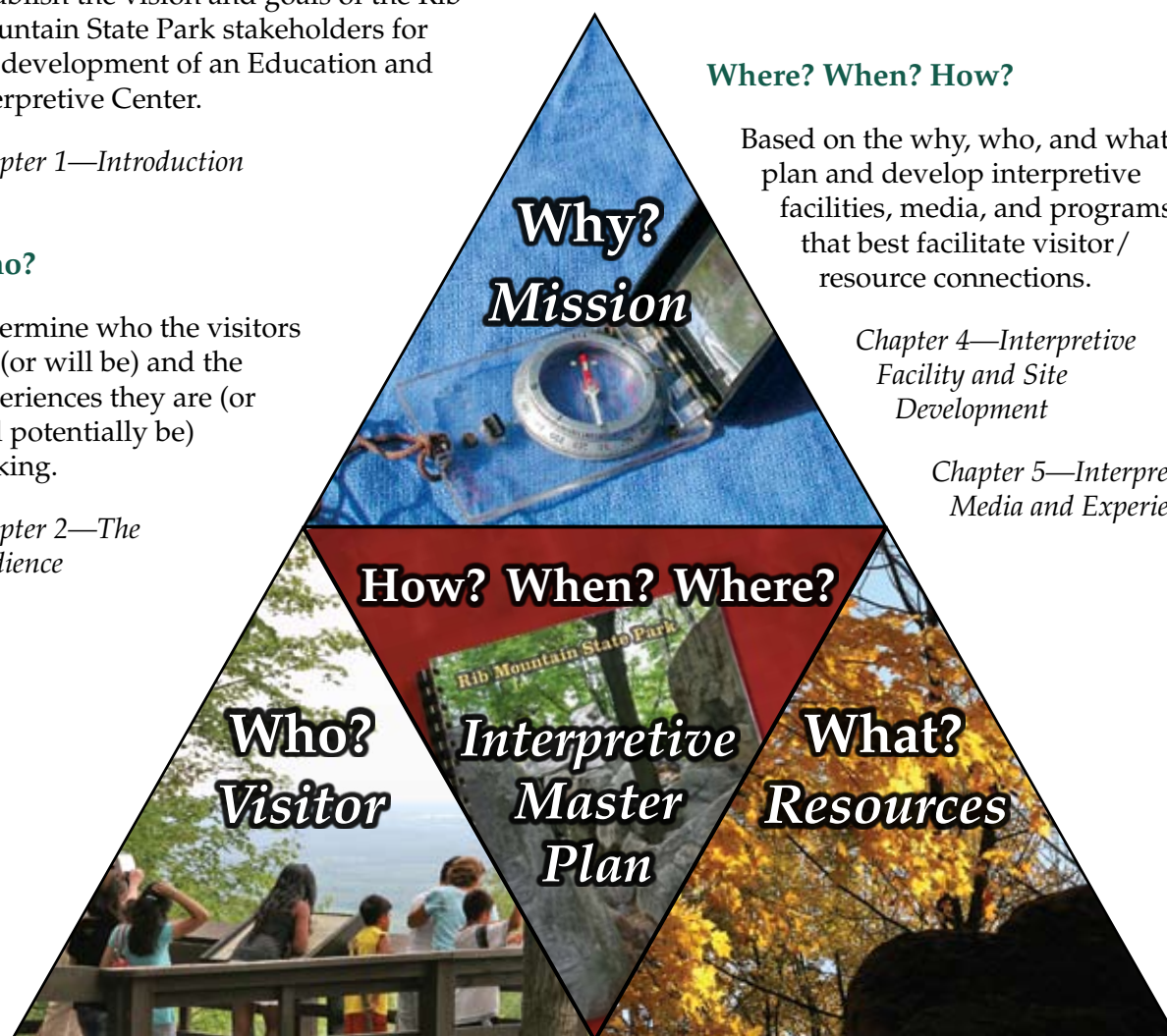
*Chapter 3—Resources, Themes, and Messages*

### Where? When? How?

Based on the why, who, and what, plan and develop interpretive facilities, media, and programs that best facilitate visitor/resource connections.

*Chapter 4—Interpretive Facility and Site Development*

*Chapter 5—Interpretive Media and Experiences*





## Friends of Rib Mountain State Park

The Friends of Rib Mountain State Park Inc. is an organization of volunteers formed in January of 1993 for the charitable and educational purpose of assisting the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to improve, preserve, and promote Rib Mountain State Park. In 2001, the Friends established the “Friends of Rib Mountain State Park Fund” through the Wausau Area Community Foundation to provide an endowment to meet the future needs of the park.

In 2003, the Friends group proposed the addition of a new facility for educational programs or activities. The Friends envisioned self-guided permanent and temporary displays that interpret the geology, flora and fauna of the park, and the history of the Wausau area. Through the creation of a new educational facility, the Friends group has a goal of creating better stewards of state parks and natural resources.



## Friends of Rib Mountain



## Mission and Goals of the Interpretive Center

On July 9, 2007, Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters met with ten Friends of Rib Mountain State Park board members and the park manager to pose four questions:

1. Why do people come to Rib Mountain State Park?
2. What are the functions of this new facility going to be?
3. What are must tell stories (big ideas) for visitors to learn?
4. What changes do you want to see with the trails, other interpretive materials, etc.?

A complete list of responses to these questions is reported in Appendix 1.

The ideas presented in this 2007 meeting, the 2005 DNR *Rib Mountain Master Plan*, and visitor input obtained in structured interviews (Chapter 2 and Appendix 2) has provided a foundation for the following mission and goals:

**Mission:**

The new Education and Interpretive Center will interpret Rib Mountain through stories of the area’s natural and cultural history, provide educational experiences for school groups, and interpretive experiences for visitors to the park.

**Goals:**

- Provide a central location for school groups to learn about the natural and cultural history of the park
- Provide self-guided interpretation for visitors (exhibits, brochures, maps)
- Serve as an optimal location for an all-weather panoramic view of the landscape (windows overlooking southwest, viewing deck for outdoor experience)
- Provide a sales area for snacks, gifts, souvenirs, and educational materials operated by the “Friends of Rib Mountain State Park”
- Provide a multi-purpose room limited to interpretive/educational gatherings, DNR/ State Agency meetings, non-profit recreational/ park events and groups like the Friends of Rib Mountain. The meeting room space will not be offered for use or rental for social events such as wedding receptions, banquets, or private parties



- Construct an aesthetically pleasing building with as many green design features as practical
- Consolidate several park activities into one multi-use building to eliminate duplication, lower operation costs, and minimize the number of staff needed to operate facilities and programs



*South overlook covered in a fresh layer of snow, the proposed location of the Education and Interpretive Center. January, 2008*



## Chapter 2:

# The Audience



*Visitors watch a performance at the Rib Mountain State Park amphitheater, as part of the 2008 Summer in the Clouds concert series. July, 2008*



*Visitors are attracted to the unique rock formations found on Rib Mountain. July, 2008*

## Connecting with Visitors

Rib Mountain attracts visitors from the local community, as well as from across the state and the upper-Midwest. School groups from the region visit the park to learn more about one of the state's premier natural areas right in their own backyard. Fall colors draw visitors to the park en masse and the winter season attracts thousands of ski enthusiasts to the mountain. Many weddings and special events are held in the park. When local residents have family and friends visiting from across the country and around the world, many make it a point to bring them to Rib Mountain. Community members, visitors, and school groups will all benefit from the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center and other park renovations.

The local community population of Marathon County is over a quarter of a million people (2005 American Community Survey census.gov). The top five municipalities are the City of Wausau, the Village of Weston, the Town of Rib Mountain, the Town of Kronenwetter, and the Village of Rothschild.

School districts within Marathon County include Athens, DC Everest Area, Edgar, Marathon City, Mosinee, Spencer, Stratford, and Wausau. Public school enrollment for the 2000-2001 school year was nearly 20,000 students (commerce.wi.gov). Within the Wausau school district alone, there are 14 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 2 high schools, 2 Charter schools, and a school forest.



## Visitor Trends

Rib Mountain reports the following visitor trends:

- The average annual recreational visitation of Rib Mountain (excluding skiing) during 2002-2006 was about 146,000 visitors.
- Most visitors are day-users from the local area. Nearly 30% of visitors may be from out-of-state.
- Day-use visitors typically take in the view from the top of the mountain, climb the observation tower, hike the trails, observe nature and picnic.
- During the fall, thousands flock to the hill to view the fall colors.
- The amphitheater is very popular for weddings, concerts, lectures and other social events and is fully booked on summer weekends.
- A popular trend has been the use of the Park Road for exercise walking and biking.
- The park is visited by local school groups in the spring and fall for classroom outings and nature study.
- Camping has declined in recent years due to the undersized and overcrowded campsites that discourage RV and tent campers. Area parks and recreation areas offer hookups and a range of recreational opportunities not available at Rib Mountain.
- The ski hill and its visitors are an important component of the winter tourism recreation economy of the region.
- Snowshoeing in the park has increased greatly in the last few years, and this trend is expected to continue as the trail network is expanded.
- The convenient location near Highways 29 and 51 lures some regional visitors to stop in as they travel across the state.



*In summer, the Rib Mountain amphitheater hosts weddings, concerts, and other social events every weekend. July, 2008*



*In fall, visitors experience a birds-eye view of the spectacular colors on Rib Mountain. September, 2007*



*Downhill skiers at Rib Mountain are an important component of the region's winter tourism. January, 2008*



Visitors enjoy snacks and purchase souvenirs at the Rib Mountain Concession Stand. June, 2007



Students take in the breathtaking view atop the Rib Mountain observation tower. Education is an important part of the new visitor facility. July, 2008

## Target Audiences

### I. Local Residents

- a. Skiers
- b. Seasonal fall color viewers
- c. Picnickers
- d. Long distance and nature trail hikers
- e. Campers
- f. Bird watchers
- g. Those attending amphitheater gatherings
- h. Those bringing out-of-town guests for the view

### II. Regional and Out of State Tourists

- a. Skiers
- b. Seasonal fall color viewers
- c. Campers
- d. Nature trail hikers
- e. Bird watchers
- f. Those attending amphitheater gatherings
- g. Through travelers taking a break and enjoying the view

### III. School Groups

- a. Self-contained elementary classes
- b. Secondary science classes
- c. College geology classes

### IV. Other Target Audiences

- a. Non-English speaking groups (e.g. Hmong population)
- b. People with disabilities who cannot access many areas of the park

## What Visitors are Seeking

In July and September, 2007, Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters interviewed 40 groups representing 120 visitors. The interviews were from a mix of repeat and first-time visitors, whose stays ranged from 20 minutes to 3 hours. The basic sequence included the following questions:

1. Why do you visit Rib Mountain State Park?
2. What activities are you engaged in during your visit(s) to the park?
3. What topics/ideas would you like to see included in exhibits and programs in a new education/nature center?
4. What other suggestions or comments do you have (finding your way/orientation/improvements in the park)?

### Discussion of Responses

The complete list of interview responses are located in Appendix 2. The following is a summary of responses:

**Question 1:** Most visitors are local residents who come periodically for the view, to hike around, and perhaps have a picnic. Some came to entertain out-of-town guests, while others were traveling by and came for a break in their travels.

**Question 2:** Hiking the trails and climbing the observation tower were the most frequent activities that visitors engaged in.

**Question 3:** The geology of Rib Mountain and the wildlife that can be seen were, by a wide margin, the most important topics that people would like to learn about. A significant number also wanted to learn about the history of the park.

**Question 4:** Visitors are, in general, thrilled with the beauty of the park. They did not express any problems with wayfinding.



*Based on interviews, visitors are most interested in discovering the geology and wildlife of Rib Mountain State Park. August, 2007*



*Ripple marks in vertical rock. July, 2008*



*Turkey vulture soars above the quarry. July, 2008*



*The new Education Center will provide space and facilities for educational programs that connect students to the stories of Rib Mountain. June, 2007*

## Serving School Groups

The 2005 (Second Edition) Rib Mountain State Park Teachers' Study Guide provides background information and in-class and on-site activities for elementary school classes to learn about the human history, geology, plants, and animals of Rib Mountain State Park. Lessons are divided into nine topic areas: Biotic Community, Human History, Geologic History, Plants, Trees, Wildflowers, Birds, Mammals and Insects. Classes visit the park most often during the spring and fall seasons.

The Education and Interpretive Center will offer classroom space and shelter from inclement weather, both of which will enhance the experience for students and teachers. Most important will be the curriculum enhancements provided by the exhibits in the interpretive center. These exhibits will provide tangible experiences which will reinforce the lesson plans, especially in the topics of human history, geology, birds, and mammals. It is recommended that when the exhibits are in place, a new edition of the study guide be developed that integrates opportunities for learning in the Education Center.

The Education and Interpretive Center will provide alternative activities for inclement weather and serve as a hub for educational activities to radiate from. More diverse teaching tools and meeting spaces will enrich student learning, while increasing the efficiency of teaching multiple lessons and groups of children.

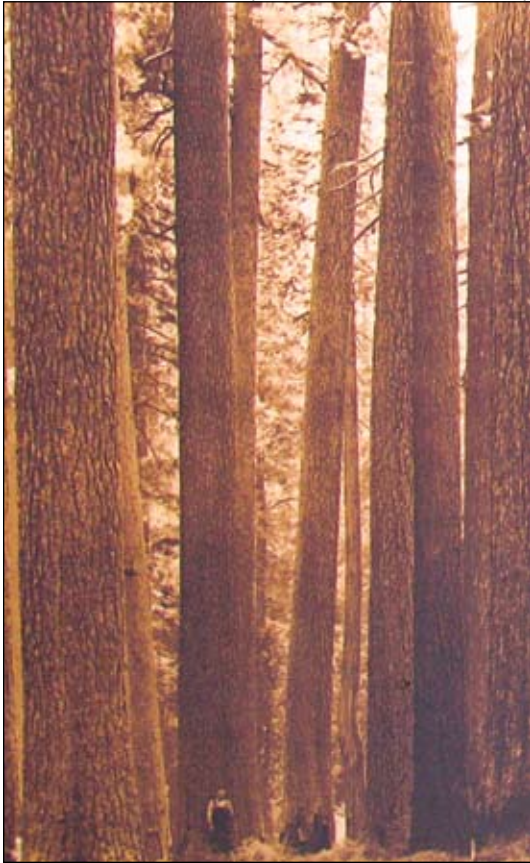
## Chapter 3:

# Resources, Themes, and Messages



*Visitors enjoy a fall colors tour on the Granite Peak ski lift up Rib Mountain. September, 2007*

Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society



Towering virgin pines, like these photographed in Marathon County in 1865, drew settlers to the Wausau area.

Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society



Big Bull Falls circa 1856.

## The History of Wausau

The history of the Wausau area is linked to the Wisconsin River. For centuries, the river served as a means of transportation for American Indians and, later, for the fur traders. In the 19th century, it became both highway and power source for sawmills that served as incentives for settling the region.

In 1838, George Stevens of New York heard that the Wisconsin Territories held much promise for a logging industry. The 1836 Treaty of the Cedars with the Menominee Indians transferred most of northeast Wisconsin to federal ownership, which ignited a massive land rush. Stevens became part owner in a sawmill that would be built in the Wisconsin Territory. In 1839, he set out to this area and arrived in what was called Big Bull Flats or Big Bull Falls by the French fur traders (the long rapids created many bubbles, or *bulle* in French). Here he constructed his sawmill.

Walter McIndoe, a Scotsman, came to Big Bull Falls in 1846 and became part owner in the former George Stevens' mill. He is credited more than any other person for turning the mill settlement of Big Bull Falls into a town. In 1849, the year after Wisconsin was made a state, McIndoe was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly. One of his early accomplishments in the Assembly was to introduce a bill that divided Portage County, creating a new county to the north named Marathon. This bill was passed and became effective in 1850, naming Big Bull Falls as its County Seat, which McIndoe renamed Wausau commonly interpreted to mean "a faraway place" or "a place which can be seen from far away" in the Ojibwe language.

As the northern Wisconsin timber stands were depleted, growing industries increasingly depended on the Wisconsin River. Today, the river serves both industrial and recreational purposes, connecting the communities that call its valley home.

## The History of Rib Mountain State Park

Rib Mountain is an isolated ridge that towers nearly 800 feet above the surrounding landscape. The “mountain” is composed of very hard metamorphic quartzite rock estimated to be 1.7 billion years old. This durable rock resists the weathering that eroded the ancient mountain range around it into a flat plain.

Historically, Rib Mountain was believed to be the highest point in Wisconsin. Today, precise measurements conclude that Timm’s Hill near Ogema in Price County is the highest at 1,952 feet above sea level, Pearson Hill (just a half mile southeast of Timm’s Hill) is second at 1,951 feet, Rib Mountain is third at 1,940 feet, and Sugarbush Hill in Forest County is fourth at 1,939 feet (Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, 1999). Rib Mountain is an impressive geologic feature because of its mass, about four miles long, and because it looms above the surrounding terrain. Its vertical rise above the Wisconsin River Valley is 800 feet, more than any other promontory in the state. It is the highest bedrock in Wisconsin. The higher Wisconsin peaks are made up of debris deposited during the last Wisconsin glaciation.

While this quartzite ridge has been durable, the name has changed. In the 1920s it was known as Rib Hill, but by the 1930s it was referenced as Rib Mountain; perhaps a more inviting term for attracting downhill skiers. Today, the hill’s official name is Rib Mountain, despite the ambiguity that was created when the ski operations changed their name to Granite Peak (the hill is composed of quartzite, not granite).

