

Published Friday, June 15, 2012

LEEDing the way: Chattahoochee Bend State Park recognized for conservation

BY SARAH FAY CAMPBELL

sarah@newnan.com

Chattahoochee Bend State Park now holds a very distinctive honor — it is the first state park in the nation to be certified in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The state park, located in western Coweta along the Chattahoochee River, has achieved LEED Silver certification.

While there are several buildings in various Georgia state parks, as well as in parks around the country, that are LEED certified, Chattahoochee Bend is the first park to be certified in its entirety.

“The neatest thing about this is there is no formal program, through the U.S. Green Building Council, for LEED for parks,” said Toby Evans, northern region engineering and construction manager for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

“This is the first in the nation — we led the way on that,” said Evans, who was also project manager for the construction at Chattahoochee Bend.

“This is something we can pat ourselves on the back about.”

The only building that is actually LEED certified in the park is the visitor center, but there were other steps taken throughout the park to conserve energy and water. Additionally, the two staff residences are Earthcraft houses. Earthcraft is a designation for homes similar to LEED, which is for nonresidential structures.

The park was designed with the intention to receive LEED certification. “We went into it with the idea that, if everything came together as planned, we could have the first LEED-certified state park,” Evans said.

The LEED principles were integrated into everything.

“You bring the architects and engineers, and the landscape architects and the civil engineers together,” Evans said. “You just establish a common goal” of maximizing greenspace, finding materials that are regionally manufactured, and the like.

“You put your architect and your engineer in the same room and you talk â | then you come back and can start putting policies together,” he said.

“Through the entire process, everybody is on the same page, with certification the goal,” Evans said.

Reducing energy and water use are the major facets of LEED certification.

Chattahoochee Bend’s water use was 46 percent less than it would have been without taking special steps.

“You save 30 percent by putting in waterless urinals,” Evans said. “And you use low-flow aerators on your faucets.”

There’s also no irrigation in the park. There is a rainwater catchment system at the visitor center. That rainwater is then used to water the landscaping when it’s needed.

There are low-flow fixtures, including shower heads, on all the showers, sinks and toilets in the park, and the toilets at the north platform and Adirondack camp areas are “vault” toilets with no water at all.

The park uses energy efficient heating and cooling systems, as well as energy efficient lighting.

The visitor center was designed to take advantage of natural light. In fact, designers had to add an extra window at the center to go from standard LEED certification to LEED Silver, Evans said.

Of course, Georgia sunshine can add a lot of heat to a building, so special window glass was used “that did not allow thermal penetration,” Evans said.

The materials used in the construction of the park were all regionally manufactured, which cuts down on energy use and costs in getting the materials to the site.

By using construction waste management strategies, more than 62 percent of construction waste was diverted from landfills.

In addition to reducing waste, there were also steps taken to reduce chemicals in the building, thus improving air quality.

Low VOC (volatile organic compound) paints, carpets, sealants, adhesives, coatings, and composite wood materials were used. “When you paint, you don’t smell any odors,” Evans said. Additionally, the carpet and some other times were made from recycled fibers.

Building LEED certified facilities really isn’t that expensive.

“Contrary to popular belief, it probably adds 2 to 3 percent” to the cost of a facility, Evans said. And you recoup those costs within the first two years or so, mainly through reduced energy costs.

The energy costs for the two staff residences are especially low. The homes are 1,800 square feet, and the power bills are between \$80 and \$100 per month — in the middle of summer and in the middle of winter, according to Evans.

The added insulation in the homes makes them naturally cooler. Evans said that during construction in the summer, “you could go into those residences, and it was an immediate relief to just walk in” — and that’s when the homes were being framed and there was no air conditioning.

The two homes have sealed crawlspaces. Air is pumped into the crawlspaces, “which provides just enough positive pressure that the vapors and moisture from the ground” can’t seep up into the house, Evans said. The attic is insulated and conditioned so that the attic space is not significantly hotter or colder than the rest of the home. The air handling system sits in the attic so it’s not taking super hot or cold air and trying to bring it to a comfortable temperature.

“We are really excited about” the LEED Silver certification, said Dean Jackson, vice-president of the Friends of Chattahoochee Bend State Park.

Evans was full of praise for Coweta County officials who helped with the construction, and State Rep. Lynn Smith, R-Newnan, who championed the project in the Georgia General Assembly and secured funding for the development of the park.

- [About us](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Social News Forms](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Visitor Agreement](#)
- [RSS](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [Go To Top](#)