



Sandstone Visitor & Orientation Center

The 13-acre site serves as a gateway to the southern portion of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.

Here visitors to the site can learn about the natural and cultural history of the New River and its watershed both inside the building and out.

Viridian reclaimed the site, an old quarry and landfill, by establishing successional grasslands that merge with the surrounding hillside forests. Influenced by the most successful National Parks of the early 1900's, they wanted visitors immersed in the beautiful local landscape and the stories of the region. They captured storm water runoff from the roof, road, and parking areas in planted islands and depressions where it is filtered and then seeps into the ground as natural irrigation. The wet depressions, the tree copses and groves, and the grasslands host myriad plants, animals and insects. With the addition of milkweed, the site has become a monarch butterfly waystation.

From parking lot to visitor's center the site design gives park rangers many ways in which to engage visitors in lessons of green design and the natural world. In addition to the native landscapes, there are terraces and overlooks crafted of local sandstone for programs as well as outdoor exhibits to help tell the story.

Viridian worked closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the USDA to develop a long-term landscape management plan for the new landscapes and exhibits. Because it's not just what you build on day one, it's what you leave for future generations that matters.

Location: Glen Jean, West Virginia

Client: National Park Service

Size: 13 acres

Cost: \$14 million with 2 million for site work

Status: Completed 2003