When viewed from above this hill curves in an east-west arc, like a rib. The name Rib Mountain reportedly originated from a Chippewa Indian word “O-pic-wan-a” meaning rib and “Polwan” meaning

*Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society*



*Historic newspaper illustration of “beauties” on the Rib Mountain summit. Although not the highest peak in the state, Rib Mountain has the greatest vertical rise—an impressive feature towering above the landscape. June, 2007*



*Quartzite quarry at Rib Mountain State Park. The rock has been mined here since 1893 for sandpaper, grinding, and polishing. March, 2007*



*Plaque commemorating the beginnings of Rib Mountain State Park, with the donation of Jacob Gensman and enlargement by the Kiwanis Club. June, 2007*

back. It is speculated that the Chippewa and earlier tribes used this promontory as a lookout and as a landmark for finding their way, as did later European explorers and settlers.

The original 1840 land survey described the mountain as forested by hemlock and northern hardwood, including yellow birch, white birch, white ash, basswood, sugar, and red maple. Rib Mountain was not logged until the aftermath of a massive fire in July of 1910 when the entire forest canopy burned. All of the charred timber was salvaged by 1911. Innovative loggers built a wooden chute to slide the logs down the steep side of the mountain.

As early as 1893, quartzite was mined to manufacture sandpaper. Quartzite is an excellent abrasive because it is hard and brittle. The Wausau Sandpaper Company was incorporated in 1900 and built a factory. In 1902, Wausau Quartz Company crushed the quartzite for grinding and polishing purposes. The two companies merged in 1905 to form Wausau Abrasives, which was purchased by Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) in 1929 and operated until the 1990s.

For a period in the late 1800's, hopeful prospectors dug for gold, but found too little in the ore to make gold mining profitable. One speculator actually "planted" California gold dust, but the ruse was quickly discovered.

In 1923 the estate of Jacob Gensman presented 40 acres of the Rib Mountain summit to the state. The Wausau Kiwanis Club recognized the mountain's recreational potential. The club bought an additional 120 acres of land at the top and donated it to the state. It was officially opened as a state park in 1927 (Musolf paper) or 1929 (DNR documents). Later gifts expanded the park to 606 acres in 1970 and nearly 860 acres by 1982. A 2001 purchase of 257 acres from 3M Corporation increased the park area to its current 1528 acres.



Many men in the community made it a point to climb to the top of the mountain at least once a year, probably just to prove that they could do it, according to a 1926 article in the Wausau Daily Record Herald. It was a difficult climb because of the dense forest and lack of paths. The mountain remained undeveloped until 1929, when a special committee of the local Chamber of Commerce spearheaded a drive to build a road to the summit. The Kiwanis Club funded a 200-foot entrance right-of-way, and the road was completed in 1931.

In August, 1935, the 3649th Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was set up on the west bank of the Wisconsin River in the Town of Rib Mountain. The young men created walking paths, widened the road, developed a campground, and built a picnic area and gazebo. Chamber of Commerce leader Walter Roehl had convinced the Conservation Department that Rib Mountain would make an excellent winter ski area, and the CCC began work on clearing the slopes and installing a J-bar lift. The CCC built a spacious new shelter house, which was opened in December 1939.

When the ski run opened on the slopes of Rib Mountain in 1937, it was one of the first downhill ski areas in North America. A ski area in Stowe, Vermont had opened a few years earlier in 1934, and Sun Valley in Idaho had become the nation's first ski area in the western states in 1936. Rib Mountain began operations with six runs, a half-mile long J-bar powered by an 85 horsepower Ford V-8 motor with a standard truck transmission and a 20' by 60' temporary base chalet. At the time it was the longest ski tow in the country.

The ski area was created largely through the efforts of residents of the City of Wausau, then a thriving city of 25,000 people. The runs were constructed by the labor of teams of CCC workers standing almost shoulder to shoulder as they cut the trees, removed stumps and brush, and crushed the boulders with sledge hammers. A road was built to the base of the ski area,

*Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society*



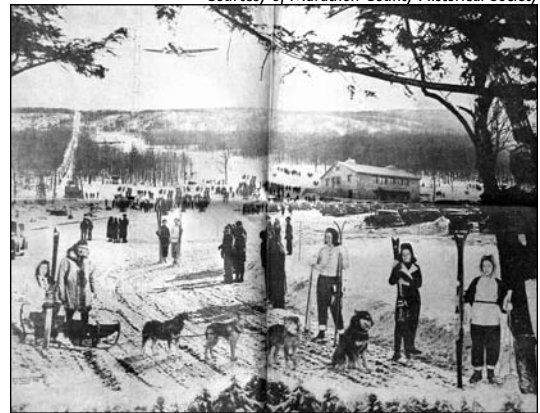
*Funded by the Kiwanis Club, the state park entrance road was completed in 1931.*

*Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society*



*Members of the 3649th CCC camp worked on paths, roads, campgrounds, and buildings at Rib Mountain State Park.*

*Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society*



*Composite photo of the Rib Mountain ski area that railroads used in advertising, circa 1937.*



*An exhibit in the historic chalet displays artifacts and interprets Rib Mountain's connection to the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division. January, 2008*



*With the recent development of new trails, snowshoeing is becoming a popular winter sport at Rib Mountain. March, 2007*



*Granite Peak Ski Corporation has upgraded and added many services to the Rib Mountain ski area. January, 2008*

a parking lot cleared for 300 cars, and a stone chalet was built. It is still being used in 2008.

The first ski event was the Central Ski Association Championship February 24-25, 1938. The slalom, downhill, cross-country, and jumping events attracted more than 465 participants and 3,000 spectators.

The Rib Mountain ski area has a historic connection to the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division which served in Italy during the closing months of World War II. Several Wausau boys who learned how to ski on Rib Mountain joined the Division. The Joe Duskey Room in the historic chalet is named after a local man who, in the years before and after graduating from high school in 1941, developed a singular love for skiing the slopes of Rib Mountain. He became a particularly accomplished skier in these early years of the sport and joined the famed alpine skiing 10th Mountain Division in World War II. Sgt. Duskey served with the U.S. Army in Colorado and Texas teaching both alpine skiing and mountain climbing, and touched the hearts of his compatriots with his skill and patriotism before his tragic death in the mountains of Italy in 1945.

Recent developments include a new hiking and snowshoe trail on the south slope of the mountain which was developed in 1994. A trail was constructed to the 3M quarries in 2008.

Granite Peak Ski Corporation leased 406 acres of the steep north face in 2000 as a winter ski area. Since 2000, Granite Peak has added 58 new runs for a total of 72 runs, installed five new lifts, including a high-speed chairlift, restored the historic stone chalet, replaced the snowmaking equipment, and built a new ticket and ski school building.

## Geology of Rib Mountain

Rib Mountain is a geological formation called a monadnock, a general term for a lone, dominating hill that rises above the surrounding flat terrain. Rib Mountain quartzite is extremely hard and resistant rock that metamorphosed from ancient sandstone.

Sand was deposited from erosion about 2.5 billion years ago. Characteristic ripple marks in the stone show that it was once loose grains of sand in shallow water. Under pressure from being buried, the loose sand was cemented into sedimentary sandstone. When one plate of the Earth's crust was subducted beneath another plate about 2 billion years ago, the sandstone was transformed into today's metamorphic quartzite. The once horizontal layers of stone have been turned upward almost ninety degrees, evidenced by the sand ripples that now stand vertical.

Quartzite is a hard but brittle rock. Since it does not weather and erode as easily as other materials, it is often left as an isolated remnant of an earlier, larger mountain. Due to its brittleness, the rock fractures in random planes when water freezes in cracks and crevasses. These fractured rocks lie as talus slopes everywhere on Rib Mountain.

The quartzite mass of Rib Mountain is emerging from a much larger mass of igneous rock known as "syenite." Syenite once surrounded the quartzite, but has weathered away into today's low-lying plain surrounding Rib Mountain. Examples of syenite rock are found at the bottom of Rib Mountain, where a road cut exposes a cross section of syenite (south side of Highway N just west of the junction with Highway KK). Rib Mountain, Mosinee Hill, and Hardwood Hill are all huge masses of quartzite that were once totally covered by syenite. Even today after 300 million years of erosion, only a fraction of these quartzite hills' masses are exposed; most remain subterranean, perhaps as deep as 4,000 feet.



*An interpretive panel at the southwest overlook describes monadnocks, lone hills surrounded by flat terrain. August, 2007*



*Quartzite fractures when water freezes in cracks and crevasses, evidenced by large talus slopes on Rib Mountain. July, 2008*



*Frozen ripples in the quartzite of Rib Mountain illustrate that the rock was created from loose grains of sand in shallow water. July, 2008*

A geologic chronology of the park (excerpted from *A Geological History of Rib Mountain, Wisconsin* by Keith Montgomery) includes:

1. Archaean Supercontinent splits 2.5 billion years ago, much like Europe and North America have split and formed the Atlantic in more recent geologic time. Erosion of this ancient continent produces sand (among other things) that accumulates and soon forms sandstone.
2. Subduction starts to happen about 2.0 billion years ago, sweeping oceans and continents back together. The Penokean Mountains are formed. Perhaps at this time the sandstone is metamorphosed into quartzite. At a later time, an intrusion of syenite incorporates and surrounds various large blocks of this quartzite.
3. The Penokean Mountains and some of the syenite in their roots are eroded away between 1.5 and 0.6 billion years ago, revealing the quartzite xenolith of today's Rib Mountain.
4. The landscape is submerged and was buried under accumulations of various sedimentary rocks roughly between 600 and 300 million years ago.
5. Erosion in the past 300 million years removes the sedimentary rocks from this part of the state. As before, Rib Mountain survives this erosion and stands high on account of the legendary resistance of its quartzite!

## Flora and Fauna

The park's forest serves as an important reserve for wildlife habitat and ecosystem protection because it is one of the few remaining large blocks of closed canopy forests in the region. The three forested monadnock hills arc around Nine Mile County Forest, a 5,000 acre county conservation and recreation area. A view to the southwest overlooks this forest.

A mix of hardwood trees can be found within the park. Park visitors can enjoy sightings of white-tailed deer, gray squirrel, cottontail rabbit and raccoon, various bird species, wild turkey, and turkey vultures. Vultures roost on rocky bluffs in the old 3M quarry and can often be seen soaring on heat thermals during warm sunny days. The area provides nesting habitat for a variety of forest birds and habitat for neotropical migrants such as vireos, warblers, and thrushes.

The **Rib Mountain Talus Forest State Natural Area** includes 215 acres within the park and has the highest concentration of rare plants in the park. Some of the quartzite talus has artesian seeps, providing unique micro-habitat for rare species of flora and fauna.

Rib Mountain Talus Forest is a unique site that supports three rare plant species found among the scattered quartzite rocks on the south side of Rib Mountain. The site supports an extensive second-growth mesic forest of sugar maple, paper birch, red oak, and big-tooth aspen. Larger trees present in patches or as individuals include basswood, white ash, red maple, and yellowbud hickory. Scattered conifers are occasionally present but are greatly reduced from their historic abundance. Richer areas support ground layer plants such as Virginia waterleaf and maidenhair fern while areas with thin soils where quartzite outcrops and talus occur contain plants associated with drier and generally more infertile conditions. Unique microhabitats within crevices of the jumbled talus support rare plants



*Red squirrel in Rib Mountain State Park. June, 2007*



*Polypod ferns growing in the quartzite talus slopes of Rib Mountain. July, 2008*



*White-tailed deer are common residents of the Rib Mountain forest. High populations adversely affect ground layer plants and shrubs. July, 2007*

including purple clematis (*Clematis occidentalis*), Missouri rock-cress (*Arabis missouriensis*), and the state-threatened drooping sedge (*Carex prasina*). Rib Mountain Talus Forest was designated a State Natural Area in 2005.

The large deer population has impacted the diversity of shrubs and ground layer plants.

The talus fields offer summer nesting and winter hibernation crevices and cavities for a variety of mammals including eastern chipmunks, woodchucks, and even bats. Red and gray foxes, bobcats and other predators hunt these areas for mice, voles, and rabbits which seek protection in the rocks.

The Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail describes the summit of Rib Mountain as a recommended site for bird watching:

*From spring through fall, this park is a great place to watch large numbers of Turkey Vultures, hawks and Bald Eagles glide on the thermals above. In the spring, park woodlands attract large numbers of migrating songbirds, especially warblers. In the summer, it holds Winter Wrens, Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and Tufted Titmice. In the fall, it offers one of the best spots to watch migrating hawks.*



*Turkey vultures soar above the rocky cliffs of the abandoned Rib Mountain quarry. July, 2008*

## Themes and Messages

Themes are the important ideas that organize the messages to be communicated at the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center. They create a framework for planning and help place resources and events into meaningful contexts for visitors. Once these significant concepts are identified, decisions can be made about what site resources and media are most appropriate to tell these stories. Compelling interpretive themes link a tangible resource to the interests of visitors.

The theme statement, which is the main idea of an interpretive opportunity, should always contain universal concepts. A universal concept is an intangible meaning that has significance to almost everyone, but may not mean the same thing to any two people. They are the ideas, values, challenges, relationships, needs, and emotions that speak to the human condition.

Interpretation is most effective when media and other interpretive opportunities allow visitors to grasp the meanings expressed in themes and apply them to their own lives. Visitors may not parrot the themes we write—but if they are provoked, inspired, or can relate to something within themselves, we have been successful.

The themes selected for the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center were created with input from members of the Friends of Rib Mountain and the state park property manager during a meeting on July 9, 2007. A complete listing of the ideas generated at the meeting is available in Appendix 1.

A **primary theme** expresses the main idea and unifying concepts that tie together the stories of Rib Mountain. To provide a cohesive visitor experience, all interpretation at Rib Mountain State Park should relate to this holistic theme.

**Sub-themes** split the primary theme into several more specific and workable ideas. These broad storylines guide visitors to discover deeper meanings and relationships with the resources of the site.

**Messages** break down the broad sub-themes into specific, discrete stories that can be told with interpretive media and programming.



*Forget-me-not flowers in Rib Mountain State Park. Themes provide a framework for telling the important stories that connect people to the meanings of the site. July, 2008*



*Rib Mountain has a spirit of place that draws visitors to its summit. It is an ideal location for connecting people to natural and cultural history stories. July, 2008*



*Communication towers soar into the sky from the Rib Mountain summit. July, 2008*

## Primary Theme

Rib Mountain looms over the surrounding landscape, offering panoramic views and opportunities for people to connect with the natural features and human history of this unique place.

## Sub-theme 1

Rib Mountain, the third highest elevation in Wisconsin, has been a significant landmark for centuries and now attracts thousands of people each year to enjoy the spectacular view and recreation opportunities.

## Messages

- The name Wausau is locally interpreted to mean “place where you see far,” a Chippewa Indian word.
- Native American tribes and French fur traders used the mountain as a landmark for travel.
- Because its great elevation compared to the rest of the landscape, Rib Mountain is an important part of the state’s communication network, hosting several transmission and relay towers for local television and radio stations.
- Rib Mountain features the greatest “local relief” of any area in the state—800 feet from the valley floor to the top of the hill.
- From the Van Douser Observation Tower on a clear day, it is possible to see more than 30 miles from above the 60 foot tree-top canopy.



- The Wisconsin River valley, Nine Mile Forest, Mosinee Hill and Hardwood Hill can be seen from the tower, as can the mix of agriculture that includes ginseng farms.
- Driving, walking, or biking the mountain provides a scenic view unique to the entire north central Wisconsin region.
- The natural setting with developed roads and trails, provides opportunities for exercise.
- More than 10 miles of trails meander around the park.
- Today, tens of thousands of people visit the mountain annually to walk, hike, downhill ski, and snowshoe.
- During the winter season, thousands of visitors come to ski or snowboard at the 406 acre ski area leased to the Granite Peak Corporation.
- During the fall, thousands flock to the mountain to enjoy the colors of the season.

## Sub-theme 2

The geology of Rib Mountain connects us to the origins of Earth.

### Messages

- Rib Mountain, at 1,940 feet, is the highest bedrock summit in Wisconsin (two higher peaks are composed of glacial till).
- It is called a “mountain” likely because of its local relief (the difference in elevation between the high point and the surrounding landscape), which is about 800 feet above Lake Wisconsin.
- Rib Mountain (formerly Rib Hill) consists of an impressive east-west ridge almost 4 miles long that slightly curves like a rib.



*The view from the Rib Mountain observation tower reveals numerous landscape features and land use patterns. June, 2007*

Courtesy of CJF, [www.flickr.com/photos/franklinphotos](http://www.flickr.com/photos/franklinphotos)



*In fall, the view from the observation tower erupts in an array of brilliant colors. Visitors flock to the mountain for this unique perspective.*



*Rib Mountain is composed of hard quartzite that resists erosion. Visitors climb up to the highest point, 1,940 feet above sea level. July, 2008*

- It is composed of some of the most resistant rocks in nature—extremely hard, firmly cemented, massive homogeneous quartzite.
- Ripple marks and cross-bedding indicate that originally it was sand deposited offshore in an ancient sea.
- Folding has caused its once horizontal beds to be tipped to a nearly vertical position.
- Erosion of the Archaean Supercontinent about 2.5 billion years ago produces sand that accumulates and forms sandstone.
- Subduction occurs about 2.0 billion years ago and perhaps at this time the sandstone is metamorphosed into quartzite.
- At a slightly later time, an intrusion of syenite (from magma that solidified from below) incorporates various large blocks of this quartzite.
- The Penokean Mountains and some of the syenite in their roots are eroded away between 1.5 and 0.6 billion years ago, revealing the quartzite xenolith of today's Rib Mountain.
- The landscape was submerged and buried under accumulations of various sedimentary rocks roughly between 600 and 300 million years ago.
- Erosion in the past 300 million years removes the sedimentary rocks from this part of the state. As before, Rib Mountain survives this erosion and stands tall on account of the resistance of its quartzite.
- On steeper slopes, freezing and thawing breaks the brittle rock into talus fields.
- Rib Mountain and its sister hills are often mistaken for extinct volcanos, but they are not in any way volcanic.

## Sub-theme 3

Rib Mountain is home to diverse wildlife and plant species, most typical of northern mesic forests, and others unique to the quartzite talus and quarry bluffs.

