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WRT's Tom Ridge Environmental Center wins Top 10,000 Friends 2006 Award

June 16, 2006 (Philadelphia, PA) –The Tom Ridge Environmental Center at Erie’s Presque Isle State Park, designed by Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC (WRT), was honored with the Commonwealth Design Award, the top award conferred during The 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania’s 2006 Commonwealth Design Awards program. The award ceremony was held on Tuesday, June 13th at the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg.

The annual Commonwealth Design Awards were developed by the 10,000 Friends, a Pennsylvania-based non-profit consortium dedicated to fostering green development and smart growth, to recognize sustainable projects throughout the state and to celebrate the professionals and firms who design them.

The Tom Ridge Environmental Center was chosen from among more than forty nominated projects to receive the prestigious Commonwealth Design Award. The new 58,000-square-foot building facilitates a unique collaboration of public and private agencies, educational institutions, and environmental organizations working together to create a more sustainable region. The Center serves as a visitor center for the park as well as the region, and functions as an educational resource, a research center, a travel destination, and an environmental resources center. Designed to achieve a U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Silver rating, the new building practices what it preaches.

“WRT did an outstanding job in capturing the essence of Presque Isle in the design of the building,” said Harry Z. Leslie, Park Operations Manager for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), “and the overall ‘green and sustainable’ elements of the project are a perfect match for DCNR and Presque Isle State Park.”

The Center was sited at the entrance of the state park to minimize disturbance of the park, and makes great use of natural light through transparent and translucent panels as well as exterior shading devices. Inverted roof forms collect rainwater for reuse, significantly reducing the Center’s overall water consumption. The surrounding landscape was designed to manage and conserve site water, avoid the need for irrigation, and

employ native plants to reinforce the local ecology.

“The design represents a collaboration of creative people and ideas that not only serve the functions of an environmental education and research facility but that also embody sound ecological principles that will serve the community for years to come,” said Charlie Tomlinson, AIA, LEED® AP, who served as one of WRT’s principals in charge of the project.

This marks the third time a WRT project has been given an award by The 10,000 Friends. In 2003, the firm’s Susquehanna Commerce Center in York, Pennsylvania was presented with the Silver Award in recognition of Design Excellence and Responsible Development. In 2004, WRT’s Temple Station Area Redevelopment Plan in Philadelphia was given the Bronze Award in recognition of Design Excellence and Responsible Development.

WRT is a renowned planning and design practice with headquarters in Philadelphia and offices nationwide. The firm’s architects, landscape architects, urban designers and planners offer integrated services to help clients create places that are at once memorable and sustainable. WRT’s projects range from the scale of regional land-use plans to the design of individual buildings and landscapes.