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## Wilderness at the Smokies' Texlon Roof Helps Keep Energy Costs in Check

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SEVIERVILLE, TENN.—It would make sense that a resort called Wilderness at the Smokies would do everything it can to preserve the environment and be an environmentally responsible business. Although thousands of visitors travel from all over to experience the resort's indoor and outdoor water parks every day, many of them don't realize all that Wilderness at the Smokies is doing to be an environmental leader.

The first thing many families notice when entering the indoor water park at Wilderness at the Smokies is that it feels like one is outside on a summer day—even in the middle of winter when it is 20 degrees outside. The see-through Texlon roof that covers the 60,000-square-foot indoor water park allows in sunlight and UV rays. The Texlon roof not only allows guests to tan year round, it allows real plants to thrive indoors and dramatically reduces the resort's energy consumption.

According to John Regnerus, operations director at Wilderness at the Smokies, the resort uses 300 to 400 less therms of natural gas per day to heat the indoor water park during the colder winter months because of the Texlon roof. One therm is the energy equivalent of burning about 100 cubic feet of natural gas and the average U.S. household uses roughly 1,000 therms per year.

### Significant Energy Reduction

"It significantly lowers our energy consumption," Regnerus said. "Over a three or four month period, we can reduce our natural gas usage by 30,000 to nearly 50,000 therms. That's a considerable reduction in our use of fossil fuel."

The difference between an indoor water park with a Texlon roof and one with a standard roof like one would find in a gymnasium is the difference between night and day. The transparency of the Texlon roof and the natural light it allows into Wilderness at the Smokies brings the outdoors in throughout the year.

The natural lighting provided by the Texlon roof at Wilderness at the Smokies also allows the resort to lower its electric consumption by not using artificial lighting during daylight hours. The roof has a built-in ventilation system to circulate more air in the summertime and reduces the resort's use of air-conditioning when it's warm outside.

### Guest Experience Enhanced

"Because of the roof at Wilderness at the Smokies, guests can literally forget they are inside," said Dave Keim of Aquatic Development Group, the company that supplied the Texlon roof to Wilderness at the Smokies. "In the middle of winter, guests are surrounded by live tropical plants, getting a suntan and splashing in the water attractions. The energy savings are important, but what the guests remember is the experience."

Wilderness at the Smokies is a member of the Green Hotels Association. In addition to the Texlon roof over the resort's indoor water park, Wilderness at the Smokies uses energy-saving compact florescent lighting in many areas throughout its facility and all of its appliances and kitchen equipment are the latest Energy Star rated design (using 30 percent less energy than older appliances). Guest rooms at River Lodge are equipped with state-of-the-art key-controlled occupancy sensors which save electricity by turning on lights and the HVAC system as guests enter their rooms. Tinted windows on guest rooms are also designed to reduce energy consumption and motion-sensing towel dispensers in the common areas reduce paper usage.

"Wilderness at the Smokies is adjacent to one of this nation's most valuable

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natural wonders—the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” said Dave McGregor, the general manager of Wilderness at the Smokies. “We value nature and the environment the same way our guests do. Being environmentally responsible is everyone’s responsibility and Wilderness at the Smokies wants to be a leader in this area.”

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