



## **Elephant Futures Vision Question and Answer—March 28, 2014 For External Distribution**

### **OVERVIEW AND VISION**

**1. Why is Woodland Park Zoo announcing a new direction for its elephant program?**

Woodland Park Zoo has been caring for elephants here since 1921 and has long been committed to ensuring a future for elephants in zoos and in the wild. Following a critical and thorough external review of our current elephant program, the zoo has developed a new strategic direction for our elephant program and our Board of Directors has adopted a resolution to approve it. The board determined the strategic direction for our elephant exhibit and program. It is an Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) requirement that the zoo's President and CEO makes decisions regarding our animal collection.

**2. Why are you focusing on an all-Asian elephant population?**

Woodland Park Zoo has for years participated in the Species Survival Plan (SSP) for Asian elephants and the species is highly endangered in the wild. Over the next five years, the zoo will commit \$1.5 to \$3 million to strengthen the Asian elephant program at the zoo and play a key role in multiple elephant conservation arenas. AZA recommends that elephants be cared for in single species social groupings.

**3. How will you acquire more elephants? What is the timeframe to make this happen?**

It will be a priority to begin the exhibit improvements and program investments necessary to support growing the herd, but acquiring new elephants may take time. We will carefully assess all our options while preparing for the various challenges facing the North American elephant population, namely availability and age. Social and health assessments will be important components to any decision and selection process. In the short-term, however, we can begin progress on enriching the elephants' environment, enhancing the guest experience and educational programming, and strengthening our advocacy role.

**4. How will the zoo enhance its commitment to elephant welfare and conservation?**

While we continue to focus our program on Asian elephants, the zoo remains committed to preserving both African and Asian elephant species in the wild through field partnerships. We will be a key partner in the Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) *96 Elephants* campaign, named for the number of African elephants currently gunned down each day by poachers. Through this global advocacy campaign, we will partner with a network of citizens and leaders to help end the ivory trade. The U.S. is the second largest importer of ivory. An estimated 35,000 African elephants were slaughtered by poachers in 2012 alone due largely to the demand of elephant ivory. Elephants are facing extreme pressure in the wild, particularly from conflicts with humans in Asia. The World Wildlife Fund estimates only 25,600 to 32,750 Asian elephants remain in their 13 range countries in South Asia and Southeastern Asia. Strong and effective programs on grounds and through digital communications that draw attention to this crisis will be even more critical than ever before.

### **WOODLAND PARK ZOO'S ELEPHANTS**

**5. How many elephants do you currently have?**

We presently have two female Asian elephants, 47-year-old Bamboo and 35-year-old Chai, and one female African, 45-year-old Watoto.

**6. Why are you moving Watoto?**

We have determined we cannot safely integrate our herd as recommended by the Elephant Task Force. Since our strategic direction is now focused on Asian elephants, staff will begin formulating a plan to integrate Watoto, our one African elephant, into a herd at another AZA-accredited institution.

**7. What is your timeline for moving Watoto to another facility?**

Under our high animal care standards, moving any animal to a new home, especially an elephant, requires a very thoughtful, deliberative process. We will immediately begin the process of carefully evaluating other zoos accredited by AZA to identify a future home for Watoto that will match her with a healthy, compatible social grouping to ensure her ongoing health and well-being. Watoto is healthy, so we hope to find a new home and move her before the end of 2014.

**8. Are any of the private facilities in California and Tennessee being considered as a new home for Watoto?**

We would only send our elephants to a facility accredited by AZA. The facilities in California and Tennessee do not share our mission of conservation and education nor do they have the same rigorous elephant care and veterinary standards as AZA. By contrast, AZA-accredited zoos focus not only on the care of individual elephants, but also on the welfare of the total population in North American zoos and on the fate of elephants in the wild.

**9. Will you bring a bull in to breed with Chai?**

A medical examination last winter on Chai identified an ovarian cyst and a benign uterine fibroid. These findings, while not detrimental to her overall health, greatly reduce the possibility of her having a successful pregnancy so bringing a bull in to breed with Chai is no longer feasible. We have initiated the process of identifying Asian elephants that can join the zoo and we are optimistic about adding to the herd in the near future.

**10. If you can't acquire additional elephants within a few years, will you phase out the elephant program?**

The effort to grow the Asian elephant herd can't happen quickly. We will launch a design phase in 2014, with construction projected to begin in 2015. We have started exploring prospects for acquiring new elephants and are confident about our prospects.

**EXHIBIT AND FUNDING**

**11. Will the Elephant Forest be expanded? What kinds of physical improvements will be made?**

In the near-term, we will focus on making improvements to the award-winning Elephant Forest, which opened in 1989, including: adding greater flexibility to how animals enter and exit the barn, increasing the diversity of surfaces in the yard and barn even more than current, installing timed feeders in the yards and barn, expanding enrichment opportunities, increasing the complexity of the yard, adding supplemental wind/rain shelters and outdoor heating, and upgrading barn cams to allow for 24-hour monitoring.

Expanding the exhibit is a long-term option that will be a part of our strategic planning process; the zoo's updated strategic plan is currently being developed.

**12. Will the zoo need to raise funds to make improvements to the elephant exhibit and support the strategic direction of the elephant program? How much?**

Fundraising is always a key part of our efforts related to building new exhibits and expanding our current exhibits. The zoo's board has committed \$500,000 now to put the plan in motion and make this vision a reality, and over the next five years, we will commit \$1.5 to \$3 million to strengthen our Asian elephant program and play a key role in multiple elephant conservation arenas.

**13. Other AZA zoos have expanded its acreage or built brand new spacious exhibits. Is there room to expand the exhibit within the current footprint?**

These options will be explored during the design process.