

THE WILDERNESS CENTER, INC.



THE WILDERNESS CENTER

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NEWS RELEASE

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The Wilderness Center Appoints Jeffrey R. Corney Executive Director

Wilmot, Ohio – December 18, 2013 – The Wilderness Center today announced the appointment of Dr. Jeffrey R. Corney as Executive Director, succeeding Gordon T. Maupin, who recently announced his retirement after 32 years of service in the role. Corney will take up his duties on April 1, 2014.

Corney joins The Wilderness Center from the University of Minnesota, where he spent the past eight years as Managing Director of the University's Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve. This 5,400-acre reserve is a large ecological research site in central Minnesota with natural habitats that represent the entire state, providing the venue for research, conservation and education programs.

Corney, who holds Master's and Doctoral degrees in Natural Resources from The Ohio State University, oversaw all aspects of Cedar Creek's operations and was instrumental in expanding the reserve's educational and outreach programs. Prior to coming to Cedar Creek in 2006, Corney spent four years as an Assistant Professor at Lynchburg College and the first full-time Director of the college's Claytor Nature Study Center, a 470-acre field station and nature center located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.

"The fact that we were able to attract a leader of Jeff's caliber to become our new Executive Director speaks to The Wilderness Center's strength, stability and dynamism over our first 50 years," said C. Andrew Haag, Managing Partner at Regas & Haag and President of the Board of Directors at The Wilderness Center. "As we look to our second half century, I am confident Jeff's leadership excellence, science education credentials and innovative track record will help us continue to create sustainable value for our community while offering cutting-edge programs that are a model for other nature centers to follow."

The Wilderness Center has become the leading land conservation and nature education organization in northeast Ohio. The Center's education programs are an invaluable resource for teachers across the region, who can choose from 34 educational programs geared toward elementary through college students benefiting more than 7,000 children each year.

Individuals and families also take advantage of the educational opportunities at The Wilderness Center each year. Thousands of area residents participate in more than 100 adult and family education programs annually, many of which take place the Dale and Loretta Hart Interpretive Building and on the surrounding headquarters tract near Wilmot in southern Stark County, Ohio. The Wilderness Center has also expanded its educational programs to reach even more people with unique offerings, such as eco-tours and a weekly podcast, *Wild Ideas*.

“With the success he has had developing and implementing innovative educational programs throughout his career,” said Haag. “Jeff has the experience we need to extend the reach of our on-site educational programs while also helping us adapt to today’s virtual-learning environments. At the same time, he has the conservation expertise we need to manage our ever-expanding portfolio of land for the benefit of our ecosystem and the enjoyment of our community.”

Founded in 1963, The Wilderness Center today has approximately 3,500 acres under its stewardship, including nearly 2,000 acres owned directly by The Wilderness Center. It also holds several important conservation easements, which allow land owners to remain on their land while protecting it for the future. They also benefit from The Wilderness Center’s deep conservation expertise in the development and implementation of long-term management plans.

In recent years, The Wilderness Center has broadened its land conservation impact by using its Revolving Land Fund to enable other nature organizations in the region to acquire new land. Through the Revolving Land Fund, The Wilderness Center can quickly purchase key parcels for nonprofit organizations or government agencies and hold that land until funds can be raised by the partner entity to repurchase the land.

“As only the third Executive Director at The Wilderness Center in 50 years, I look forward to advancing the mission of an organization that has become such a strong resource for the community while also offering a number of cutting-edge programs,” said Corney. “I am eager to put my ideas and energy to work as a member of a team that has earned the respect not only of its local community, but also the broader conservation and nature education fields.”

In recent years, The Wilderness Center has launched innovative new programs to extend the value it brings to the community beyond the programs on offer at a traditional nature center. Through its efforts to restore and protect wetlands, The Wilderness Center has provided the mitigation credits needed to enable critical economic development projects to move forward, including the expansion of the Canton-Akron airport. The Center also provides consulting forestry services to advise land owners on the sustainable harvest of trees, and operates Foxfield Preserve, a nature preserve cemetery using sustainable green burial techniques, the only one of its kind in Ohio.

For more information, please visit www.wildernesscenter.org or contact **Dr. Jeffrey R. Corney**, Managing Director Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve. Cell: (763) 222-5449

The Wilderness Center (TWC) is a nonprofit nature center and land conservancy. The headquarters is located one mile west of Wilmot, Ohio just north of highway 250. TWC serves a seven-county region in northeast Ohio. The Center is dedicated to connecting our community with nature, educating people of all ages, conserving natural resources and practicing environmental stewardship. The Center derives its support from memberships and donations. It is not a government agency and is not supported by taxes. The Wilderness Center is conserving more than 3,258 acres of wetlands, forests, prairies, farmland and more.