



**“...YOU SHOULD LEAVE  
THIS WORLD BETTER  
THAN WHEN YOU  
CAME INTO IT...”**

~ Pat McFadden

a place to  
**grow**

Guided by the vision of Larry “Pat” McFadden, McFadden Nature Center is more than just a piece of land; it’s a living legacy of his dream for our community—a sanctuary where nature, people, and purpose thrive together. Set across 1,200 acres, this land is being transformed by dedicated volunteers, employees and visionaries since 1999, helping a previously neglected landscape to be a thriving, sustainable environment rich with native plants and wildlife.

At McFadden Nature Center our vision is to create a space where the community not only witnesses nature’s beauty but also becomes its guardian. Here, we hope people of all ages come to know and cherish the land, water, and air that sustain us. Through immersive, hands-on experiences, we aim to inspire curiosity, foster a peaceful environment, and build an enduring commitment to conservation. Together, we can create a place where nature, people, ideas, and hope flourish side by side, leaving the world a little better than we found it.

## VISION

Our vision is to share a responsibility to conserve and preserve our natural places, and enhance appreciation and love for the land, water and air that we share. To spark curiosity, and joyfully share the quiet peace that comes from time and close attention to nature and our own human spirit. To link actions to hearts. To be a place to grow...for nature, for people, for community, for ideas, and for hope.



## MISSION

To share and care for the land, air, water, and animals entrusted to us through meaningful environmental education, balanced conservation and preservation, for the benefit of our community now and future generations.

## OUR MISSION AND VISION ARE UPHELD THROUGH THREE ESSENTIAL PILLARS: EDUCATION FOR ALL, MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION.

- **Education for All:** We will offer interactive and hands-on experiences in our museum, provide interpretive signage along trails, develop school and homeschool programs, create accessibility programs for children and adults with special needs, and organize programs for families and adults.
- **Meaningful Engagement:** We connect with people and nature through initiatives that promote health and wellness, provide physical and financial accessibility, and involve the community through a robust volunteer program.
- **Environmental Conservation:** We manage and protect the land, support native species, maintain wildlife habitats, and engage the public in conservation practices through ongoing education.

### EDUCATION FOR ALL

McFadden Nature Center will be a vibrant hub where children and adults alike can explore nature and discover their connection to the world through engaging, hands-on experiences.

Throughout the outdoor trails and natural spaces at McFadden Nature Center, families will find countless opportunities to learn while they explore. Our programs will expand these experiences with onsite workshops, events, animal presentations, and activities designed to spark curiosity. We'll partner with schools, special needs classrooms, and homeschool families to offer field trips that include interactive activities, inspiring students to marvel at the natural world and develop a love for life sciences. Children of all abilities who visit the center will engage in activities that bring to life our native plants and wildlife, natural features, and rich biodiversity, helping them understand how people impact and interact with the environment. In addition to hands-on learning in one of our three classrooms, they'll have miles of trails teeming with native plants and animals to further explore and discover.

And grown-ups will be learning too! McFadden Nature Center will offer nature-focused educational programs tailored to adults, designed to foster a deeper understanding of our natural surroundings and the mental and physical benefits of being outdoors. We'll hold programs on birdwatching, native plant care, photography, and lectures on topics that resonate with our community in our spacious classrooms or conference room. Collaborating with local environmental groups and associations, we aim to expand our offerings, making McFadden Nature Center a vital resource for environmental education in our community.





## MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

McFadden Nature Center will be a place where people can connect deeply with nature. Our Museum will be ADA-accessible, and we'll offer electric golf carts to ensure that those with mobility challenges can explore the site comfortably. Nature should be accessible to all, and we believe everyone deserves the chance to engage meaningfully with the natural world. To help make this possible for everyone, McFadden Nature Center will partner with the Museums for All program to offer free admission for EBT cardholders, a substantial number in our community and surrounding areas.

A robust volunteer program will also foster meaningful engagement, offering volunteers and visitors alike the opportunity to connect with nature and participate in enriching discussions. Research shows that time spent in nature has significant benefits for both mental and physical health, for both children and adults. At McFadden Nature Center, providing opportunities for high-quality nature engagement is central to our mission and contributes to the overall well-being of our community. We will be a place to unwind, unplug, and reconnect with nature.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

The McFadden Nature Center will tell the story of our region's unique environment—its native flora and fauna, conservation efforts, waterways, and our essential connection to them. Our area boasts rich biodiversity across both the plant and animal kingdoms, a legacy worth celebrating and protecting. Through our exhibits, we'll showcase the unique ecosystems of our region while highlighting the responsibility we all share to conserve and protect this beautiful world.

At McFadden Nature Center, we don't just educate the public about nature, we actively work to preserve it. Our commitment includes a rigorous program of land and wildlife management, controlled burns, invasive species removal, the planting and reintroduction of native species, and wetland restoration. By taking the lead in conservation, we aim to inspire visitors to make a difference, empowering them to help protect and enhance the environment.