### Messages

- The site supports an extensive second-growth mesic forest of sugar maple, paper birch, red oak, and big-tooth aspen. Larger trees present in patches or as individuals include basswood, white ash, red maple, and yellowbud hickory. Scattered conifers are occasionally present but are greatly reduced from their historic abundance.
- Richer areas support ground layer plants such as Virginia water-leaf and maidenhair fern while areas with thin soils where quartzite outcrops and talus occur contain plants associated with drier and generally more infertile conditions.
- Representative herbs in the generally sparse understory include Pennsylvania sedge, Canada mayflower, wood anemone, intermediate wood fern, hairy Solomon's-seal, false Solomon's-seal, large-flowered trillium, rice grass, and club mosses.
- Portions of the park on the western and southwestern sides are designated as Rib Mountain Talus Forest State Natural Area, harboring several unique environments with rare species of flora and fauna. No vegetation management activities are allowed in this area except for the removal of hazardous trees near trails, the control of invasive exotic species. The only recreational uses include primitive hiking, snow shoeing or hunting.



*Rib Mountain supports a forest ecosystem of maple, birch, oak, and aspen. July, 2008*



*The quartzite talus slopes of Rib Mountain harbor rare plant species. July, 2008*



Cracks and crevices in Rib Mountain's talus slopes offer shelter and microhabitats for plants and animals. July, 2008



With the development of new trails, the abandoned 3M quarry will become more of a destination for Rib Mountain visitors. July, 2008

- Unique microhabitats within crevices of the jumbled talus support rare plants including purple clematis (*Clematis occidentalis*), Missouri rock-cress (*Arabis missouriensis*), and the state-threatened drooping sedge (*Carex prasina*). Rib Mountain Talus Forest was designated a State Natural Area in 2005.
- The talus fields offer summer nesting and winter hibernation crevices and cavities for a variety of mammals including eastern chipmunks, woodchucks, and even bats. Red and gray foxes, bobcats and other predators hunt these areas for mice, voles, and rabbits which seek protection in the rocks.
- The 3M quarry on the western side of the park has been inactive for over 10 years. In recent years turkey vultures have roosted in the quarry bluffs. The area has naturally re-vegetated by pioneer species like white birch and aspen.
- A forest fire in 1910 impacted the type of vegetation we see today by greatly simplifying the structure and composition of the forest, creating the existing even-aged forest cover.
- The deer population is very high in the Rib Mountain area and they seriously impact vegetation in the park by limiting regeneration of tree species and suppressing some understory and herbaceous species.
- Rib Mountain remains as one of the few large blocks of closed canopy forest in the region, serving as an important area for wildlife habitat and ecosystem protection.
- Small mammals, like red and gray squirrels, cottontail rabbits, raccoons, and many rodents, are common residents of the park. More wary park wildlife includes red fox, gray fox, coyote, bobcat, and an occasional black bear.

- The Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail describes the summit of Rib Mountain as a recommended site for bird watching.
- The Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura*, (*Cathartes* means “purifier”) also known in North America as the Turkey Buzzard (or just “buzzard”), is a bird found throughout most of the Americas.
- The Turkey Vulture is a scavenger and feeds almost exclusively on carrion. It finds its meals using its sense of smell, (a rarity in birds) flying low enough to detect the gases produced by the beginnings of the process of decay in dead animals. In flight, it uses thermals to move through the air, flapping its wings infrequently. It roosts in large community groups, here on the quarry bluffs. Lacking a syrinx—the vocal organ of birds—its only vocalizations are grunts or low hisses. It nests in caves, hollow trees, or thickets, each year generally raising two chicks, which it feeds by regurgitation. In fall, they migrate a short distance south and return each March to Rib Mountain.
- Turkey vultures are easily identified soaring over Rib Mountain by the “V” shape of their outstretched wings as they tilt from side to side, unlike eagles and hawks. The flight feathers on the wings appear to be silvery-gray beneath, contrasting with the darker wing linings.
- Rib Mountain preserves a large portion of green space in a rapidly growing urban area.
- Invasive plants in Rib Mountain State Park are a major threat to native species. The Friends group solicits volunteers to help control these exotics.



*A turkey vulture soars above Rib Mountain in search of carrion. July, 2008*

Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society



*“Miss Gwen Egdahl of Wausau” stands near the summit of Rib Mountain. The massive rise of quartzite above the flat terrain has always attracted people.*

Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society



*A CCC crew clears the ski trail on Rib Mountain.*

## Sub-theme 4

Rib Mountain has a colorful history that mirrors the history of America and the Wausau community.

### Messages

- The crest of this hill forms a rib-shaped, east-west ridge, thus the name “Rib Mountain.” The name Rib Mountain is derived from a Chippewa Indian word “O-pic-wan-a” meaning rib and “Polwan” meaning back.
- Early tribes probably used it as a lookout and as a landmark for finding their way as did the later European fur traders.
- As early as 1893, quartzite was mined to manufacture sandpaper. The Wausau Sandpaper Company was incorporated in 1900 and built a factory. In 1902, Wausau Quartz Company crushed the quartzite for grinding and polishing purposes. The two companies merged in 1905 to form Wausau Abrasives, which was purchased by Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing in 1929.
- For a short time period in the 1800’s, hopeful prospectors dug for gold, but found too little in the ore to make gold mining profitable.
- Rib Mountain was not logged until after a massive fire in July of 1910 burned the entire forest canopy. All timber was salvaged by 1911. A wooden chute was built to slide the logs down the side of the mountain.
- Jacob Gensman’s estate presented 40 acres of the Rib Mountain summit in 1923 to the state. The Kiwanis Club of Wausau purchased 120 acres at \$10 per acre. The combined 160 acres was donated to the state for use as a state park and to protect the unique natural features. The park was officially opened in 1929.

- The Civilian Conservation Corps blazed the first ski runs, built many of the trails within the park, constructed a gazebo, ski chalet, restrooms, and widened the road up the mountain.
- The Rib Mountain Ski area has a historic connection to the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division which served in Italy during the closing months of WWII. Several Wausau boys who learned how to ski on Rib Mountain joined the Division.
- The ski area is the 3rd oldest in the country (after Stowe, VT—'34 and Sun Valley, ID—'36) and has been operated by private concessions since 1937.
- Rib Mountain first opened with six runs, a half-mile long t-bar powered by an 85 horsepower Ford V-8 motor with a standard truck transmission and a 20' by 60' temporary base chalet.
- The first ski event was the Central Ski Association Championship February 24-25, 1938. The slalom, downhill, cross-country, and jumping events attracted more than 465 participants and 3,000 spectators.
- Granite Peak Ski Corporation leased 406 acres of the steep north face in 2000 as a winter ski area. They have developed Rib Mountain (what they call Granite Peak) as one of the prime ski areas in the upper Midwest.
- Friends of Rib Mountain, established in 1993, have made significant contributions to the park.
- Old farmstead ruins in the southwest end of the park are evidence of early 20th century agriculture.
- Rib Mountain leases two acres to the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board for a 600 foot high public radio and television tower.
- A CCC era communication tower and building is leased by Marathon County for emergency and law enforcement communication. These are scheduled for replacement by 2012.
- Beginning with WSAU in 1954, Rib Mountain has been home to Wausau TV and FM transmitter towers, including WSAW, WAOW, and WHRM.

*Courtesy of Marathon County Historical Society*



*A few members of the 3649th CCC camp who helped build the trails, roads, campgrounds, and buildings at Rib Mountain State Park.*





## Chapter 4:

# Interpretive Site and Facility Development



*Conceptual rendering of the new Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center. Large windows and a deck showcase the spectacular scenery and diverse rock talus slope.*



*Guidelines for effective interpretive center design include respecting the landscape and culture of a region, reflecting the natural characteristics of a site, planning a color scheme that complements the landscape, and incorporating sustainable features. The Savage Visitor Center in St. Paul, Minnesota is built from the native limestone that surrounds the building.*

*\* Sense of place is an identity reinforced by our feelings that we are part of our ancestry, our cultural history, our community, and our landscape.*



*Rib Mountain is an enduring central Wisconsin icon that has attracted people to its summit for hundreds of years. July, 2007*

## Design Guidelines

The design of the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center should reflect both the natural and cultural history of the site:

- Select forms, textures, colors, and groupings that replicate and compliment the landforms and ecology of the mountain.
- Regional architectural styles should be coupled with indigenous building materials to create a green and economically sustainable structure.
- The design of the interpretive center should help visitors to feel a *sense of place*\*.
- Key elements of the building, such as stone, timber, and green metal roofs can be replicated in kiosks and trail head structures throughout the park in order to create a coordinated and recognizable identity.

The Education and Interpretive Center should seemingly grow from its surroundings and synthesize rustic park building practices with today's needs and technology. Native and local materials such as stone and wood should be used when feasible but even when other materials are utilized, they should harmonize with the surroundings, be durable, consume less energy, and invite public visitation.

The Center will be located in proximity to the highest concentration of interpretive/educational features in the park, including the observation tower, major rock formations, and observation decks. It will also serve as a "gateway" to the real experience out on the site, including a number of hiking trails. This hub will serve as a filter that buffers on-site use of the area. It will provide for visitors' physical comforts and needs, orient them, and prepare people to develop deeper connections to the region's unique sense of place.

# Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center

## Conceptual Overview Site Map



Granite Peak Ski Slopes

North Parking Lot (existing)

Van Douser  
Observation Tower  
(existing)

Education and  
Interpretive Center  
(proposed)

Outdoor  
Learning  
Station  
(proposed)

Talus Slope

Wildlife  
Viewing Area  
(proposed)

Concession Stand  
(existing)

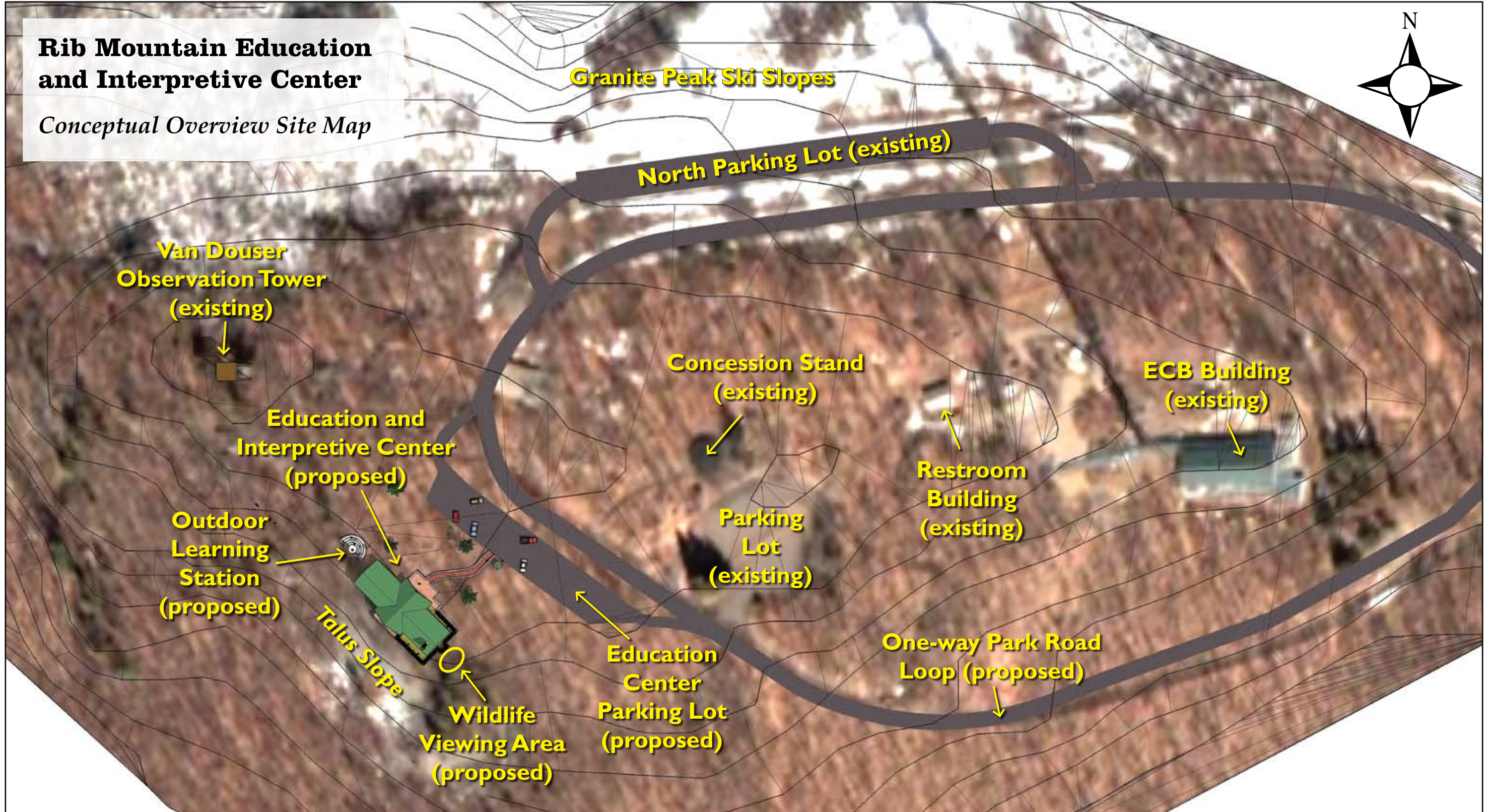
Parking  
Lot  
(existing)

Education  
Center  
Parking Lot  
(proposed)

Restroom  
Building  
(existing)

ECB Building  
(existing)

One-way Park Road  
Loop (proposed)





## Ecological Considerations for the Rib Mountain Site

- The proposed Education and Interpretive Center site is a broad and sometimes windy ridge top.
- Weather conditions, topography, and natural communities are diverse and will influence the design of the year round center.
- If the building is oriented in a basically east to west footprint, the site offers prevailing winds for cooling and ventilation, along with southern exposure for active/passive solar heating and day lighting.
- The building site is within the existing forest which creates an inviting contrast of cool shade as one approaches the building and a bright sunny view as one enters it.
- The building overlooks the Talus Slope and Talus Forest.
- The topography of the site offers the possibility of ground level access to the lower level of the building.



*The panoramic view of distant landscape from the proposed Education Center site is countered by the talus slope in the foreground. The site offers extreme exposure to wind and sun. Different seasons of the year (January 2008 above, June 2007 below) paint an ever-changing face on the landscape.*



## Architectural Guidelines for the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center

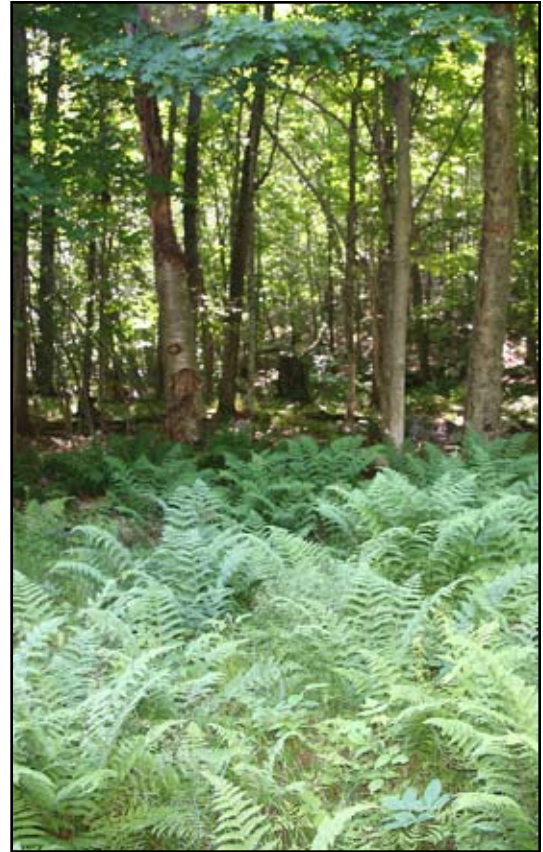
Based on the visions of the Department of Natural Resources, the Friends of Rib Mountain, and the needs of education groups and visitors, the following concepts will guide the development of the Education and Interpretive Center.

**Rationale for using quartzite as a building material:**

- It is the bedrock of Rib Mountain and therefore blends harmoniously with the site
  - Recognized for its strength and durability, quartzite has been used for many years in the construction of roadways and bridges, railroad ballasts, and erosion control.
  - Quartzite has low porosity, meaning that freezing and thawing cycles will not crack or degrade it.
  - Quartzite is impervious to stains and does not wear significantly. It is a lifetime product.
  - By square footage, it is one of the least expensive yet durable paving stones.
  - Its non-skid texture makes it an ideal material for use around swimming pools, spas, and high-traffic flooring areas.
  - Thin veneer quartzite is used for interior or exterior walls and fireplace surrounds. Quartzite boulders are sited in landscaping as accent pieces and are also used to create unique benches, seating areas, and tables.
- **Respect the local climate, topography, and ecosystems, both natural and human.**
    - The site will be placed so as to distribute the intensive use facilities over a larger portion of the Scenic Recreation Zone to minimize user conflicts.
    - Minor impacts will be made to the scenic quality and vegetation in the area of the Center.
  - **Materials should reflect the natural characteristics of the site and be themed to the culture and natural heritage of the region.**
    - Use quartzite as a base for walls to compliment the region's rugged geology, to visually tie the building to the ground, and to protect the wall from snow and moisture. If metamorphic quartzite is not readily available consider using locally quarried sandstone quartzite , a softer sedimentary stone that is visually compatible with Rib Mountain.
    - Make windows large enough to invite views of the panoramic scenery and take advantage of the sunlight for illumination and heating.
    - Unify all signage, the kiosk, viewing decks, benches, amphitheater, and other landscape elements by using key features of the buildings architecture, such as stone blocks and timbers.
    - Use elements of the natural environment in all walkways, signs, and landscape elements.
    - Celebrate quartzite and wood where appropriate and use local sources whenever possible.

