

# The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation:

## Conservation, Sustainability, and Forward Thinking

**Missoula, Mont.**—The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation practiced what it preaches—conservation, sustainability and forward vision—when it built its new \$12 million visitor’s center at its national headquarters in Missoula, Mont.

Complying with its conservation theme of ensuring the future of elk, other wildlife, and their habitats, the 9,000-square-foot Elk Country Visitor’s Center not only features energy-saving state-of-the-art construction and mechanical HVAC systems, but also aesthetics that suit its surrounding natural 23-acre preserve.

The “no holds barred” design includes R-40 roofing, natural lighting, recycled rainwater for landscaping, natural building materials void of toxic paints, coatings, preservatives and other chemicals, high efficiency lighting and mechanical equipment, not to mention a host of innovative products such as aesthetic and energy-saving fabric HVAC ductwork.

“They wanted this building to be a role model of sustainability, so all the major players—architects, engineers, contractors—were given freedom to create and specify the

most cutting edge innovations,” said Thomas Wolgamot, P.E., the mechanical engineer who led the mechanical/electrical/plumbing design team for the project’s consulting engineering firm, GPD Engineers, Missoula, Mont.

One of the first innovative products chosen for the project was fabric ductwork. Martin Noyd, partner, OZ Architects, Missoula; mechanical contractor, Metal Works of Montana, Missoula; and Wolgamot were all in agreement that fabric duct was a more aesthetic choice over spiral metal duct because of its high visibility in the open architecture of the towering 40-foot-high vaulted ceiling and natural lodge-style interiors.

GPD specified DuctSox, Dubuque, Iowa, U.S.-made fabric duct, which has streamlined less industrial looking features without the protruding registers and ribbing associated with spiral metal duct. The earth-colored tan Sedona-Xm, which doesn’t attract mold-generating condensation or top surface dust because 15 percent of the air flows through the fabric, was chosen particularly for its linear diffusers that distribute air more evenly than metal registers, thus requiring less HVAC equipment operating time, according to Wolgamot, who recently became a branch manager of DC Engineering, Missoula.

“There are many hardwood surfaces, so the fabric duct helps soften both texturally and acoustically,” added Noyd, who previously collaborated with Wolgamot and Beaudette to use fabric duct at Missoula’s Iron Horse Bar & Grill. The fabric soaks up some sound, plus it doesn’t reverberate mechanical equipment and airflow noise as much as metal duct.”



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Because fabric duct is 90 percent lighter than its metal counterpart, less obtrusive and lighter hanging materials were needed to suspend the H-track support system 15 feet above the floor area, according to Allen Kitts, general manager of Metal Works of Montana.

Using fabric duct saved the project an estimated 15 percent in labor, plus using natural resources such as metal were avoided, which are two of several issues that help buildings qualify for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) credits from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), Washington, D.C. “Using sustainable products may or may not always be the most cost-effective for budget, but in this case fabric duct saved thousands of dollars,” added Kitts.



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