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## THE NEED FOR NATURE

In our county and surrounding areas, poverty levels are significant, with 96.7% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Schools with limited resources often struggle to provide hands-on science education, and many families lack the disposable income to visit nature and science centers, leaving children without access to high-quality environmental learning experiences.

Within a 50-mile radius of the Nature Center—encompassing parts of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida—there are 203 schools where 96.7% of students receive free or reduced lunch. Many of these schools face challenges in offering hands-on science and nature-based learning in the classroom. This has created an "opportunity divide" across the tri-state area, with accessible science-based experiences concentrated in larger, more urbanized areas. The Nature Center is uniquely positioned to bridge this gap, offering a much needed opportunity for students to explore, engage, and discover science and nature close to home.

Research underscores the mental and physical health benefits of spending time in nature, with just two hours per week in natural environments linked to increased happiness, reduced anxiety and depression, and a stronger sense of purpose. These effects are most profound in high-quality natural spaces—places rich in biodiversity, free of litter, with serene landscapes and open green areas. For children, regular nature exposure significantly boosts well-being, leading to greater happiness and lower levels of anxiety and depression. A 2019 long-term study further found that children raised with access to green spaces have a reduced risk of developing anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and substance abuse issues as adults.



## WHY MCFADDEN NATURE CENTER MATTERS

A nature center like McFadden is especially important for a rural community with high poverty levels. Our region lacks nature-based educational spaces, with few environmental centers, botanical gardens, zoos, and science museums in Seminole County or within a 50-mile radius. By contrast, these resources are concentrated near major city centers in Georgia and Alabama, highlighting the disparity in access for our community.

McFadden Nature Center aims to fill this gap, providing a high-quality nature experience that is green, serene, and biodiverse. It serves as a place for education, environmental engagement, and conservation — a vital resource for our community and a beacon of natural learning for the region.

## OUR HISTORY

McFadden Nature Center began as a passion project for Larry “Pat” McFadden (August 8, 1947 - October 21, 2008) and a group of dedicated friends. Pat was a man of many talents and interests, ranging from music boxes and planes to welding, boats, art, shooting pool, hunting, and conservation.

In 1999, Pat, Angela, and Raymond established the Lokchasassa Wilderness Project (now known as McFadden Nature Center), a 1,240-acre sanctuary in Seminole County dedicated to protecting native plants and wildlife.

Until his passing in 2008, Pat and his friends worked tirelessly on land restoration, removing truckloads of baling twine and trash, dismantling 25 miles of fencing that was potentially harmful to wildlife, repairing wetland dams, enhancing water control devices for native species, conducting controlled burns, and creating native food plots.

Pat envisioned a public nature center where everyone could enjoy the beauty of the outdoors and where native plants and animals could thrive.

After decades of land restoration and wildlife management, McFadden Nature Center broke ground in July 2024, for the Welcome Center. This center will provide information about the property and local flora and fauna, and feature 18 holes of disc golf, as well as the Woodland Trail, Wetland Trail, and Agricultural Trail, offering access to over 1,200 acres of stunning Georgia wildlife and plants. Family-friendly, accessible bathrooms will be available on-site, along with rentable electric golf carts.

On the opposite side of the property, an RV site with hookups and a primitive camping area will be developed alongside a newly restored wetland and Lagoon Trail. This area will also include a children’s playground, bathrooms, shower facilities, and a laundry room. Visitors will enjoy views of our Pecan Orchard, which boasts over 600 pecan trees, providing a serene environment to engage with nature and appreciate the region’s natural beauty.