- **Building and landscape color should be consciously planned with regard to the site's seasonal color palette.**
  - Use light colors and white on ceilings to illuminate rooms with ambient light
  - Utilize dark stone and masonry on floors and key walls to absorb and hold solar heat
  - Exhibits and signage should incorporate some of the accent colors found in the vegetation and rock formations of Rib Mountain
  
- **A program of comprehensive sustainable (green) design most appropriate to the site and location should be applied to the planning, construction, and operation of the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center.**

Sustainable design has many precedents in Wisconsin. A world-wide rating system is used to achieve long-term cost savings and environmental benefits: LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). The system awards points that result in bronze/certified, silver, gold or platinum ratings for sustainable development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. Some architects cite weaknesses in the LEED rating system which tends to focus more on an arbitrary point system rather than real achievement in appropriate design for efficiency. The Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center should strive for a high rating, but temper design decisions with a rational approach with respect for balancing the specific demands of the site, visitor needs, and budgets. Building a site specific, sustainable facility should be the goal and a good rating will result.



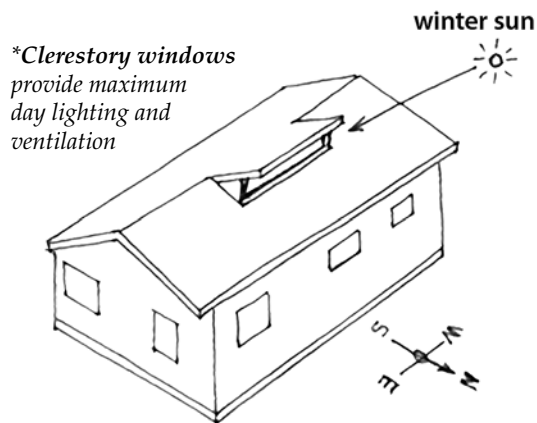
*The colors, textures, and groupings found in Rib Mountain should be replicated in the landscape and architecture of the building. July, 2008*



*Quartzite should be considered as a building material, even if it is just for accent elements. July, 2008*



*Lebanon Hills Nature Center in Minnesota incorporated a vegetated roof, passive solar, and a variety of other sustainable features in their award-winning design.*



*The George W. Mead Wildlife Area Visitor and Education Center is a good prototype of sustainable building practices in Wisconsin.*

A partial listing of potential sustainable design features:

- Heat with a natural stone surfaced masonry heater/fireplace coupled with hydronic heating coils. Use local wood fuels
- Utilize the southern exposure for passive solar heating, incorporate a large heat mass such as concrete and stone surfaced floors, quartzite boulders, and masonry walls faced with stone
- Create natural cross-ventilation throughout the building to take advantage of the prevailing winds and updrafts of this site. Allow for natural ventilation by choice of windows, etc.
- Use local wood and stone as construction materials
- Use efficient toilets and faucets; recycle gray water; consider a composting toilet system or a low flow system
- Use efficient lighting and appliances. Maximize day lighting and ventilating with clerestory windows\*. Use light sensitive meters that dim lights to supplement ambient light entering the room. Paint walls and ceilings light colors for optimal reflectivity
- Create the least site disturbance for the building and associated roads and trails
- Use solar panels for active generation of energy
- Incorporate a high performance building envelope. Use storage space and rooms without windows to buffer the cold north and east side of the building
- Geothermal systems such as a vertical well that utilizes bedrock heat exchange should be investigated for its suitability on Rib Mountain





**Rib Mountain Education  
and Interpretive Center**

*North-Facing Conceptual Rendering*

## **Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center**

*South-Facing Conceptual Rendering*



Model sustainable design projects for similar buildings in central Wisconsin include:

- **George W. Mead Wildlife Area** (Thomas Brown, Architect) incorporated five renewable systems to include wind, photovoltaic, solar hot water, geothermal, and wood biomass. The Mead facility has been designed to comply with standards of the LEED green building rating system. A brochure “Energy and Green Design at the George W. Mead Wildlife Area” describes all of these features.
- The **Aldo Leopold Legacy Center** (Kubala Washatko, Architects) has received Platinum LEED Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The LEED program awarded the Legacy Center 61 of 69 possible points, which, at the time, was the highest rated building in the world. The facility is a net-zero energy building, meeting all of its energy needs on site. It is carbon-neutral and constructed with locally harvested wood products.



*The Aldo Leopold Legacy Center near Baraboo, Wisconsin received Platinum LEED Certification, the highest level of sustainable design.*

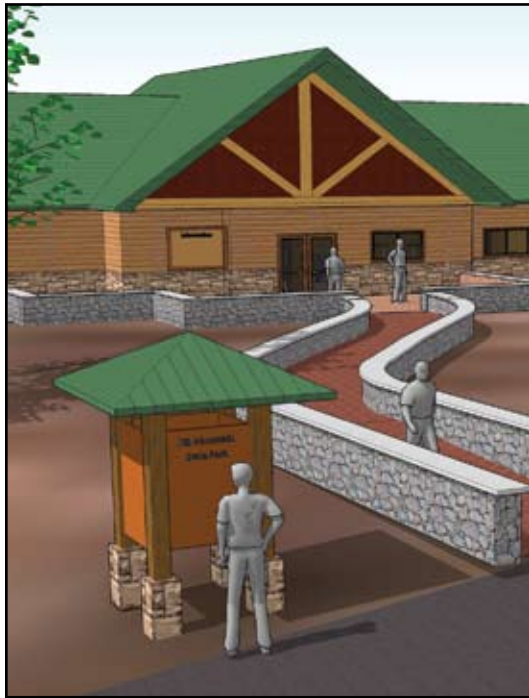
- **Design a universally accessible facility**

Universal design creates environments that are usable by the widest range of users. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 made physical access to public facilities a civil right.

- Design for access by the widest range of potential users.
- Provide a multi-sensory experience throughout the building.
- Designs should allow everyone to hear, touch, see and do.



*The building must be universally accessible to all visitors. Exhibits should be designed to use a diversity of senses and learning styles, like this tactile bullfrog with audio call at the Crowley's Ridge Nature Center in Arkansas.*



*The Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center will become the hub of park activities. A roofed kiosk provides information even when the center is closed.*



*The entry should appear open, public, and inviting. Quartzite walls and bases with timber beams connect the building to the Rib Mountain story.*

## Idealized Walk-through of the Education and Interpretive Center

A fictional family has just moved to the Wausau area and is visiting Rib Mountain for the first time. It is a sunny, crisp fall day. The parents have two daughters; one is 6 years old and the other is 13. They are eager to learn more about their new home and hope to feel the same sense of community and place that they did in their former hometown.

They have heard that you can see 360 degrees from the 60-foot observation tower, so that becomes their destination when they enter the park. As they follow the new, standardized directional signs, they are attracted to the new Education and Interpretive Center. Its rustic exterior blends into the forest environment. A winding concrete ramp with rock clad walls draws their attention to the spacious entryway framed by rock and wood. The stone facing, wooden timbers, and the green metal roof combine to make the building appear harmonious with the park environment. The parking area is divided into several lots allowing for native landscaping to buffer the visual effects of dozens of automobiles in this natural setting.

As they leave the parking area and begin their short trek up the gently sloping walkway, they encounter an information kiosk. It has architectural elements that tie it visually to the Education Center. Stone bases support timbers and a green metal roof. A map and panels have clean professional designs that promise a quality experience. Simple but dramatic graphics reassure them that they are near the observation tower, that bathrooms are just up the ramp, and that this building is indeed open to everyone.

The building has a spacious entryway with glass doors that allow a peek into the sunny lobby, exhibit room, and the panoramic view beyond. The family scrapes mud off the soles of their shoes as they walk over the grates embedded in the entryway floor.

The girls race through the doors and across the open lobby area to the massive boulder perched in the center of the room. A friendly volunteer greets them from the nearby reception desk. Taxidermy vultures stand atop the quartzite boulder, one with long wings outstretched, and seemingly, look down at them. A series of colorful exhibits gracefully surround the back side of the boulder and promise to tell the story of Rib Mountain with titles like *Myths, Lies, and Legends of the Mountain*. Rocks and tools lure visitors to test the hardness of minerals in the *Paper, Scissors, Rock* exhibit.

Dad begins to investigate the exhibits while the children rush on to the view out the windows. Their mother encourages them to look through spotting scopes conveniently placed near the windows.

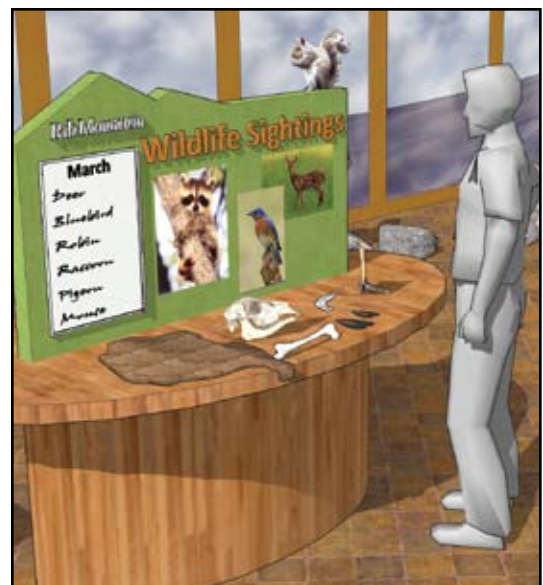
As the family acclimates to the big, open room, they notice the many colorful and enticing objects and pictures in the exhibits that surround them. Mom is focused on studying the three-dimensional map of the mountain and surrounding region. As a hiking enthusiast and a bird watcher, she is thrilled to see the long hiking trail down to the old quarry which is marked with a vulture colony label.

Meanwhile, the kids touch antlers, pelts, and skulls on a changeable *Wildlife Sightings* exhibit, exploring actual wildlife signs that they can look for out on the trails.

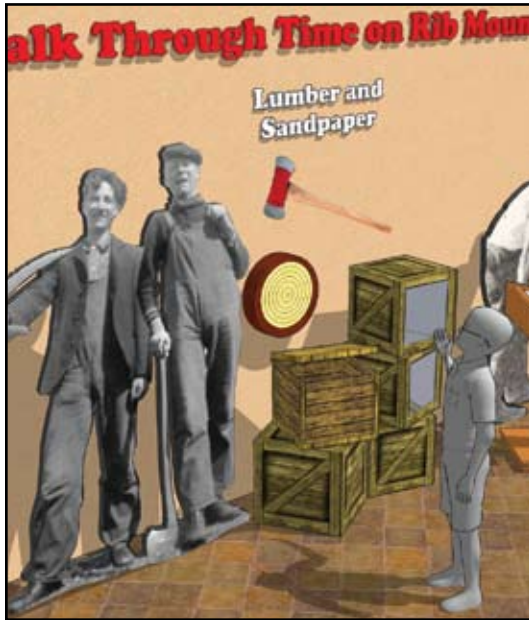
The whole family ventures out to the deck where they view distant mounds on the horizon and turn the *Story Scope* to learn the secrets of the hills and views. Dad reads about the unique properties of a talus slope, and shows his girls illustrations of wildlife that call the rocky slope home.



This dramatic focal point exhibit introduces visitors to the most fundamental stories of the ancient mountain.



Exhibits like "Wildlife Sightings" can be changed to include seasonal and up-to-date information.



*A variety of multi-sensory components allow for exploration while appealing to multiple learning styles. The “Walk Through Time” exhibit encourages visitors to discover historic artifacts.*



*The viewing deck unites the stories told in the building with the outdoors. It is an overflow area for crowded days and is accessible even when the building is closed.*

After they reenter the building, the kids discover that they can open crates, trunks, and suitcases as part of the *Walk Through Time* exhibit. Inside are touchable objects and artifacts that relate to the history of Rib Mountain: lumberjack tools, sandpaper, a CCC employee’s belongings, and old ski boots. Dad pages through an oversized CCC scrapbook, while Mom warms up by the nearby energy efficient fireplace.

Just around the corner of the fireplace, one of the daughters spots a flurry of activity outside the viewing window. At the *Wildlife Viewing Area*, a flock of songbirds are fluttering and chirping as they feed on seeds and splash in bird baths. The kids get a close-up view through binoculars, while Mom identifies the birds with a field guide. Dad searches for the birds on a touchscreen computer and plays their calls.

Before they leave, the family purchases hot chocolate and some Rib Mountain sweatshirts, and they pick up a Friends of Rib Mountain schedule of events. The mother asks the person at the desk about membership in the Friends group.

With knowledge of the many activities and sites to visit at Rib Mountain, they leave the building and continue their exploration of the park.

## Room and Space Considerations

### Architectural Program

The following recommendations are conceptual and are intended to guide the final architectural program for the building. Rationale and background for space and uses are provided wherever possible so that architects and volunteers can revisit them and refine them as the planning process continues into the future. These recommendations will require adjustments based on input from The Friends of Rib Mountain, Department of Natural Resources staff, and engineers and architects.

The building should be designed to focus a visitor's attention to the site itself. It is a gateway to Rib Mountain and not a destination. Windows, doors, and decks are invitations to get out on the trails, tower, and overlooks. The building is intended to greet and prepare visitors to experience this special place.

This facility must accommodate large numbers of "walk through" visitors. Rib Mountain often receives crowds of people during peak periods of fall color or spring warm-ups. School field trips also come in busy, concentrated bursts. A building will be most successful if it can serve these surges of visitors and help direct them to find meaningful experiences during their visit. The lobby and exhibit areas should be spacious enough to invite entry and allow for a free flow of traffic movement between exhibits, out to viewing decks, and into the restrooms. This area will also contain a sales area. The facility should be designed so that one individual can supervise the entire operation from the reception desk.

A multi-purpose room separated from the public lobby and exhibit area should provide a versatile space for special programs, classes, meetings, and



*The Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center must accommodate surges of people at peak visitation periods. Raptor Program. June, 2007*



*The building should be designed so that a single staff person can monitor all of the public use areas from the reception desk, like this centrally located desk at the Ottawa National Forest Visitor Center in Michigan.*



*The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland provides a spacious lobby with accessible counter. Universal design makes accessing the building convenient for everyone.*

workshops. It must have restrooms and kitchen access, but be able to be closed off from the other areas of the building when staff is not supervising use.

Green, sustainable design is of paramount importance in this building. Solar appears to present the most potential at this site so the conceptual layout of the building reflects this premise. Spaces are arranged to maximize ambient light, solar heat absorption, and buffer heat loss to the cold north side of the structure.

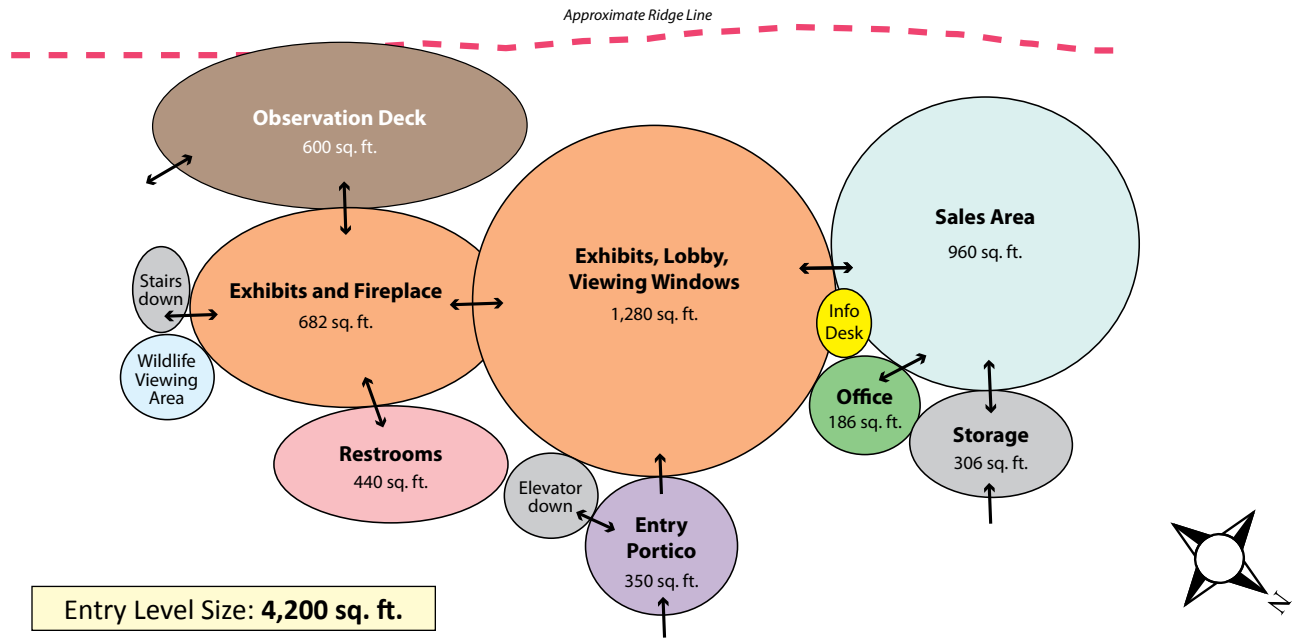
The building must, by law, provide universal accessibility. It should not only be physically accessible but should accommodate diverse ages and learning styles.

