

A Proposal to Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

History & Setting

The Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center originated from an extraordinary act of generosity when Fred Schroeder approached State Parks about building a nature center at Thompson's Lake. Fred had benefited as a child from a summer camp at the Lake and wanted to pay it forward to future generations of children. With the completion of the Center in 2000, thus launched a public – private partnership in nature-based education that thrives to this day. Now the Center welcomes over 8,500 visitors per year to observe nature, go on a guided hike, or participate in programs about the area's animals, plants and minerals led by the education staff.

“the Top 20 List of places to take kids in the Capital District!” from Kids Out and About Albany.

Keeping true to Fred's vision, the Center reigns as one of the most popular attractions for children's education in the Capital District.

In 2023, our educators provided nature-based programming to over 3,000 students from local school districts on field trips. Not only was the Center built with private philanthropy, but Fred and Martha Schroeder also established an endowment to ensure that the Nature Center would always remain vibrant. Proceeds of the Schroeder endowment enable the hiring of an educator to augment the State's investment in a Center Director and other program and maintenance staff.



Governor Pataki dedicates the Center
July 17, 2001



The Thachers begin acquiring land along the Helderberg Escarpment to protect it from development.

1909

Emma donates 350 acres in honor of her husband, establishing John Boyd Thacher State Park.

1920

Opening of the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center

1906

John Boyd Thacher passes away. Emma inherits several ridge-top parcels.

1914

Emma donates an additional 50 acres: 40 acres for Thompson's Lake Campground. 10 acres for the Albany Boy's Camp (now the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center).

2000

A Call to Reinvent

The Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center still sports the original exhibits and displays as constructed in 2000. We have learned a lot over the decades about what works best to capture the attention of young minds and how to efficiently manage space for large groups of kids, families and chaperones. Many of our displays, exhibits, and finishes should be reconsidered after decades of service.

- **With floor space at a premium, exhibits were evaluated for their size and utility.**
- **Improvements are required for the Center to be welcoming to all abilities.**

We propose an interior transformation of the center in celebration of its 25th anniversary. With thoughtful direction from dedicated nature education professionals and the creativity of an architectural design firm specializing in public exhibit spaces, the Center can be made more accessible, more useful, and more engaging to children, our prime audience.



BUDGET

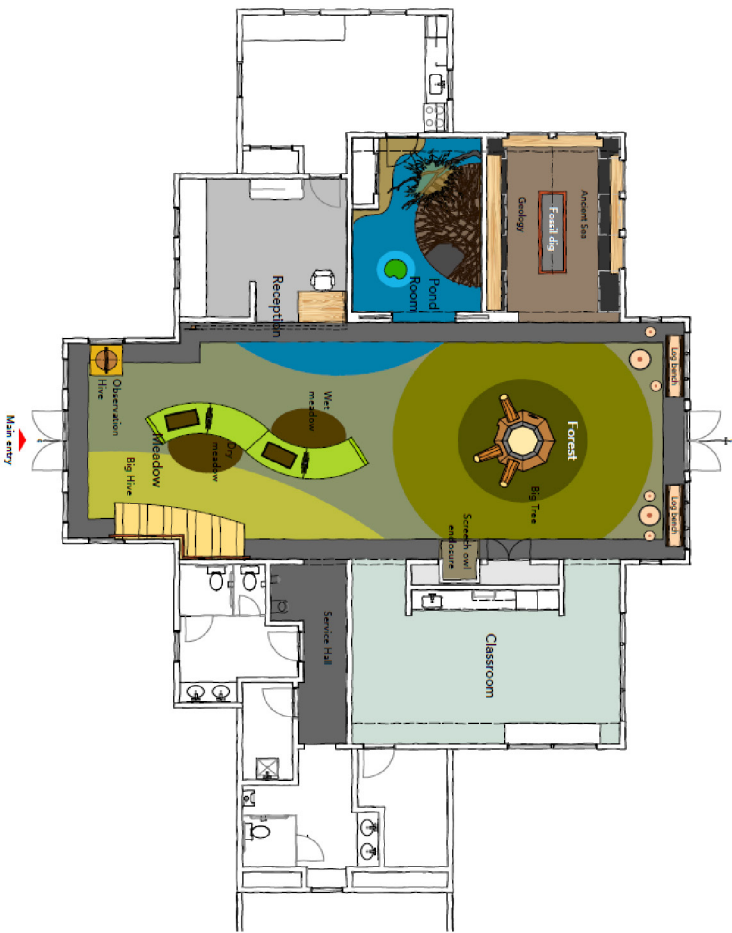
The interior renovations you see below can be accomplished with **\$300,000**. Our goal is to amass this funding through a combination of private donations and grants. State Parks will continue to maintain and invest capital improvements as needed for utilities, building envelope and site work including parking, trails, gardens and more.



Current Conditions



Proposed Plan & Renderings



Final Scheme: Exhibit Plan

Key Features

The final scheme is organized thematically around three habitats, Meadow, Pond and Forest. Each habitat features a structure that kids can climb on or crawl into.

The Meadow area features a structure of six-sided plywood boxes stacked like a honeycomb. Each cell is large enough for younger kids to crawl into or sit in. The stack of cells is low enough for younger visitors to walk over.

The Wet Meadow/Dry Meadow exhibit is a curved tabletop with two sections each with a live animal tank + horizontal and vertical surfaces for flexible displays.

The Forest area features a tall eight sided wood framed, structure with a plywood exterior and interior meant to look like a big tree, surrounded by an open play area.

The ancient sea / geology room features a fossil dig. Two long countertops and base cabinets flank the fossil dig and open shelves line three walls.

The Pond Room features a stick-built wood structure in the shape of a beaver den and an actual Blue heron nest set on a tree trunk and branches, a lilly pad jump activity, animal magnet activity, and a pond landscape mural on all walls and doors.



After



Our Team

Carley Kiernan

John Boyd Thacher State Park Manager/ Thompson's Lake Campground Park Manager

Becky Schneider

Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center Director

Peter Farquharson

Environmental Education Assistant

Daniel DiMaggio

Maintenance and Front Desk

SCA (Student Conservation Association) Interns:

Annika Dahlin

Environmental Education