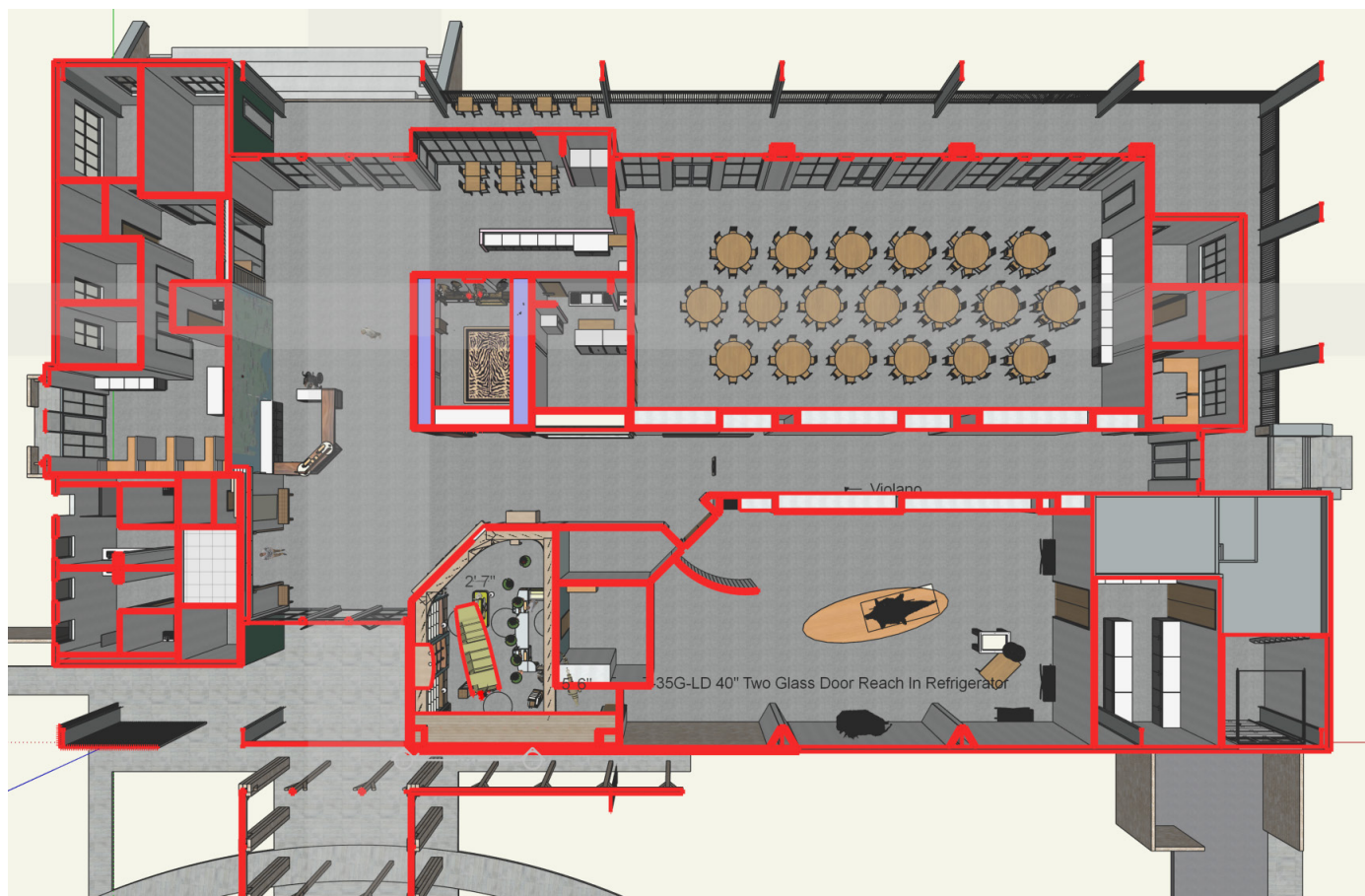




## BRIDGE TO THE NATURAL WORLD

The crown jewel of McFadden Nature Center will be a 17,000-square-foot museum, designed as a community gathering space, educational hub, and a place for growth in Donalsonville, Georgia. The Museum will feature exhibits on native Georgia flora and fauna, our local watershed, environmental conservation, and the role of hunting as a conservation tool in both Southwest Georgia and South Africa. Serving as a gateway to outdoor learning, it will inspire discovery of the natural world all around us.

Upon entering, visitors will be welcomed by a life-sized Live Oak, the centerpiece of our lobby, and greeted by staff ready to answer questions and guide their Museum journey. The Museum will immerse visitors in interactive exhibitions showcasing Southwest Georgia's remarkable wildlife — from the elusive bobcat and familiar white-tailed deer to the turkey, armadillo, and the wetland residents such as alligators, fish, and wood ducks. Each regional ecosystem will be thoughtfully interpreted for all ages, with hands-on opportunities to engage directly with the environment.







As they explore further, visitors will encounter an exhibition on our watershed, examining its impact on the environment, the current challenges it faces, and ways to protect clean water access. A separate exhibit room, the South African Room, will draw comparisons between the native species of Southern Africa and Georgia, discussing hunting's complex role as a conservation tool. Visitors can even ride "Sneaky," Pat's original golf cart, where multimedia displays share the history of McFadden Nature Center and the ongoing conservation efforts on-site.

Education will be central to the Museum's mission, with three classrooms, a conference room, an amphitheater, and a spacious open-air porch providing flexible spaces for schools, families, adults, and other groups to learn about our natural environment. Both inside and outside the museum, artworks will enhance the area's natural beauty and foster a deeper connection to the land. Administrative offices within the Museum will ensure that Museum Education staff and directors can actively engage with visitors, offering hands-on programming throughout the day.

Nestled within a diverse, native landscape, the Museum will be surrounded by pollinator-friendly flowers, overlooking a scenic land formation known as the "big bowl," and a newly restored natural wetland pond in the woodline to encourage native species to flourish. Upon leaving, visitors will be inspired to explore the trails, encounter the native species onsite, and reconnect with the natural world with fresh eyes and renewed wonder.



# McFadden

NATURE  CENTER

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**ESTABLISHED 1999**

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