### **Bubble Diagrams**

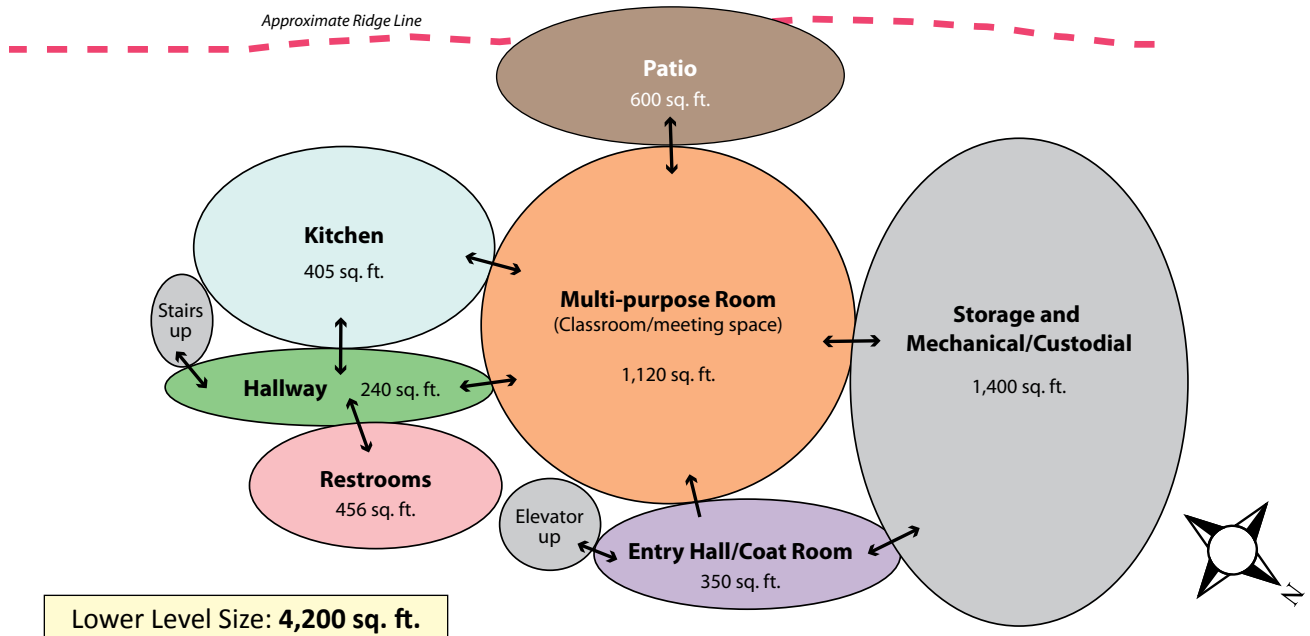
Bubble diagrams visually show the size and space relationships between rooms and use areas within a building. They allow planners to consider the pros and cons of various alternatives of traffic flow and dedicated spaces before committing to more architectural details. These diagrams can serve as the foundation for actual scaled floor plans.



### Entry Level Bubble Diagram of the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center



### Lower Level Bubble Diagram of the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center



## Outdoor Learning Station/ Small Amphitheater

### Purpose:

A small learning amphitheater adjacent to the building provides an economical outdoor classroom, staging area, and overflow space for the facility. On good weather days it invites school classes to view the panoramic sweep of the landscape or to study the talus forest just below them. It can also be a very functional space for programs because audiences can all see “center stage” where birds of prey, rocks, or a naturalist is located.

### Description:

A stained concrete, semicircular amphitheater with embedded quartzite boulders that protrude randomly through the concrete seats blends with the talus slope. A ramp, built discreetly into the slope, provides wheel chair access to the lowest tier of seats and the stage area. It is a small learning station not meant for large assemblies like the north-facing amphitheater near the park office.



## Walkway to the Building

### Purpose:

To provide a hard surface, universally accessible ramp to the building that blends with the forest environment. The rock walls are intended to add an organic touch to the concrete and should serve to funnel people in from the parking area instead of allowing them to create short cuts to the door.

### Description:

A stone and timber kiosk with a green metal roof greets people at the beginning of

the walkway. It reassures visitors that this is a public building and they are welcome to enter. The roof creates a sheltered structure that invites entry. A map helps to orient first time visitors and photos quickly identify “must see” features in the park. The meandering walkway with its low stone walls provides a visual link between the parking area and the building. The topography of the site requires that the walkway be slightly elevated to facilitate no more than a 5% grade from the parking lot to the door. The stone facing thematically unifies the building with the rocky environment on Rib Mountain.



## Entry Level

This level of the building functions as the visitor reception area that greets and orients everyone who enters. It is visually inviting, has an open arrangement that allows free flow

of traffic, and serves as a staging area to get groups to meeting rooms and out into the park and trails.



## Entry Portico

### Purpose:

To serve as a transition from the drive in to the park and to prepare people for the educational/interpretive experience. This room will provide visitors with a buffer from the weather and elements prior to entering the lobby.



### Description:

The entry room should be visible to allow a person to see where they are going and allow enough personal space to pass others coming out. Ideally, it would include double doors with glass. This area also needs a floor grid for mud and snow. The

floor surfacing material should be water resistant and nonskid like quartzite stone. The elevator can allow access to the multi-purpose room while the exhibits/sales area remain locked.





### Grand Room: Lobby/Exhibit Hall, Information Desk, and Viewing Windows

#### Purpose:

To orient visitors to the Education and Interpretive Center and to the features that the state park has to offer during their visit. This spacious area creates a dramatic entry into the building. The high walls and open ceiling permit the creation of a large bank of windows that draw viewers through the room to panoramic views of the plain south of Rib Mountain. The large size of this room allows for unimpeded movement of groups of people through the



hub of the building to other destinations such as restrooms, fireplace, deck, and the sales area. The expansive windows bathe the room in ambient light that allows easy viewing of exhibits and reading of maps and publications at the reception desk.

**Objectives:**

Visitors will learn:

- That this facility is sponsored by The Friends of Rib Mountain and will be introduced to the important work of The Friends Group and the WI Department of Natural Resources.

Visitors will appreciate:

- That members of the community and concerned citizens are working to protect and preserve this natural area.

Visitors will:

- Seek answers to their questions, plan their visit, use the comfort facilities, and engage in the many opportunities at the center.



**Description:**

The **lobby/exhibit area** should be bright and inviting with a high ceiling and open floor plan that permits free flow of traffic and space for gathering groups. The large windows permit a panoramic view of the distant landscape and a view down to the talus slope. The atmosphere of this room sets the tone for the entire visit. A massive boulder with a turkey vulture mount on top is prominent in the room. It is intended to dramatically introduce the all inclusive central geology theme.

The **information desk** should be in a central location, easily identifiable by visitors, but not so close to the entrance that visitors feel uncomfortable. On slow visitation days, the desk should allow one person to conduct sales, provide information, and monitor the exhibits and hallway to restrooms.



## Sales Area

### Purposes:

- To produce revenue that will assist in operation and maintenance of the park.
- To assist visitors in learning more about natural and cultural subjects featured in the exhibits.
- To reflect and reinforce the themes of the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center.
- To motivate visitors to become returning customers.



- The sales area should be accessible through the lobby/exhibit hall where visitors spend much of their time.
- Storage for merchandise should be provided by a large, adjacent storage room (at least 300 sq. ft.)
- The sales desk should be directly connected to the information desk, allowing a single staff member or volunteer to operate the facility.

### Description:

Many nature centers underestimate the space needed for a functional sales area. At least 900 square feet of public shopping/display area should be adequate for this facility.

The store must be an integral program that relates to the educational mission. It should feature items that compliment and reinforce the natural history and conservation values of the Friends of Rib Mountain. Visitors can purchase take-home items that relate to the themes and memories they associate with Rib Mountain. The store should be one of the first and last areas visitors encounter as they access the building.





## Fireplace Room/Exhibit Hall

### Purpose:

To provide a warm passive social area that connects the lobby area with the deck, and to interpret the rich heritage of Rib Mountain over time.

### Objectives:

Visitors will learn:

- About the stories of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the 10th Mountain Division, and their impact on the development of Rib Mountain.

Visitors will appreciate:

- An opportunity to relax, get warm and absorb the stories of this place.



Visitors will:

- Be engaged emotionally and intellectually in the story of Rib Mountain.

### Description:

The fireplace room is flexible space that can accommodate fluctuating numbers of people from the exhibit area and deck. Wooden benches encourage visitors to sit by the fire during cold weather. The wall of south-facing windows connects visitors to the outside with inviting views of the observation deck and active bird feeders. An exhibit on the opposite wall interprets the changing human uses of the area through time. A topographic map of Rib Mountain in the center of the room helps to place visitors in a spatial context and discover other activities that they can participate in within the park.



## Office Space

### Purposes:

An office area will provide private space for staff to sort money, handle book keeping, hold private meetings and communicate via telephone when there are crowds and noise in the visitor center. Its central location allows one person to manage the building activities.



### Description:

This office is situated adjacent to the reception/sales counter to facilitate a one person operation of the building when needed. It should be large enough to accommodate at least two people at desks.

Computers and printers will inevitably become part of this office, so electrical outlets and network wiring should be incorporated into the design.



## Entry Level Restrooms

### Purpose:

To conveniently serve visitors who are using the exhibit and sales area of the facility. These restrooms should be universally accessible and of a size to accommodate buses, school classes, and families with small children. They must serve concentrated periods of heavy use by organized groups.

### Description:

Restrooms should be located proximal to the entry and visible from the reception desk. They must be of an adequate size to accommodate group events and large classes. An adjacent storage room holds custodial supplies.



- The wall that screens the restroom doors should take advantage of people waiting there. Interpretation can include graphics and information about Rib Mountain, programs, energy systems in the building, etc.
- Restrooms must be accessible to all visitors (wheelchairs, walkers, limited vision, etc.) and should have baby changing tables and other family friendly features.



## Deck

### Purpose:

To serve as a connection with the real exhibits outdoors. It provides a place for interpretation when the building is closed and is an area that accepts peak visitation overflow. It has a long season of use because of the southern exposure and the “enclosed” area next to the fireplace walls.

### Description:

The deck provides overflow space from the exhibit room, functions as a sensory culmination to the facility, and allows visitors to obtain information and experience the panoramic view even when the building is closed. A bird feeding station, interpretive panels, and viewing scopes will be available near the deck railings.



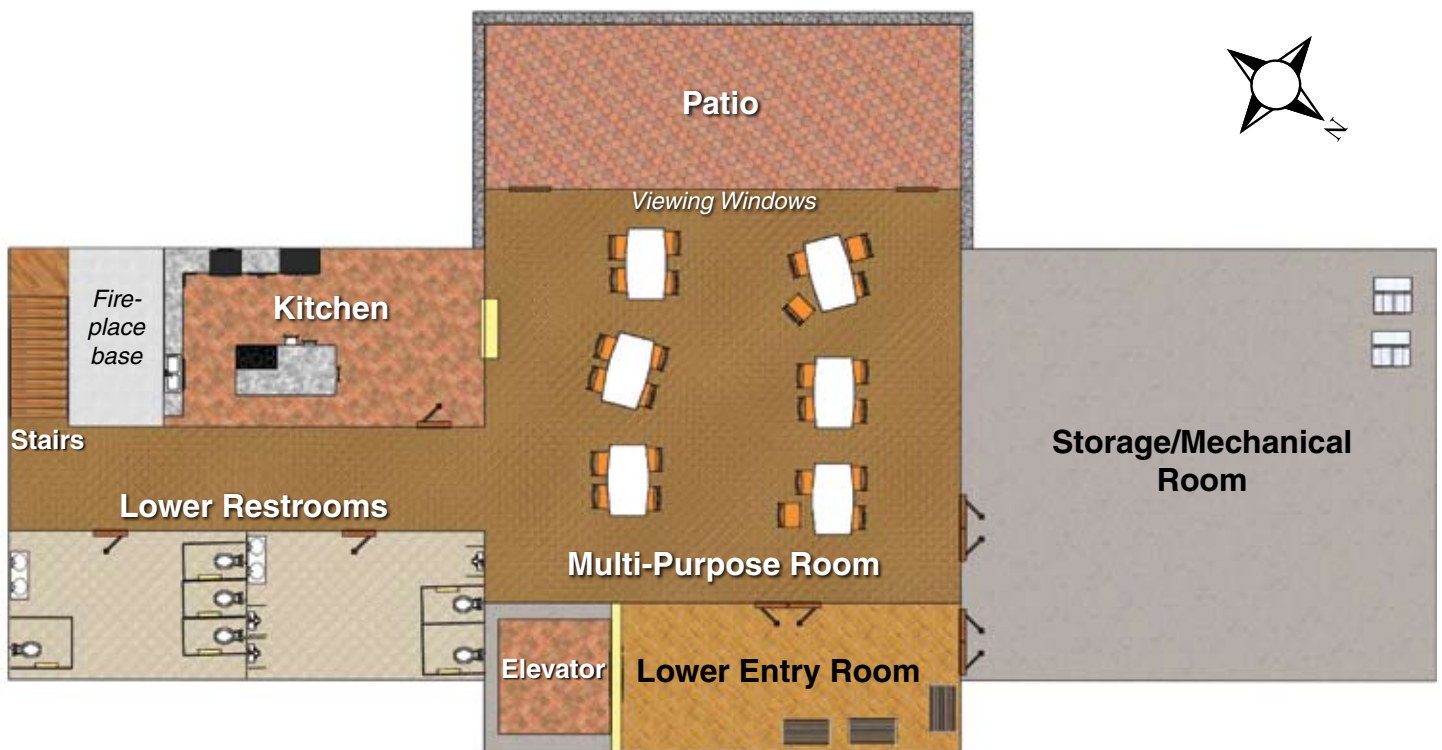
The deck will be proportional to the building size, with adequate space to accommodate groups and programs. The deck surface will be constructed of a high quality simulated wood, fabricated from recycled plastic and wood fiber. It will be one level to maximize accessibility. The railings could be constructed of thin black iron to allow people to see through it. Both the deck surface and the railing material require minimal maintenance.



## Lower Level

This level houses the multi-purpose room, kitchen, storage, and future area for expansion. It has dedicated restrooms to serve the needs of the groups that are using the room. While it has a magnificent view of the panorama south of Rib Mountain and access to a large patio, it is isolated from other use areas and from the general visitor traffic entering the building

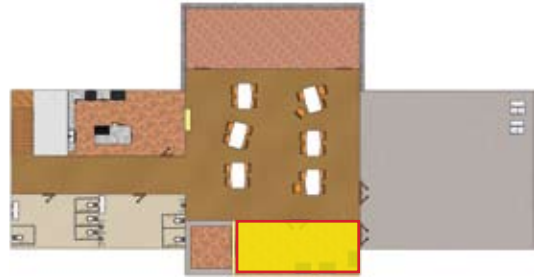
and using the exhibit room and sales area. The large storage area can eventually be converted to other uses such as a program planning space, an exhibit and project preparation room, a volunteer break room, or other spaces as needed. The entry room facilitates access to all lower level rooms without needing to walk through the middle of the multi-purpose room.



## Lower Level Entry Room

### Purpose:

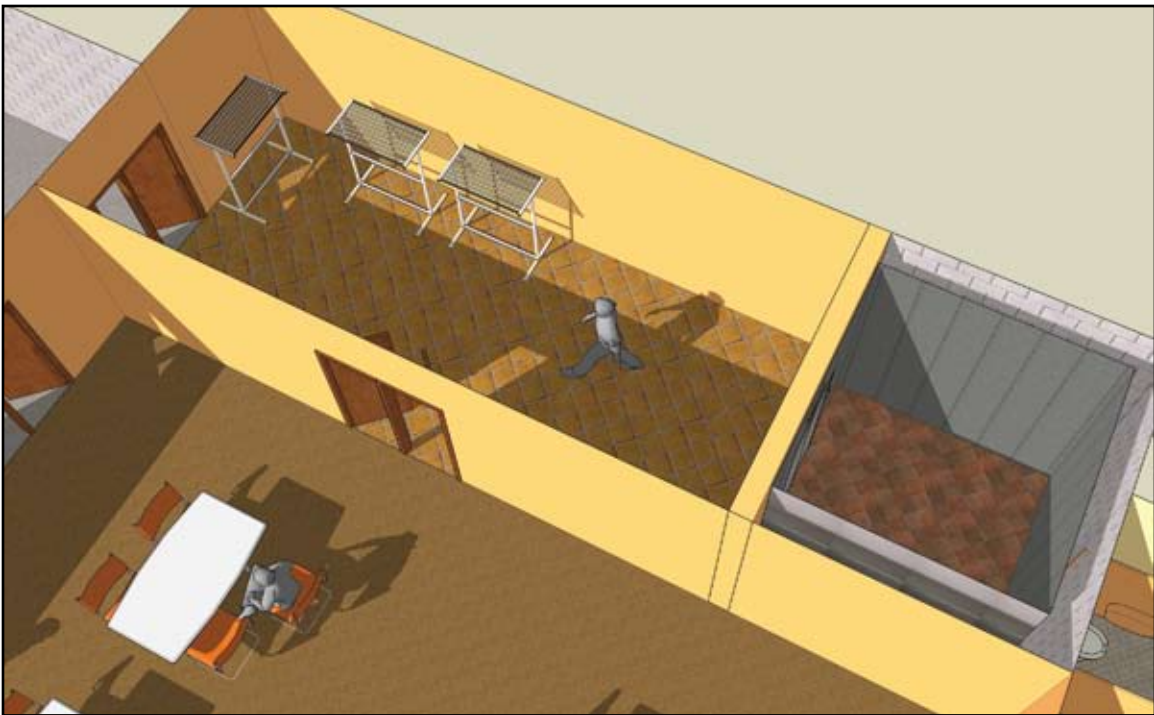
This area serves as a buffer and a hub to other use areas on the lower level. It allows access to the large storage room without disturbing activities in the multi-purpose room. It also serves as a coat room and a transition area between the elevator and the multi-purpose room.



### Description:

The entry room's relatively spacious size permits large items to be moved into and out of the elevator. Double doors enhance access to the large storage/mechanical

room. The entry contains a coat rack and shelving for individuals to temporarily store items when using the multi-purpose room.



## Multi-Purpose Room

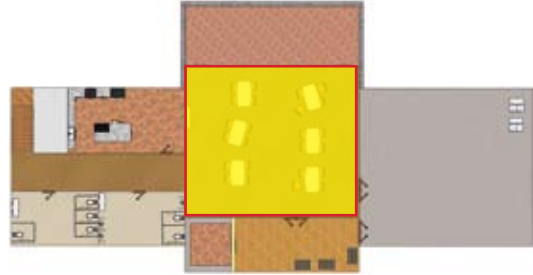
### Purpose:

To accommodate large groups and diverse uses.

