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Appalachian Wildlife Center Will Bring Visitors to Eastern Kentucky.

At a recent event focused on economic development in eastern Kentucky, Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner James Comer announced the launch of a new marketing initiative, Appalachia Proud: Mountains of Potential. David Ledford, CEO of the Appalachian Wildlife Foundation followed Comer and announced that the foundation will build the Appalachian Wildlife Center in southeastern Kentucky. The campus will be developed on land that has been surface mined for coal and reclaimed. Ledford's announcement followed comments by US Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, Kentucky State Senator Robin Webb and Commissioner Comer.

The Wildlife Center Campus, which will include a vineyard and orchard, will be a venue to showcase and market locally grown products. Ledford's announcement was included in the event because Commissioner Comer also announced that the Appalachian Wildlife Center will be the first entity licensed to use the Appalachia Proud brand.

The Wildlife Center campus will be developed on a 1,000-plus acre site which will include a conservation education and elk viewing facility, a regional museum, a gift shop and local artisan market, a meeting and conference center, a concert and entertainment amphitheater and a wildlife research center.

"This Center is something that will play a pivotal role in expanding tourism in eastern Kentucky and will also educate people about the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and how hunters have been the driving force behind the restoration of wildlife", said State Senator Robin Webb who also serves as the President of the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses.

Ledford pointed out that a similar center in a remote section of Pennsylvania drew more than 360,000 visitors in 2013, and studies predict the new center would surpass that number. The foundation is currently evaluating potential sites for the center in Knott, Perry, Martin, Breathitt and Bell counties.

"This will be a world-class facility and we are going to build it without any government funding", said Ledford.