

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Facts about the:

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center
“Where your great adventures begin!”

Mission: The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center helps people connect with the historic, cultural, and natural resources of the Northern Great Lakes Region through customer-based, visitor information, tourism services, and educational programs.

Vision: The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center will be a leader in advocating the sustainability of the region’s cultural, historic, and natural resources through innovative partnerships that engage people and communities in positive change.

History: The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center is a citizen-initiated project combining elements of history, natural resources, and visitor information under one roof. In the mid-1980’s, a group of citizens approached Ashland and Bayfield counties asking that a study be conducted regarding the “feasibility of establishing an interpretive Center” in the Ashland-Bayfield county area. At the request of the counties, the University of Wisconsin – Extension undertook a two year feasibility study that resulted in the “Report to Congress” being published in 1989. That feasibility study provided the broad vision and a more detailed “blueprint” necessary to build support and move the project forward. The Friends of the Center, a grass roots, non-profit organization formed to support and further the goals of the new Center, lobbied the State and Federal governments for nearly six years to obtain funds to construct the Center. State and Federal funds were allocated to the project and construction commenced in 1995. The Center opened in May of 1998.

Partners: The Center is operated through a unique federal, state, and local partnership. Operating partners are:

- USDA Forest Service
- National Park Service
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Wisconsin Historical Society
- University of Wisconsin – Extension
- Friends of the Center Alliance Limited

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Opened: May 1998

Size: 37,000 square feet

Cost to Build: \$7 million
(\$3.5 federal funds; \$3.5 State of Wisconsin funds)

Annual Budget: \$1.3 million

Annual Visitation:

<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
130,797	113,194	114,237	126,874	151,129	161,919	145,450	122,777

2006 Annual outputs/numbers:

- Personal Contacts 70,015
- Archives Researchers 712
- School Students 724
- On-the-water programs 160
- Meeting participants 5,508
- Program participants 8,282

Attractions and Features:

- Award-winning Center design that incorporates the distinctive architectural elements of the region (brownstone, metal roof, cedar siding, tower suggests a lighthouse)
- Regional visitor information services (one-stop shopping)
- Professional, high-quality exhibits (3,000 square feet) that make regional stories come-to-life.
- 5-story observation tower overlooking Lake Superior
- 9-county regional archives
- Educational programs and events
- Classrooms and meeting rooms
- Unique, regional gift shop
- Lounge and library
- Art gallery
- Two, ½ mile loop trails, beginning and ending at the Center.
- 100-seat theater with video programs shown throughout the day
Eleven minute, multi-media, presentation entitled “Northern Voices”

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2007 Scheduled Events:

October 25, 2006 – April 1, 2007 – “Observations of a Lake Superior Fishery” Exhibit
January 13 – Sleigh and Cutter Parade
January 22 – April 1 – “Our Shared Planet” Exhibit
January 12 – February 15 – “River of Words” Student Art and Poetry Collection
April 27 – July 31 – “Paradise Lost?” Climate Change in the North Woods Art Exhibition
May 18 – 20 – Junior Duck Stamp Exhibit
May 18 – 22 Chequamegon Bay Birding and Nature Festival
June 2 – Kids Fishing Day

Days and Hours of Operation:

- Open year around, seven day a week (closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Easter)
- Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Employment:

- 20 permanent staff
- 13 seasonal, part time staff

Land Base: 180 acres

Location: In northern Wisconsin, 2 miles west of the City of Ashland on U.S. Highway 2 near Lake Superior and the Bayfield Peninsula.

Contact information:

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