### Description:

A spacious room on the lower floor (at least 1,100 sq. ft.) should be designed for maximum versatility, seating large groups of people for programs or meetings. This allows for multiple table arrangements and can be divided to create two classrooms for school sessions or for multiple workshop sessions. It should include the following features:

- A 10-foot ceiling to permit visual presentations on a large screen.
- Windows and doors that open to the lower patio provides access for breakout



sessions and social gatherings. Light blocking, thermal shades are needed for audio-visual presentations and to reduce nighttime heat loss.

- Sound absorbing floor and ceiling surfaces.
- A large storage area adjacent to the meeting room for tables, chairs, and other equipment.
- A digital projection and audio system mounted on the ceiling for PowerPoint presentations, DVDs, and video tapes.



## Kitchen

### Purpose:

This facility will serve as a preparation/staging area for catered meals, potlucks, and food warming and storage. It is not intended to be a commercial kitchen.



### Description:

This kitchen should be designed to function with an optimal number of people in the space since it may see use for volunteer potlucks, catered meals, or school lunches. The need for commercial grade cooking and dishwashing equipment is not anticipated, but adequate space

should be allotted for upgrades. An alternative entrance is provided for food and catering deliveries that will not disrupt meetings in the multi-purpose room. A counter opening to the meeting room can be closed off during food preparation.

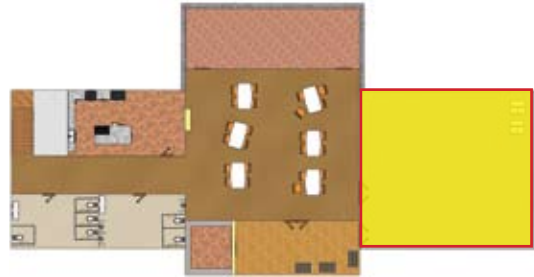




## Lower Level Storage/Mechanical

### Purpose:

This large area will house the heating/cooling mechanicals for the facility, will provide storage for the tables and chairs in the multi-purpose room, and has the potential to provide space for future expansion.



### Description:

Storage areas are often cited by managers of interpretive centers as the area most undersized and needed in their buildings. This expansive area can serve as a storage room for the tables, chairs, and other multi-purpose room equipment. Other space can be designated as storage for rotating exhibits, program materials, etc. Because

it is adjacent to both the entry room, elevator, and multi-purpose room, it can be thoughtfully walled off and converted to other uses as the programming in the facility develops. Perhaps a staff room can be developed for an expanded cadre of volunteer naturalists.



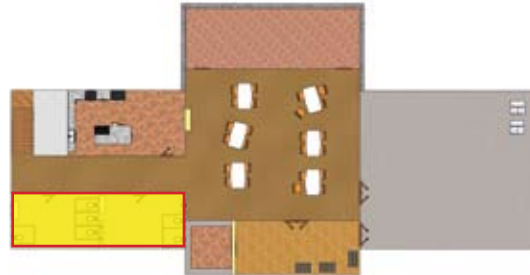
## Lower Level Restrooms

### Purpose:

These restrooms are for use by people in the multi-purpose room.

### Description:

The lower level restrooms will have to accommodate large numbers of people who may all have a scheduled break at the same time; they are supplemented by the more public bathrooms on the floor above, which are accessible by both stairs and an elevator. The number of bathroom fixtures in this room can be fewer than the restroom on the entry floor since both are available



to groups using the multi-purpose room. These restrooms can be accessed from the kitchen or from the stairway without entering the meeting room. All restrooms must contain universally accessible features.



## Lower Level Patio

### Purpose:

The patio is an extension of the multi-purpose room. It allows ambient lighting of the room, visually increases the perceived size of the space, and unites the interior with the outdoors.



### Description:

The lower patio permits meeting and workshop participants to experience the outdoors and enjoy the panoramic views

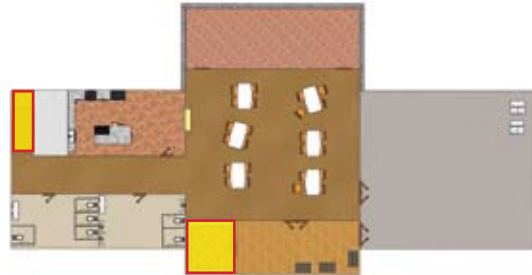
during breaks. The cozy area also serves as a gathering place for smaller breakout sessions or as a staging area for classes.



## Elevator and Stairs

### Purpose:

To provide multiple access routes to the lower and upper levels, while avoiding disturbing meetings in the multi-purpose room. Stairs are needed for emergency exiting of the area.

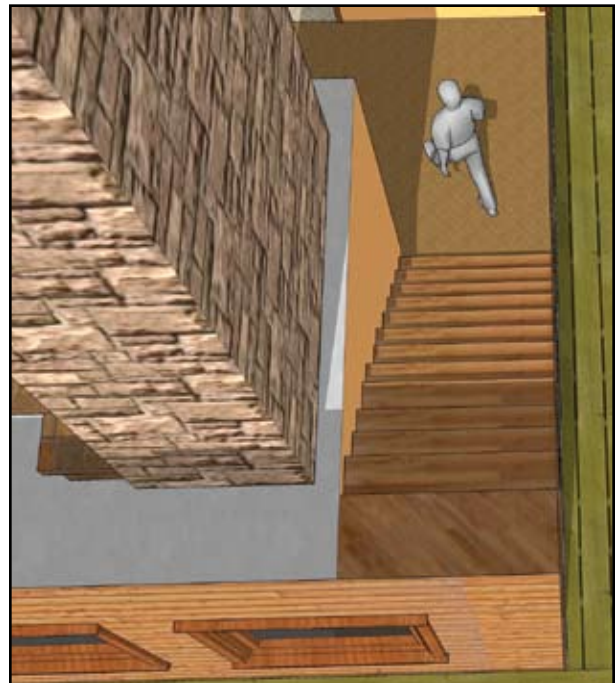


### Description:

Access to the multi-purpose room must, by law, be easily and universally available to all visitors. An elevator will provide the primary means to enter the lower level, but alternative entries must also be provided. The elevator serves the dual role of being a barrier as well as an entry. It can be locked when the staff wishes to close off the lower level. It also facilitates the easier movement of goods and equipment to the lower level.

Since it opens to an entry room, it can allow people to access various rooms without disturbing meetings.

A stairway on the southeast end of the building permits foot access to the upper and lower levels. Doors from the meeting room to the patio serve as emergency exits. A door on the east end of the building facilitates food delivery to the kitchen.



## Chapter 5:

# Interpretive Media Development



*Conceptual rendering of interior and exterior interpretive media for the Rib Mountain Education and Interpretive Center. A series of permanent and portable exhibits provide flexibility inside the building space, while connecting visitors to the meanings and stories of the site.*



*The goal of interpretation is to connect the stories of Rib Mountain with visitors on a personal level. July, 2008*

## Telling the Stories of Rib Mountain

The goal of interpretation is to connect visitors, community members and school groups to the themes and messages of Rib Mountain State Park. Someone who relates to a site on a personal level will have a positive experience and is more likely to care for and support the area in the future. This chapter suggests methods for creating those connections based on the mission of the DNR, the Friends Group, the target audiences, and the tangible resources and their intangible meanings.

## Purpose of the Interpretive Center and Media

The Education and Interpretive Center will serve as the focal point and the hub for many valuable visitor experiences. It will be the gateway where families and school groups come to get organized, oriented, and prepared to enjoy the many resources that the park has to offer. The real story of Rib Mountain is outside the walls of the education facility, but the building and the media associated with it will optimize the quality of people's visits by giving them holistic perspectives of the mountain and its relevance to their own lives.

A thematic approach to the development of media assures that the most important concepts and ideas are addressed. Stories told at this location will center around the geologic origins of the mountain and its impact on the resulting ecology of plants, animals, and people. The media is designed to connect visitors to the events that have taken place on Rib Mountain and to help them develop their own insights and feelings about this unique site.



*The most effective media is developed within a framework of themes and messages. Exhibits for the Great River Road Visitor Center in Prescott, Wisconsin, for example, showcased the local Mississippi River story.*

The Education and Interpretive Center will serve visitors at three levels:

1. It will **provide for peoples' physical comforts and needs**. The facility will provide water, restrooms, and a diversity of meeting and gathering spaces for a wide variety of group sizes.
2. It will **orient and inform visitors** of the location of park facilities and activities, while making them aware of rules and safety concerns, and providing a human presence where they can ask questions and report concerns.
3. At its optimal use, the center will **inspire respect and appreciation** for the uniqueness of Rib Mountain, its intricate geology, ecology, and its impact on human history. It can help visitors to develop a sense of place and pride in being connected to this land and human community.



*Interpretive centers provide for peoples' physical comforts and needs, while orienting and informing them about the site. Staffed information desks, like this one at Lebanon Hills Visitor Center in Minnesota, are an important part of an interpretive center's operation.*



## Interpretive Center Exhibit Concepts

### Quartzite and Turkey Vultures Exhibit: *The Only Constant is Change*

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this exhibit is to introduce the geological origin of Rib Mountain and how it was formed in a manner that is engaging and interactive for the visitor. As commonly seen on the quartzite bluffs of Rib Mountain, the Turkey Vulture is also featured in this exhibit.

#### Objectives:

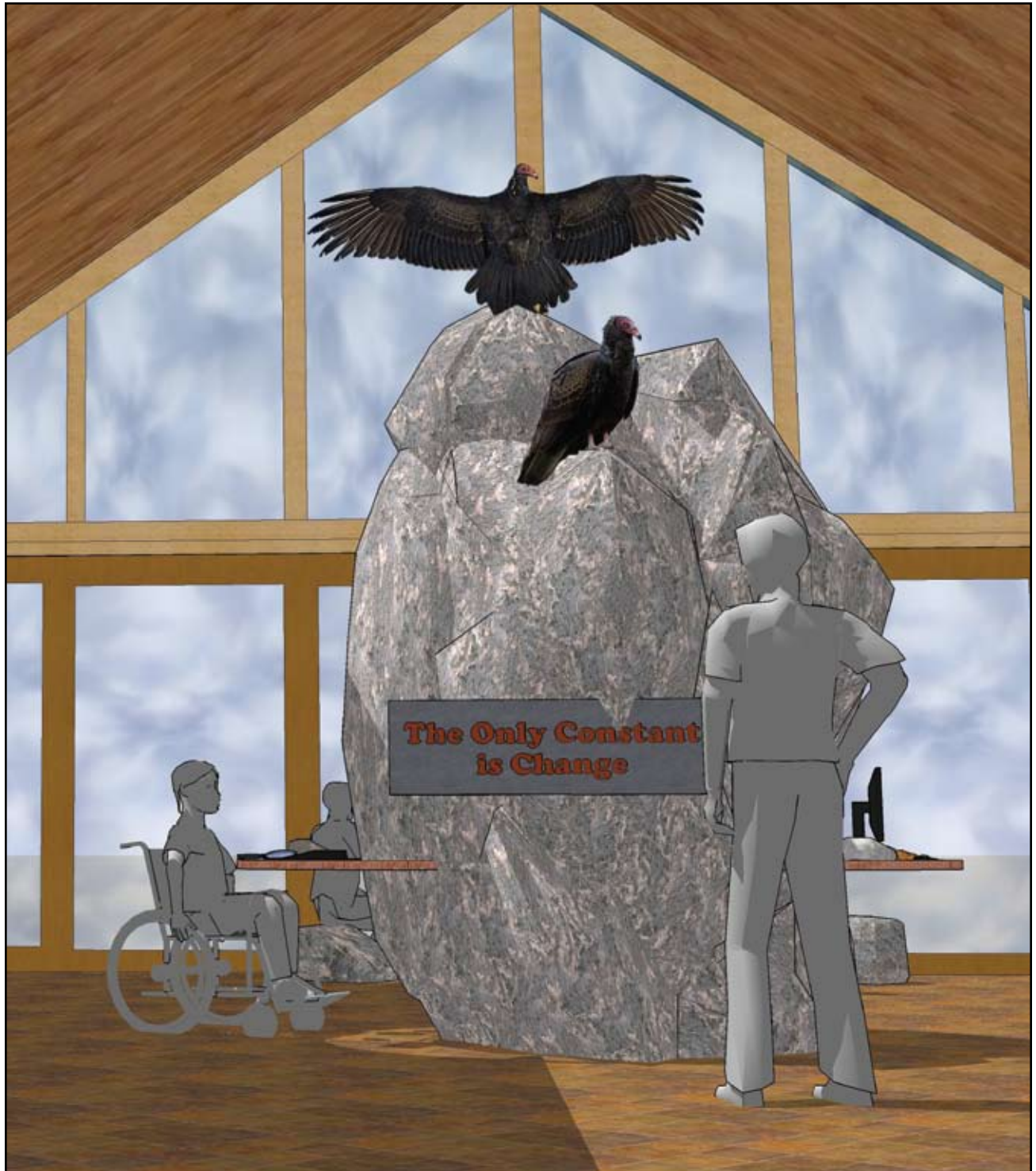
Visitors will learn about:

- The processes that shaped Rib Mountain
- The hardness and resiliency of quartzite which explains the very existence of Rib Mountain
- How other types of rocks compare to quartzite
- The truths and myths about the geology of Rib Mountain
- The commercial products made from quartzite
- Turkey Vulture characteristics

Visitors will feel:

- Amazed and in awe of the geologic process that helped to create Rib Mountain
- Appreciation for the relevance of Rib Mountain geology in their lives
- A sense of expectation about seeing Turkey Vultures during their visit





Visitors will:

- Be able to explain to others the geologic history of Rib Mountain and how it was formed
- Share their newly attained information about Turkey Vultures with others

### Description:

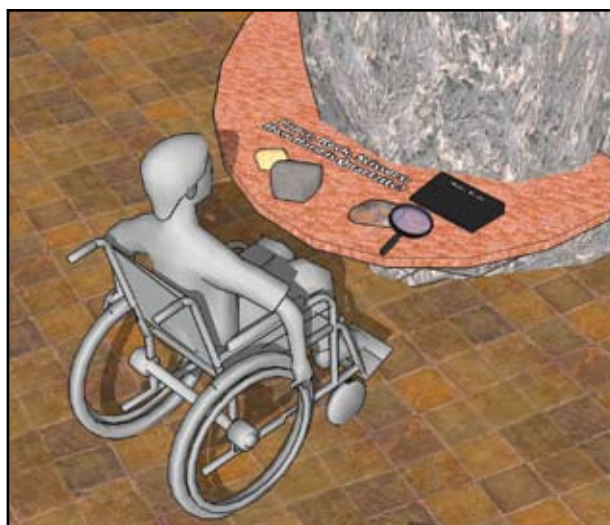
This key exhibit is a focal point that will command the attention of anyone entering the interpretive center.

A large quartzite boulder elevated in the middle of the room is taller than a person. A quote near it states, "The only constant is change." Two mounted Turkey Vultures are perched on the boulder illuminated from above by natural light from a clerestory window. This exhibit introduces people to the singular importance of quartzite to the entire story of Rib Mountain.

A series of exhibits around this boulder interpret the rock and its characteristics. Its hardness and resiliency are the very reason that Rib Mountain looms over the surrounding landscape. Quartzite is very hard but brittle. Freezing and thawing fractures the stone and results in the characteristic talus slopes of this mountain. Quartzite's hardness and tendency to split along random planes also causes it to work well as an abrasive for sandpaper. Its density causes it to absorb less than 1% water so it is often used as ballast and riprap. These exhibits are designed to make quartzite relevant to the daily lives of visitors.

### *Paper, Rock, Scissors-How Hard is Quartzite?*

At this discovery table visitors are invited to test the hardness of various types of rocks by scratching them against each other or with steel, glass, or even diamonds. It is a fun, hands on comparison of minerals based on the universally used Mohs scale of hardness.



*Visitors experiment to test the hardness of quartzite in the "Paper, Rock, Scissors" Exhibit.*

### *Mountain Myths, Lies, and Legends*

This exhibit challenges viewers to answer true or false questions and then lift a door for the answer and a brief explanation. It addresses the many misconceptions about Rib Mountain. Examples include such topics as: Is Rib Mtn. the remnant of an ancient volcano? Is this peak made of granite? Is there gold in the mountain? Is Rib Mountain the highest bedrock hill in Wisconsin? Is this quartzite the oldest rock on earth? These questions and answers are illustrated with cartoons in the Ripley's "Believe It or Not" style.

### *Sandpaper, Swimming Pools, and Spear Points*

This tactile exhibit allows people to handle commercial products made from quartzite. There are products like 3M sand paper, a piece of a swimming pool with quartzite coating, archaic hunting points, railroad ballast, and historic photos of buildings made of quartzite and the Rib Mountain 3-M quarry when it was active.

### *How to Make a Mountain*

An interactive computer program allows visitors to “travel through time” as they experience the birth of Rib Mountain. Users control an animation that visually condenses the long and complex geologic past into an easily understood story. Samples of the rocks are displayed so that people can see and touch some of the “rock stars” featured in the animation, such as syenite, granite, sandstone, and quartzite. Durable computer exhibits and components are designed for public use, and are commonly used in nature centers with little maintenance required.



*In the “How To Make a Mountain” Exhibit, visitors control the creation of Rib Mountain through geologic time.*



*The “Nature’s Garbage Collector and Recycler” Exhibit showcases the unique adaptations of Turkey Vultures.*

### *Nature’s Garbage Collector and Recycler*

The Turkey Vulture is a scavenger and feeds almost entirely on carrion. Their nickname is buzzard, and the scientific name is *Cathartes aura*. *Cathartes* is a greek term for purifier. Biologists once thought that the turkey vulture was a bird of prey and a raptor like hawks, owls, and eagles. But, in 1994, scientists used DNA tests and found that they belonged in the stork family. This is where they are classified today.

