



# Inside AWF

*“Working for Wildlife since 1935”*

Alabama Wildlife Federation ♦ 3050 Lanark Road ♦ Millbrook, Alabama 36054 ♦ 1-800-822-WILD

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## Conservation Education

### AWF Launches Alabama Nature Center Phase 1

It's an exciting time to be a part of AWF! Previously in Inside AWF we shared with you our vision for a world-class outdoor education facility at Lanark. Two key steps were taken recently in our quest to make this dream a reality. On June 14, 2006 AWF launched Phase I of the Alabama Nature Center (ANC) by signing a \$1.26 million trail and boardwalk construction contract. This was followed with the signing of a \$330,000 Outdoor Pavilion construction contract on August 25th. Funds for Phase I were secured through the help of Senator Richard Shelby and through private donations.

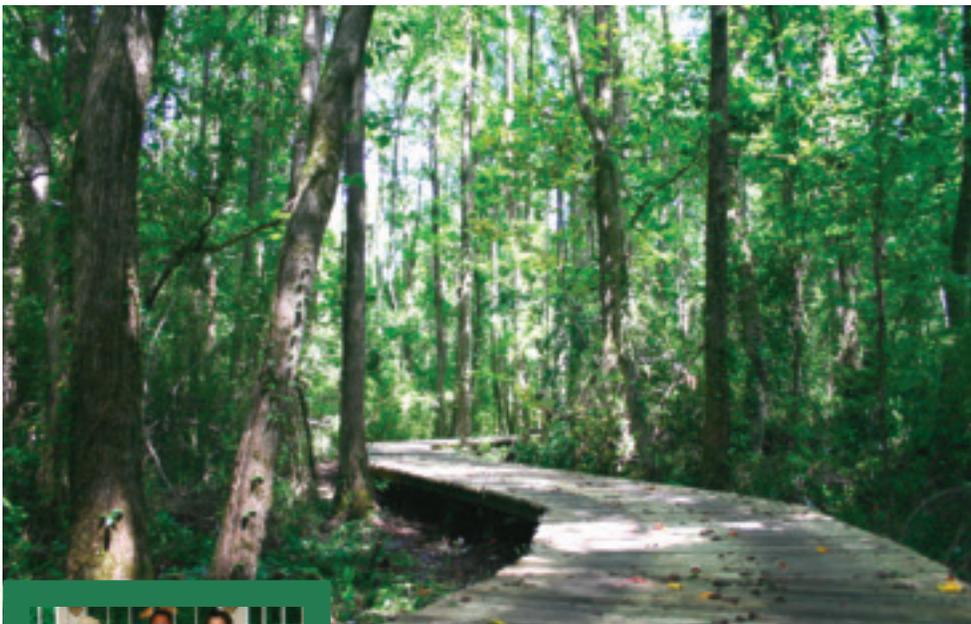
Phase I will create over four miles of boardwalks and trails that will traverse the unique and abundant natural resources found on the 340 acres at Lanark. Complemented by the 7,200 square foot outdoor pavilion, these amenities will allow us to further expand our hands-on outdoor education activities with school groups and the general public. Most importantly, it will expand our leadership role in perpetuating

the wise use and responsible natural resource stewardship ethic that embodies AWF.

The initial vision for the Alabama Nature Center was established by the AWF Board in January 2001. Following that monumental and strategic decision, AWF conducted multiple focus group meetings across the state to determine if our vision for the ANC was indeed valid. Based on overwhelming feedback, our convictions were validated. The focus group participants reported to us a lack of outdoor learning opportunities that are hands-on, affordable and that fulfill core educational requirements. They also expressed to us a deep-seeded desire for a high quality outdoor education facility with natural resources such as ponds, streams, wetlands, fields and forests, and trails and facilities that would offer students and the general public a first-hand, world class outdoor experience.

Phase I is the result of the passion and commitment of many people. AWF Past President Bo Starke of Montgomery, one of many AWF leaders who have devoted countless hours to this project, put it this way: "It is simply awesome. Phase I will provide more educational opportunities for students and adults than we ever imagined. I'm proud to be a part of this and it fires me up even more to see it come to life."

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Present at the Alabama Nature Center Phase I (Trail Phase) contract signing were:

(Bottom L-R) Rick Pate of Pate Landscaping Co., AWF Executive Director Tim Gothard, and AWF President Ted DeVos

(Top L-R) AWF Office Manager Alicia Olesen, Chuck Kelly of Gresham Smith and Partners, and AWF Development Officer Ann Harper

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AWF Past President Bill Ireland of Birmingham said “All my life the outdoor experience has been my greatest passion. I want the children of today and tomorrow to have that same passion. This step will begin a new chapter in AWF’s efforts to make sure it happens rather than simply hope it happens.”

Dr. Jeff McCollum, AWF Past President from Decatur and a leader in the development of AWF’s Conservation Education programs views it this way: “Conservation education was my top priority as AWF President and it remains so today. The concepts we have promoted through the Outdoor Classroom Program, Discovering Our Heritage, and Lanark Field Days will come alive at the Alabama Nature Center. I’ll be working to send every child I know through this facility.”

Lee Thuston, long time AWF Board Member and current AWF 1st Vice President from Birmingham said: “This is just the first step. Our vision encompasses much more, including a Center complex and educational classrooms. Phase I will be a big help in bringing those aspects to reality as well.”

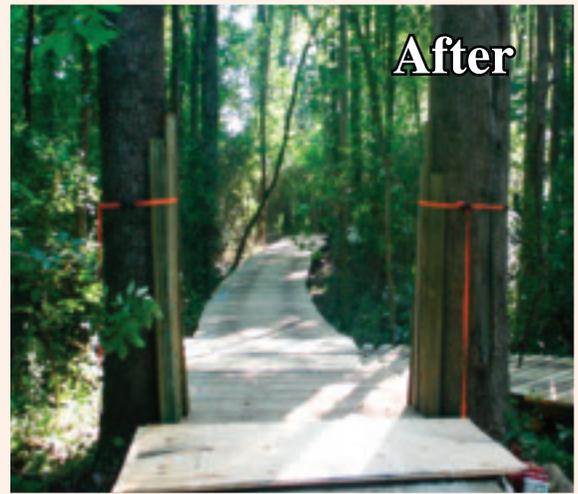
Riley Boykin Smith, current AWF President from Mobile put it into context this way: “Right now, I’m reading a book called ‘Last Child in the Woods’ which documents that our

younger generations are losing contact with the outdoors and the natural world. We can’t sit back and let that continue. Phase I is the beginning of a major step by AWF to help correct this trend.”

When complete, students and the general public will be able to experience habitats that they seldom see up close, such as forested wetlands containing tupelo gum and cypress stands, beech, oak, and hickory dominated upland hardwood forests, and pine ridges – all in one place. Not only will they see it, AWF will also make sure that children and adults who visit the facility get hands-on and truly experience the outdoors. Activities will include expansion of our popular Lanark Field Days for school groups, and programs such as youth fishing academies, basic and advanced birding, pond study and wetland ecology, outdoor photography, young biologist and young forester clubs, wildlife management seminars, wildlife management demonstrations, and much, much more.

Stay tuned for more updates on the ongoing development of the Alabama Nature Center and the grand opening in Spring, 2007.

## Alabama Nature Center Trail Highlights



Boardwalks were planned with sensitivity to the natural environment and will connect to learning areas scattered throughout the property. When completed, interpretive signs and postings will be placed at points of high interest or educational merit.

