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## **MUSEUM'S OPEN-AIR CLASSROOM RECEIVES "EDGE" AWARD**

*RALEIGH, NC* -- The North Carolina Museum of Natural Science's open-air classroom at its Prairie Ridge Ecostation in Raleigh, designed by architect Frank Harmon, FAIA, has received a 2005 EDGE Award from *Triangle Business Journal*.

The annual EDGE Awards, presented in seven different categories, "recognize excellence in the design, general contracting, engineering and landscape contracting industries," accord to the weekly journal. The open-air classroom was selected as a "project that best exemplifies environmental sensitivity."

Built on a hillside, the LEED® certified classroom is constructed with parallel strand lumber, which is made from a composite of many small trees, thus reducing the impact on old-growth forests. Earth disturbance was kept to a minimum to avoid erosion. Concrete masonry units in the foundation are made of 100-percent recycled materials, and recycled untreated scrap lumber provided mulch for landscaping needs.

The classroom's heavy, south-facing overhang maximizes sun exposure in winter and creates shade in summer. Along with the screened walls, this orientation catches year-round southwesterly breezes. Together, these design elements conserve an enormous amount of energy normally used for lighting and HVAC systems. The building will soon feature: photovoltaic panels; wind-driven generators for power; and zero-percent runoff with recycled storm water (a cistern collects rainwater from the classroom's roof for flushing toilets and minimizing the impact on local fresh water sources).

The classroom pavilion is part of Phase One of a project begun in 2003, which includes the site's master plan and will ultimately feature a wetland construction, a flood plain arboretum, and restoration of the site's native plants. Phase Two will further develop the master plan and finish construction documents for a 40-student dormitory with a green roof and solar panels, a large meeting hall/classroom, a wet lab, housing for a visiting research, geothermal wells for heating and cooling, natural cleansing systems for building waste water, and site exhibitions. Storm water will be collected to form vernal wetland teaching areas.

"This project is special because of the Museum's foresight," Harmon said. "Because of the Prairie Ridge Ecostation, this natural area of the city will forever remain wild. And this building will help teach generations of school children about how they can conserve the fields and streams of North Carolina."

This is the second design award for the Prairie Ridge classroom. It also received a 2005 Merit Award from the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

EDGE Award winners will be honored at a dinner and ceremony on October 13 at the North Ridge Country Club in Raleigh, and will be featured in Triangle Business Journal on October 14.

Accent Imaging, Alltel Wireless, and Cherry Bekaert & Holland sponsored the awards program.

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