This portion of the exhibit can include a vulture beak to demonstrate it as a ripping tool (can tear the toughest cow hide); Highlight the vulture’s feet which are more like chicken’s and not like an eagle; show the droppings which are disease free even though they eat rotten diseased carcasses. Include a “pellet” to demonstrate how the vulture regurgitates.

Turkey vultures may be seen soaring over Rib Mountain or roosting on the bluffs of the old 3M quarry.



## Cultural History Exhibit – “A Walk Through Time on Rib Mountain”

### Purpose:

Located along the wall of the hallway, this exhibit reveals the evolving human uses of Rib Mountain over time, highlighting the major events that have shaped the development of Rib Mountain State Park as we know it today.

### Objectives:

Visitors will learn about:

- When key events occurred that helped shape Rib Mountain into what it is today.
- Groups and individuals who were instrumental in developing the area as a park.

Visitors will feel:

- A connection with the people who saw the potential of recreation and nature preservation as an important endeavor to pursue at Rib Mountain.
- Motivated to support the DNR and Friends Group in protecting this unique resource.

Visitors will:

- See and touch artifacts and replicas that relate to Rib Mountain’s history
- Become members of the Friends Group and get involved.

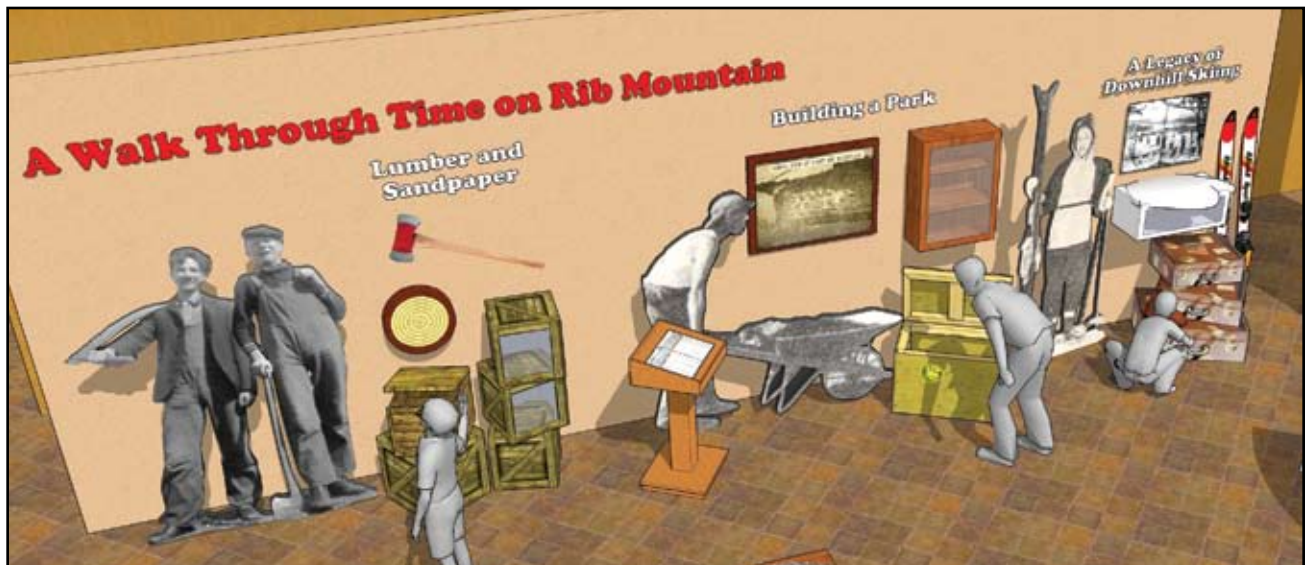


*Rather than display artifacts in a static display case, visitors to the Lewis and Clark Center in Missouri are encouraged to lift crate lids and open trunks. This results in a meaningful discovery experience for the visitor.*

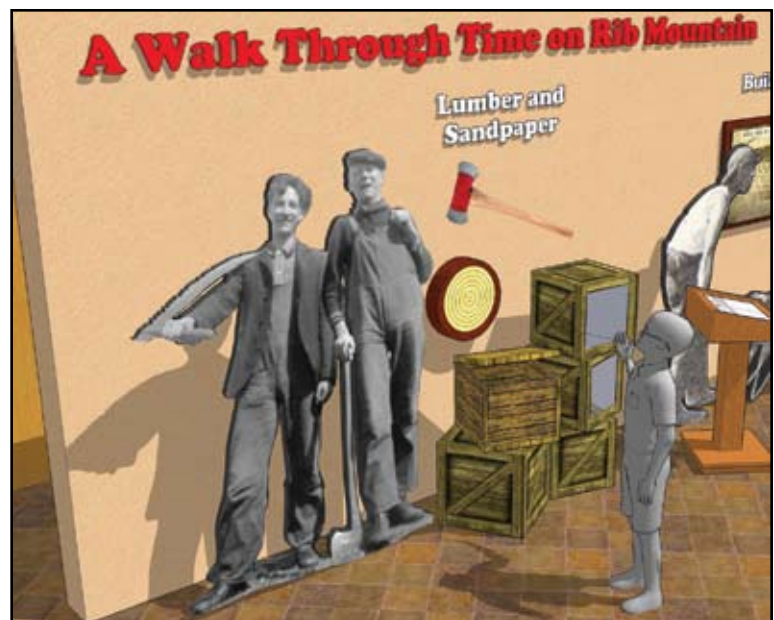
**Description:**

This exhibit illustrates the human uses of Rib Mountain over the years by incorporating full-size dimensional cut-outs of people, real and replica artifacts, and historic photographs.

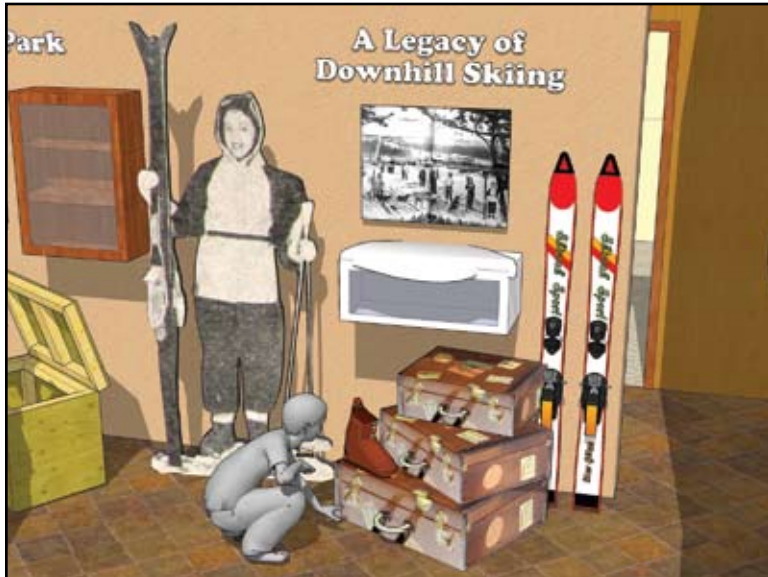
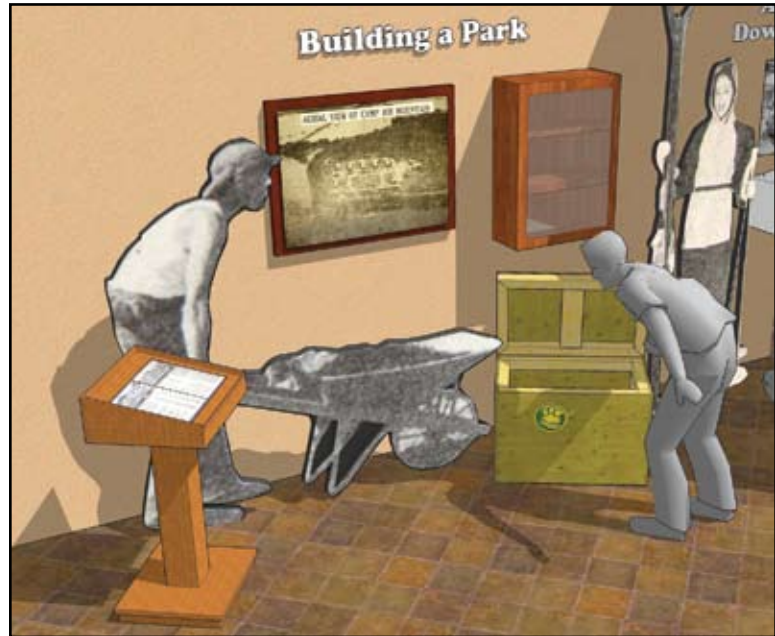
The exhibit should be rich with discovery components and tactiles. If artifacts are too sensitive to be touched, they should be housed in cases thematic with each time period.



The *Lumber and Sandpaper Exhibit* would feature full-size cutouts of lumberjacks from the Wausau Area. Visitors open crates to reveal lumbering and mining artifacts. Sensitive artifacts are displayed in crates with protective Lexan. Topics could include a concise history of Big Bull Falls and how lumbering attracted settlement, the start of quartzite mining on Rib Mountain (1893) with touchable quartzite and sandpaper, and the salvaging of timber from the 1910 crown fire.



The *Building a Park Exhibit* would feature a full-size cutout of a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) young man hard at work on Rib Mountain. Visitors open a trunk to discover the meager possessions of a CCC employee. They also flip through a book with real historic photographs of the 3649th CCC camp (1934) and the men who helped to create the park. Sensitive artifacts would be displayed in a wall mounted case. The exhibit would also interpret the official opening of the park (1927) and the role of the Wausau Kiwanis Club. Reproductions of relevant pages from the 1937 Sparta District CCC yearbook could be displayed here.



The *Legacy of Downhill Skiing Exhibit* would feature a full-size cutout of a 1940s skier. Visitors open a suitcase to find era boots, clothes, and wax. Other artifacts, like era skis and poles, would hang on the wall. Sensitive artifacts would be displayed in a case covered by replica snow. The opening of the ski hill will be interpreted as one of the first downhill ski areas in North America (1937). The story of Sgt. Joe Duskey of the 10th Mountain Division, who learned to ski on Rib Mountain, will also be told (1945).

The *Friends of Rib Mountain Exhibit* will display a collage of photographs representing the significant contributions that the organization has made to the park. Visitors will be encouraged to join the Friends in preserving and enhancing the park for the future.

## Wildlife Viewing Area

### Purpose:

To provide an opportunity for people to watch and learn about common backyard wildlife that are attracted to feeding stations.

### Objectives:

Visitors will learn about:

- How to identify common birds and mammals that are attracted to wildlife feeding stations
- What wildlife is attracted seasonally (migrants, residents, hibernators)

Visitors will feel:

- Rewarded and engaged by identifying bird and mammal activity at the wildlife station



Visitors will:

- Use field guides, binoculars, and a touch-screen computer to view and identify birds and mammals at the feeding station
- Develop backyard habitat at their own homes to attract wildlife

### Description:

The wildlife viewing area will be on and below a deck alcove on the southeast side of the building. Feeders and watering trays will be mounted on the deck railing and on the ground below the deck. A small water feature with circulated flowing water tumbling over rocks will be the center feature of this area. Surrounding it will be shrub plantings that provide berries and cover for wildlife.

Viewing windows on the southeast wall of the visitor center look out onto this wildlife station. A shelf in front of the window has binoculars attached to cables and bird and mammal field guides. A durable touch-screen computer provides life history about the species, including bird calls, population maps, and how to attract the species to your own backyard.





## Rib Mountain Topographic Model

### Purpose:

To show visitors the many potential places and experiences that the park offers and to assist them in accessing these resources. It also helps visitors to develop a holistic perspective of this large park and visually answers questions about the topography. Its large scale and physical presence allow staff to use it as a tool in giving directions or in explaining features of the mountain and park.







*Three-dimensional topographic maps, like this one at Crater Lake National Park, serve as ideal teaching tools for educators and interpreters.*

### Objectives:

Visitors will learn about:

- The topography of the park and surrounding landscape.
- The various features and activities to see and do during their visit.

Visitors will feel:

- Comfortable to explore the park because they have been oriented to various features of the park.

Visitors will:

- Seek out experiences within the park that they might not have known about otherwise.
- Be able to use the map as reference when asking the volunteer staff any questions about the park.

### Description:

This exhibit will be mounted on wheels and of a size that fits on the elevator for temporary storage in the lower level. It must be wheelchair accessible with a large overhang to allow knees to fit under it. It should show all major interpretive features such as:

1. Roads and trails
2. Viewing tower
3. Ski runs
4. Quarry
5. Prominent rock features (named formations and open talus fields)
6. Park buildings, amphitheater, etc.

The exhibit should be three-dimensional with a relief map to scale. Colors should represent forests, openings, roads, and trails. Consider a reputable fabrication company, like Solid Terrain Models, which makes digital models that are touchable and durable.

## Changeable Exhibit Modules: Exploring Rib Mountain and Watching for Wildlife

### Purpose:

This exhibit module will provide a “staging area” where visitors can learn about current events and seasonal activities, such as wildlife watching and ways to explore Rib Mountain. Emphasis will be on nature skills like wildlife identification and life history studies, phenology, hiking, and snowshoeing. The display will be developed in-house and will be changeable so that returning visitors can get new and up-to-date information.

### Objectives:

Visitors will learn about:

- Current wildlife and/or wildflower sightings in the park



- Wildlife phenology and how to keep phenological records
- Where to hike, snowshoe, and/or geocache in the park
- Tips on wildlife watching and identification

Visitors will feel:

- Confident that they can identify wildlife and eager to explore Rib Mountain



Visitors will:

- Explore other parts of Rib Mountain State Park by hiking or snowshoeing
- Actively search for wildlife in the park based on tips in the modules

**Description:**

This oval shaped exhibit module is mounted on wheels and of a size that can fit on the elevator for temporary storage in the basement. It has a vertical surface around the oval for mounting photos, artifacts, white boards, maps, and graphics. The top of the vertical space can be cut into the profile of Rib Mountain to add dimension and variety.

At 32 inches above the floor, a horizontal surface one-foot wide provides space for mounting tactile objects and participatory activities. This height also provides access to people in wheelchairs.

The module has two sides for two different topics. Concepts illustrated here include a “Winter Fun” display on one side that connects visitors to snowshoeing and geocaching opportunities, and a “Wildlife Sightings” display on the other side with touchable objects, changeable photos, and a white board for visitors to mark current sightings.

The module should be changed regularly by Rib Mountain State Park volunteers and staff to reflect current and seasonal activities. If successful, more of these modules can be constructed to reflect other themes and activities.



## Wall Space for Temporary Artwork/ Exhibits

### Purpose:

To provide flexible wall space that can be used for temporarily displaying artwork or other changeable exhibits.



### Description:

This flexible wall space provides opportunities for displaying temporary, changeable exhibits, such as photo contest entries, local artwork (paintings, photos, sculptures), school group crafts, phenological information, or current news and events.

Like the rolling table modules, the changeable space will attract return visitors by offering

something new. The wall display should be changed regularly by Rib Mountain State Park volunteers and staff to reflect current and seasonal activities.

Track lighting should be carefully planned in this space to highlight paintings and photographs without excessive glare.



## Interpretation on the Viewing Deck

### What Can Be Seen From Here?

#### Purpose:

These outdoor exhibits are available to visitors even when the building is closed. They interpret features that can be seen from this site and answer peoples questions about the landscape around them. These exhibits are more passive than the interior exhibits to allow viewers to contemplate and relax as they view the panoramic scenery, and enjoy the sunlight and the breezes that blow up this slope.

#### Objectives:

Visitors will learn about:

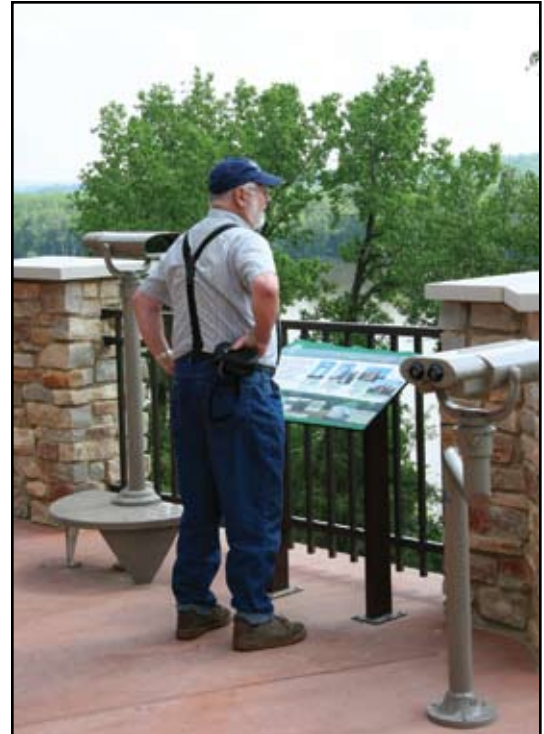
- Prominent features in view from the vantage point on top of Rib Mountain.
- The features of a talus slope and how it is formed.
- The various bird species found in the park.

Visitors will feel:

- A physical and emotional connection to experiencing nature directly at Rib Mountain.
- A sense of amazement about the views seen from this vantage point.

Visitors will:

- Be encouraged to establish bird feeders and habitat in their own backyards.
- Keep a lookout on the trails for wildlife scurrying around the talus slope.



*Decks, like this one at the Great River Road Visitor Center in Prescott, Wisconsin, are excellent locations for interpretation. They are places where people naturally congregate and are accessible even when the building is closed.*



*Rib Mountain State Park's southwest observation platform (location of the proposed Education Center) is already a popular destination for visitors. Relevant interpretation on "what they can see" will enhance the experience. July, 2008*



*A Story Scope reveals photographs when it is pointed at a significant feature.*

## **Description:**

### *The Story Scope or Feature Finder*

A small tubular scope with cross hairs is centered on a revolving circular platform. Viewers are invited to aim the scope at prominent features on the horizon. When they do, a window in the platform permits a view of photographs and verbal descriptions of the feature.

