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New Center to be Built With Trees Planted by Aldo Leopold **Trees Sustainably Harvested to Protect Wisconsin Forest**

Baraboo - The new Aldo Leopold Legacy Center, part of the Aldo Leopold Foundation's \$7.75 million Land Ethic Campaign, is being constructed with pine trees planted by Aldo Leopold himself some 70 years ago. The trees were sustainably harvested near Baraboo, Wisconsin from January through March and construction on the Center began in June.

"These trees were planted in land that had been abandoned and was considered little more than wasteland at the end of the Dust Bowl. Now, 65 years later, the trees are producing very high quality material," said Steve Swenson, ecologist at the Aldo Leopold Foundation. "I think it is humbling to realize this 'pay-off' for Aldo Leopold's good land stewardship spans a couple of generations."

Most of the trees were planted by Aldo Leopold and his family in the late 1930s and 1940s in an effort to reclaim an abandoned farm. Leopold first visited the area celebrated in *A Sand County Almanac* while scouting for hunting land in January 1935. A chicken coop found on the land was refurbished, and "the Shack" became the family's rustic quarters. Aldo and his family nurtured 40,000 pines and hundreds of shrubs, hardwood trees and prairie plants in the years they returned to the Shack.

Many of the trees in the pine forest that now covers the land have been stressed by over-crowding, some showing signs of over-competition, including poor canopy development and extremely low annual growth rate. The Leopold Foundation decided to cull 500 of the pines to ensure the health of the strongest pines in the forest. The land management plan and harvest are certified as sustainable through the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) Smartwood program. The FSC certification ensures that the harvest meets international standards for protecting residual trees, soil, water, native plants and wildlife. The FSC certification was administered through the Community Forestry Resource Center (CFRC), a project of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy in Minneapolis.

"The way in which these historical trees were harvested will strengthen the health of this forest for years to come," said Jedd Ungrodt, a forester with CFRC who helped create the management plan for the land. "The trees that were harvested were the weakest in the stand. Now the remaining healthy trees will likely thrive for another 65 years – and more."

More than 175 local conservation neighbors and dedicated members contributed more than 375 volunteer hours peeling the bark from 240 small diameter logs that will be used in the Aldo Leopold Legacy Center project. What's particularly unique about these logs is that they were actually the least attractive product of the timber harvest of the Leopold pines. Because of their small diameter, they held little value for traditional processing by a timber mill. But working with the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory and the Kubala Washatko Architects, the Leopold Foundation was able to incorporate these logs into the building design by using their whole form. Designing with whole log construction is like designing with thick, supportive pipes. Once the bark was removed from the logs, allowing them to dry, they immediately became an extremely valuable building material.

The new Center will consist of three buildings: The main building which includes sections like the Upshot Research and Administration Wing, the Seed Hall (a three-season outdoor classroom) and the Axe-in-Hand Workshop (the stewardship garage).

The Land Ethic Campaign aims to fund four initiatives, including constructing the Aldo Leopold Legacy Center, restoring and preserving the Leopold Shack and Farm, establishing endowment funds to ensure the initiatives have stability in the future, and preserving and maintaining the Leopold Archives.

For more information on the Aldo Leopold Legacy Center, go to: www.aldoleopold.org

For more information on FSC certification, contact Don Arnosti at darnosti@iatp.org.

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