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Colorado's Walking Mountains Science Center Targets LEED Platinum

-Zehren and Mithun architects design environmental education center to incorporate three stage heating, low VOC coatings, straw bale walls, and Colorado harvested beetle kill Pine –

-Walking Mountains Science Center uses custom, low-VOC water-borne wood stain developed by [Sansin Corporation](#) and [Vintage Woods](#) -

Avon, Colo. and Strathroy, Ontario, Canada, May 31, 2011 - Since Fall 1998, the [Walking Mountains Science Center](#) has inspired environmental stewardship through natural science education. To accommodate growing demand and interest by public and private schools throughout the Vail valley, the Walking Mountain Science Center selected [Zehren & Associates](#) and [Mithun architect](#) firms to design a four-building campus that would live up to its dedication to sustainability, environmental awareness and science education.

Targeting LEED Platinum, the Walking Mountain Science Center, located in Avon, Colo., will incorporate the following green design features:

- High efficiency building envelope that is very air tight with R-45 walls and R-75 roof and uses windows that are two to three times more efficient than code. Special attention was paid to the elimination of thermal breaks within the walls, roof and foundation. The buildings are expected to be 70-80 percent more efficient than current codes.
- Optimal orientation of the buildings to maximize active and passive solar energy and promote natural ventilation and cooling. The roofs will host 33.4 kwh of solar electric panels, and solar thermal panels will provide all the building hot water and some heating.
- Three stage radiant heating to achieve energy efficiency and limit fossil fuels: solar thermal then ground source heat pump and finally a 95 percent efficient boiler.
- Wood exterior—Using Colorado harvested, beetle-kill pine.
- Low VOC coating—Water-borne, low VOC stain customized for durability, highlighting beauty of Pine.

The Science Center will be completed in late Summer 2011 and comprise buildings that support interactive science exhibits, community events, speakers and classrooms. To see images of the Science Center, [click here](#).

To recall the agrarian history of Avon and to promote the use of a regional material, the architects chose Colorado harvested beetle-killed Pine, which is known for color variation caused by a naturally occurring fungus. The pine beetle epidemic has decimated approximately 70 percent of the lodgepole pine trees in Colorado and dead or dying trees are visible in the mountains surrounding the project.

“Beetle killed pine is a beautiful material that suits the buildings and the site perfectly. Using this material presents important science lessons in the value of building with regional materials and the health of the surrounding forests and therefore, it’s well suited to the Walking Mountains Science Center’s educational mission,” said Brian Sipes, Principal at Zehren & Associates. “We selected a custom low-VOC water-borne wood stain developed by [Sansin Corporation](#) and [Vintage Woods](#) that is UV resistant, water repellant and rot resistant, and allows the beauty of the wood and its color variation to stand out.”

Sipes added that the Walking Mountain Center is designed to serve as a living example of science education through sustainable design principles of energy efficiency, alternatives to fossil fuels and low to no toxicity materials.

About Zehren and Associates

Zehren and Associates provides full service professional design services in many of the world’s most beautiful and sensitive environments. <http://www.zehren.com/>

About Mithun

Mithun’s architects, interior architects, landscape architects, planners, scientists and designers are working to inspire a sustainable world through leadership, innovation and integrated design. More information at <http://mithun.com/>

About Sansin

For 25 years, Sansin has been the only wood protection company focused exclusively on researching, developing, and introducing environmentally friendly, 'water-borne' interior and exterior wood products and technologies. Sansin's products deliver outstanding color, durability and performance, without the toxicity found in conventional stains. Sansin Enviro Stains use water, not petroleum solvents, to deeply penetrate and protect wood naturally, from within. Sansin has dealer networks in both Canada and the U.S. To learn more about the Sansin Corporation, its line of Enviro Stains or how to become a Sansin preferred dealer, visit <http://www.sansin.com/>. [Or, join us on Facebook.](#)

About Vintage Woods

Vintage Woods originated from different techniques and procedures passed down from generation to generation in the Swanepoel family. Using yester-years techniques with today's modern technology, a unique naturally aged wood product has emerged. Through trial and error, Nick Swanepoel created an all-natural process that produces wood made to look like it has been around forever and naturally blends with the environment. Vintage Woods products can be used in many different architectural applications, whether interior or exterior, structural or decorative. This environmentally-friendly product uses beetle-kill pine wood and low VOC finishes to create a patina that adds distinction to any architectural project. To learn more about Vintage Woods visit www.vintagewoodsinc.net

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