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CONTACT: Frank Allen, Conservation Marketing Specialists, 800-721-6142 fallen@cms501c.com

Appalachian Wildlife Center Will Bring 580,000 Visitors to Southeastern Kentucky.

The Appalachian Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is proceeding with its plan to build the Appalachian Wildlife Center in Bell County, Kentucky. The Wildlife Center will be developed on 12,000 acres that includes reclaimed mine land and forest land. AWF is now in negotiations with the Pine Mountain Regional Industrial Development Authority to have a vacant 500-acre industrial park re-purposed to serve as the site for the Wildlife Center buildings and facilities.

Appalachian Wildlife Foundation CEO David Ledford, first announced the Foundation's plans to develop the Wildlife Center in February 2014. "We've made a lot of progress since that announcement last year", said Ledford. He went on to say, "We are considering several sites, but this site in Bell County is clearly the best location for The Center, and we are hopeful we can reach an agreement with the Development Authority that will enable us to build it there."

According to Ledford, The Appalachian Wildlife Center is modeled after a similar, but much smaller center in a very remote section of Pennsylvania that attracted more than 400,000 visitors in 2014. In its' fifth year of operation The Appalachian Wildlife Center will attract more than 580,000 visitors and generate over \$113,000,000 in regional economic impact, supporting more than 1,800 jobs.

Kentucky Tourism Cabinet Secretary Bob Stewart said, "I visited the Pennsylvania Elk Country Visitor Center in October and was very impressed. The plan that the Appalachian Wildlife Foundation has put together is spot on". He went on to say, "This is the most exciting thing I've seen in a long time for boosting tourism and educational opportunities in Kentucky and we want to assist them in any we can to make this a success."

The Wildlife Center facilities will include a main building, a research and conference center, a raptor recovery center, an astronomy pavilion, and an amphitheater. The main building will house class rooms, natural history and taxidermy displays, a theater, a gift shop and local artisans market, and a food court. The 12,000 acres and surrounding lands are home to elk, deer, black bears, wild turkeys and numerous other birds and mammals. The Center will feature a 15-mile loop road, similar to the Cades Cove Loop Road in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The Appalachian Wildlife Center will be developed and operated without any government funding. Ledford said, "We will not seek any government funding for the project. It will be funded thru private donations". If an agreement can be reached soon on the industrial park, the Wildlife Center is projected to open in 2017.

The Appalachian Wildlife Foundation is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization. www.appalachianwildlife.com