Examples include:

- Mosinee Hill
- Hardwood Hill
- Powers Bluff

All of these hills are formed from metamorphic quartzite and are resilient to being worn down by erosion. Powers Bluff is made up of a pink quartzite resulting from high iron content. It has a rich Native American history and, like Rib Mountain, is the site of communication towers. Mosinee and Hardwood Hills are each identical in origin and composition to Rib Mountain. These hills are equal in elevation at 1,610 feet. Since they were not burned in the 1910 wildfire that denuded Rib Mountain, their forests yield clues to tell us what Rib Mountain looked like before it burned.

### *Talus Slope Interpretive Panel*

An interpretive panel mounted on the deck provides viewers with the stories of the talus slope beneath them. Important aspects of the talus include information about its origin from the hard but brittle quartzite that cracks in random chunks as it freezes and thaws. The dense stone is resistant to water and breaks down into soil very slowly. This unique habitat harbors specialized plants capable of growing in the extremes of heat and drought. The larger rocks at the top of the slope shelter animals like voles, chipmunks, rabbits, and porcupines. Foxes, coyotes and other

predators hunt the talus for these small mammals. At the bottom of the slopes, the rocks are usually smaller, water is more abundant and plants can get a foothold. Snakes and small rodents find shelter in the cool, moist gravelly cracks. This panel should follow standards recommended for all interpretive panels with dramatic pictures of animals and concise narratives (see *Seven Ways to an Effective Message* on page 91).

### *Bird Feeding Station Interpretive Panels*

A bird feeding station can add a dynamic and constantly changing element to the facility. The sounds and actions of the birds will draw people out onto the deck. Rib Mountain is home to an exciting number of forest species that can be secretive and hard to see. The feeders will bring them into view. The feeders should be placed where they do not block the primary scenic views. One panel should interpret the birds at the feeder, while another can identify birds soaring past on the thermals; vultures, cranes, eagles, red-tailed hawks, and broad-winged hawks.

### *Mounted Viewing Scope*

An all-weather high magnification viewing scope should be available for visitors on the deck. It should be mounted at a height and angle to allow children and people in wheelchairs to access it.



*Bird feeding stations, like this one at Richardson Nature Center in Minnesota, attract common birds for close views.*



*Viewing scopes, like this one at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia, provide closer perspectives of landscape features and wildlife.*



Existing interpretive panels provide information about Rib Mountain features at places where people congregate. Messages developed with a visual hierarchy and a medium that allows for colored images could enhance the visitor experience.



High-pressure laminate signs, like this one designed by Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters for the Great River Road Visitor Center in Prescott, are durable, allow for crisp color pictures, and can be cut in different shapes.

## Signage Recommendations

A number of interpretive panels and information signs have already been developed to encourage self-guided experiences. This section identifies the strengths and limitations of these and provides recommendations for improvement.

### Interpretive Panels (Existing)

#### Strengths of Existing Signs:

- Low profile traditional metal base supports are based on National Park Service designs
- Panels are provided at locations where visitors congregate and have questions about what they are seeing
- Text is highly readable and engaging; graphics complement the message and attract attention

#### Limitations:

- Some panels and supports have been damaged by graffiti and weathering
- Panels are black and white
- Inscriptions are provided in a single block of text, making reading appear difficult

#### Recommendations:

- Re- powder coat the aluminum bases
- Replace the panels with a durable high-pressure laminate product (such as iZone, Folia, or Fossil) that allows full color graphics and resists weathering and vandalism
- Redevelop the interpretation; apply the “Seven Ways to an Effective Message” provided at the end of this section



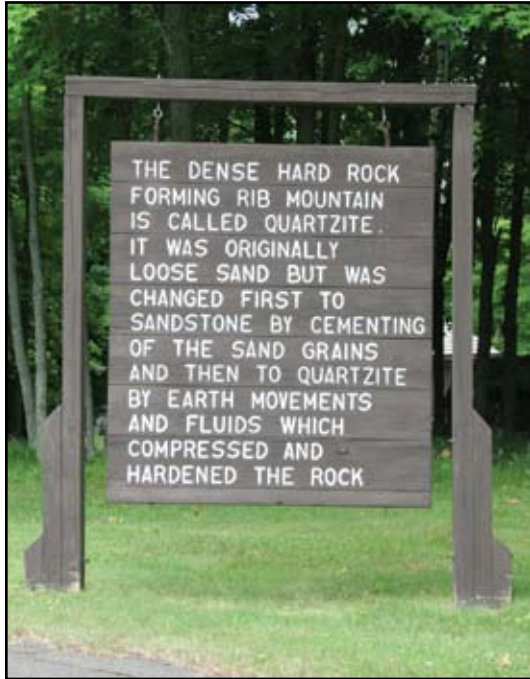
- Add additional interpretive panels in the kiosk, at the ski hill and on the observation tower
- Use unified graphic design standards for all interpretive panels and information signs.

#### Potential Interpretive Panel topics:

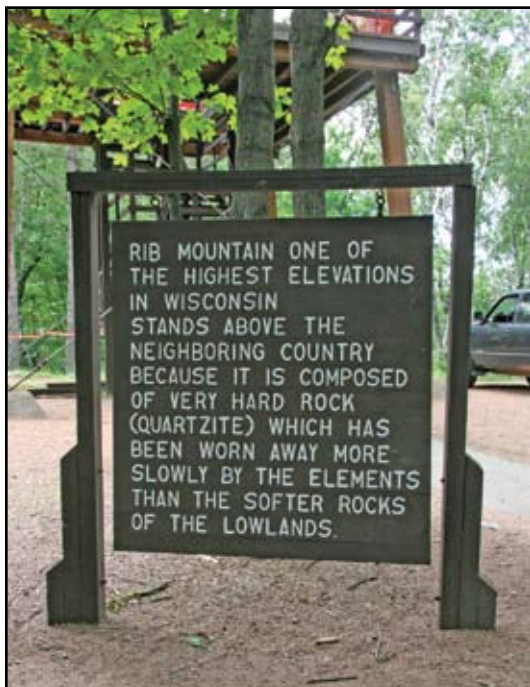
1. The King's and Queen's Chair area provide a popular location for people to scramble on the rocks, which were under the sea several hundred million years ago. Ripple marks can be seen that were formed by wave action in the sand. The once horizontal beds of rock were tipped to a nearly vertical position.
2. Sights to be seen from the Observation Tower help visitors appreciate the unique perspective while viewing the city of Wausau, the Wisconsin River, etc. Extending beyond the treetops are communication towers that are vital for the surroundings communities.
3. The ski hill is a location of interest to visitors. The history of the 10th Mountain Division, CCC, and general background about the role that Rib Mountain played with the ski industry can be told with a sign panel or series of panels located on the north side of the park.
4. The quarry location within the park offers stories about the mining of Rib Mountain, the economic impacts, the products and uses of quartzite, and the roosting site of buzzards.
5. A series of panels should be developed for the interpretive kiosk (described on page 89).

Existing Rib Mountain interpretive panels:





Existing Rib Mountain wooden interpretive signs:



## Wooden Interpretive Signs (Existing)

### Strengths of Existing Signs:

- Provide important messages about the geology of Rib Mountain

### Limitations:

- Structures are outdated and their designs are not consistent
- Routed text is set in all capitals which is difficult to read (ascenders and descenders of lower case text help readers to follow a line)
- Complex geological concepts are difficult to convey without graphics or other devices such as tactiles and interactives

### Recommendations:

- Convert geology messages on wooden signs to smaller, high-pressure laminate interpretive panels. These would be less intrusive on the landscape and allow for colored photos and illustrations. Messages should be presented in a visual hierarchy
- Interpret the geology and origins of Rib Mountain State Park in a refurbished kiosk; include graphics and tactiles that aid in interpretation of these complex topics
- Eliminate wooden signs and structures to improve the aesthetics of the summit area



## Interpretive Kiosk (Existing)

### Strengths:

- Central location is accessible by all who visit the summit
- Design has a rustic quality perhaps suitable to the site

### Limitations:

- Currently filled with mostly empty display cases; it appears prominent but has limited interpretive value
- The center posts and casements create an enclosed structure that impedes movement

### Recommendations:

- Replace this structure with a kiosk that is architecturally unified with the new interpretive building
- Include low-profile or vertically framed panels, perhaps mounted on a quartzite base or wall
- Develop panels that provide important site-specific information that visitors are interested in.

### Topics could include:

1. Geology of Rib Mountain
2. Wildlife you might experience on Rib Mountain
3. A historic overview of Rib Mountain State Park
4. A map of the summit features



*Existing Rib Mountain interpretive kiosk.*



*This roofed kiosk at Hartman Creek State Park interprets the Ice Age Trail in Wisconsin with dramatic visuals and a rustic design.*



*The loop trail system of Rib Mountain State Park can be especially confusing for first-time visitors. This new three-panel information kiosk includes a colored map that improves wayfinding. July, 2008*



*Old interpretive panel frames should be removed and, where appropriate, replaced with new high-pressure laminate signs that provide durable, full-color interpretation of site features. June, 2007*

## Interpretive Trails and Trailhead

### Strengths:

- The summit trails are a core component of the visitor experience showcasing the “real story” of Rib Mountain outside the walls of the Education and Interpretive Center
- The new trail triptych next to the concession stand provides important information for visitors

### Limitations:

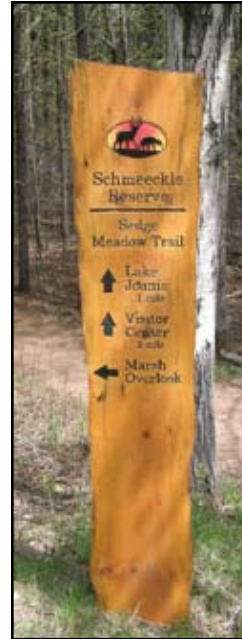
- Individual trailheads can be difficult to locate for first-time visitors
- Additional interpretation about on-site features along the trails is desirable
- The trail system is a series of interwoven loops that require additional identification and wayfinding assistance

### Recommendations:

- Provide identifiable trailheads at prominent entries with a map oriented to the site (not necessarily oriented with the top of the map pointing north) and brief text about the trail experience. Include distances, accessibility and trail surfaces
- Provide map panels at trail intersections to improve wayfinding
- Consider providing interpretive panels along one of the most popular trails
- Remove the old Knutson (former State Park Naturalist) frames that, over time, have lost their interpretive messages
- A shorter accessible loop that connects to the interpretive center would enhance the holistic interpretative experience of the visitor

### Seven Ways to an Effective Message

1. **Say it visually.** Use photos and drawings to help tell the story.
2. **Graphics should do more than duplicate what can be seen.** They should reveal hidden meanings and ideas.
3. **Use a message pyramid.** Develop a descending order of message importance. This can be expressed as the **3-30-3 rule**. Visitors can receive a message in three seconds, thirty seconds, or three minutes.
4. **Keep the message short.** Use short sentences and paragraphs. Use a readability scale such as the Flesch test to help eliminate wordy phrases and paragraphs.
5. Create imagery with **concrete nouns and active verbs**. Limit adjectives and adverbs.
6. **Relate to the visitor's experience.** Use personal pronouns, personal language, and familiar terms. Illustrate with metaphors, analogies, quotes, and real examples.
7. **Provide for multi-sensory involvement.** Use digital audio repeaters and participatory devices. These may include tactiles, models, relief maps, flip panels, and interactives.



*Schmeckle Reserve in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, has installed a series of rustic directions signs and trail maps (oriented to the site) to aid in wayfinding.*



*This roofed trailhead at Crowley's Ridge Nature Center in Arkansas features a colorful trail map, bulletin board for changing information, and unique footprint cut-outs that create patterns.*





# Appendices



*Visitors climb on the rock formation at the summit of Rib Mountain, enjoying a beautiful autumn day. 2004*

## Appendix 1

### Planning Meeting with Friends Group

Location: Shelter building at Rib Mountain State Park

When: July 9, 2007

Who: 10 members of The Friends Group, Bill Bursaw, Ron Zimmerman, Mike Gross, Brenda Lackey

A series of questions were asked of group members by the Interpretive Consulting Team...

#### 1. Why do people come to Rib Mountain State Park?

- View (amphitheater and tower especially)
- Can drive up in elevation – higher terrain like a “mountain”
- Aerobic exercise and workout in natural setting
- Picnicking and climb rocks
- Urban setting makes it convenient
- Hiking trails; winter to snowshoe, summer to hike
- Natural beauty of rock formations and scenery
- Cooler temperatures
- Diversity of wildlife
- Fall colors; this season gets the heaviest usage during the year
- 30-35 weddings in amphitheater per year
- Locals bring guests here – destination for Wausau

- Curiosity about the “bump” in the landscape
- Skiing, which primarily brings tourists is a separate audience; shouldn’t try to attract this group
- Joint use with fall colors using ski lift
- Camping (not going to last)
- For special nature programs

#### 2. What are the functions of this new facility going to be?

- School groups – educational purposes
- Visitors – interpretive purposes
- Passive interpretive experiences
- Wedding receptions maybe?
- Natural history of the area
- Children’s groups
- Multifunctional for visitors and school groups (permanent exhibit on 1 level, rooms on the second level for school group and host site for meetings, etc.)
- Rentable facility
- Windows overlooking southwest
- Concession building incorporated into the new building
- Green building; would like to follow the Mead model (e.g., passive solar)
- Possibly light lunch service with a European feel – Chalet
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Don’t want a tower or wind turbine

#### 3. What are the must tell stories (big ideas) for visitors to leave with?

- CCC (trails, gazebo, original ski runs, chalet, restroom facility, original road)



- Turkey vultures roosting in 3M quarry
  - Geology – why is this here? Have old graffiti (history)
  - Kiwanis – original investors in setting aside land for a park
  - Big Bull Falls – lumbering/sawmill/paper mill story
  - Communication towers
  - Native Americans – Name Wausau “place where you can see far”
  - 2nd highest elevation in the state – local relief makes this place unique at 800 feet
  - 10th Mountain Division of WWII – an alpine ski group – 20-30 members from the Wausau area. The Ski Chalet is the keeper of this information. Talk to Charles Skinner of Duluth or Chuck Luedke.
  - 3rd oldest ski run in the country
  - State Natural Area (plans, ecosystem, flora, fauna, invasive species)
  - Quarry – famous roof in NY made of material made from the quarry
  - Myth about gold in the mountain
  - Forest fire burned in 1910
  - Personal experience of entering the park “like you are heading into the mountain”
- 4. What changes do you want to see with the trails, other interpretive materials, etc.?**
- Bill is working on that right now
  - Trailhead kiosk by the current concession building
  - Brochure update being worked on for trails
  - Trails recently remarked with map holders
  - Current system is very good, but lots of volunteer trails
  - All colors will come together as a trailhead
  - No removal of trees in State Natural Area – needs to be explained as to why some areas of the park are managed one way and others are left to go natural
  - The average visitor wouldn’t know about the steps on the trail
  - The trail map is confusing
  - No hiking is allowed in the northeastern part of the park
  - Bill says our plan needs to focus on the nature/education center, that the DNR dictates this
  - With the displays they don’t want a “museum”
  - See the description of the proposed nature/education center on pg. 80 of the master plan
  - The quarry has old homestead sites with pottery of 1890 – good artifacts
  - An architecture student working at the park would like to help with data collection if we are interested
  - Jane Wiley contact information 359-2475
  - Historical Society contacts – Mary Jane Hetting or Gary Gesselmann or Greg Huber

## Appendix 2

### Visitor Interview Responses

#### Why do you (or did you in the past) visit Rib Mountain State Park?

- Live in local area and bring guests visiting
- Like the elevation difference here
- Visit as part of a family tradition (family reunion)
- Come every year to hike and picnic
- Like to picnic and climb on rocks
- Like the peacefulness and wildlife
- Camping (3)
- Visit to go up in the observation tower and see the view; like the natural features
- Visit once a year
- “Came up for the view, to hike around, and get out of the house”
- Like the sunsets, the nice view, and concerts
- “Have been coming since I was a kid”
- The view drew them here
- Traveling through the area (on interstate), stopped for a break and to look around

#### Activities visitors are involved in at Rib Mountain State Park...

- See the view (5)
- Picnicking (4)
- Climb rocks (3)
- Climb the observation tower (7)
- Hike the trails (16)

- Ski (2)
- Camping (3)
- Letter boxing (similar to geo-caching) (1)
- Working on a mother-daughter school project (1)
- Hunt deer (1)
- Concerts (1)
- Like the concession stand (1)

#### The topics/ideas that visitors would like a new educational/interpretive facility to include...

- Geology (19)
- Elevation difference (1)
- Wildlife species in the area (any poisonous species?) (18)
- Native Americans (3)
- White settlers in the area (1)
- Vegetation (6)
- Suggested an animated video to demonstrate how the “mountain” was formed over time (1)
- Mother wants things to get her daughter “involved” (1)
- Natural and cultural history (5)
- Why is it called Rib Mountain? Why is it here? (4)
- Ski history (3)
- Tree species identification (3)
- Deer (1)
- Plant id (1)

- Visual tour from the deck (landscape features?) What the view is...points of interest (2)
- Hawks and larger birds of prey (1)
- Telescope for star gazing (1)
- Why Queen and King chair names? (1)
- Keep it natural, include mostly what is already here (1)
- Wausau history, Wisconsin River, Logging, Mineralogy (1)

**Other suggestions/comments:**

- First time visitors raved about peacefulness and beauty of the park
- Liked the hiking trails
- Consider more clear signage as entering the park
- No problem with wayfinding...have been here before
- Signage OK
- Advertise concerts in amphitheater better
- Hiking trails have good signage and wayfinding
- Roads into park could use better maintenance
- Thin out the trees to improve the view
- Make a "Rib Garden" with beer and polka band
- Improve the trail signage, include length of trail
- Run the chair lift all year





