

# Annual Plan to the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation for 2016

December 1, 2015

**Public Comment period:** December 1, 2015 through midnight, December 30, 2015. Please direct comments: Attention: Annual Plan to [webkeeper@zoo.org](mailto:webkeeper@zoo.org). Written comments may be mailed to: Woodland Park Zoo, 5500 Phinney Avenue N., Seattle, WA, 98103, Attention: "Annual Plan Comments."

This annual plan for Woodland Park Zoo is submitted to the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation as specified by the Zoo Operations and Management Agreement between the City of Seattle and the Woodland Park Zoological Society. The purpose of the annual plan is to highlight any major program changes, capital improvements or other key developments to improve the zoo as a community-wide asset.

**Public participation and community comments:** Submitted annually in the fourth quarter, the plan is available for review and comment on the zoo website, <http://www.zoo.org/annual-reports> as well as in hard copy at the zoo's administrative offices, 5500 Phinney Avenue N. Copies are provided as well to the zoo's Neighborhood Liaison Committee, which consists of representatives of the neighboring community councils and other groups.

## Overview and major goals

The major new attraction at Woodland Park Zoo in 2016 will be the return of the zoo's popular walk-through butterfly exhibit, featuring many North American species of butterflies and moths. A previous exhibit was closed due to budget cuts during the 2009 recession. Re-opening the exhibit had been planned as soon as the zoo's operating budget permitted.

The location of the exhibit will change. Instead of its previous location near the North Meadow, the Butterfly Garden will be in a relatively unused area of the zoo, near the former west entry.

Adjacent to the site, at Zoomazium, the zoo will build a small stage, along with rustic outdoor seating, to be used for programs with ambassador animals. These are animals trained to be out of enclosures and available for up-close guest experiences; a few can even be touched. Although the exact species have not yet been determined, some potential animals include striped skunk, raccoon, mini pot-bellied pig, laughing kookaburra and red-knobbed hornbill. Zoo staff this year have been building holding areas for the presentation animals. After this introduction in 2016, an expanded program with more animals is planned in 2017.

Taken together, the Butterfly Garden and the new ambassador animal stage will bring a focus to another part of the zoo, increasing the capacity to use existing buildings, including new technology and programming in the 10-year-old Zoomazium.

In order to accommodate the butterfly area, some older water pipes and utilities have been replaced, accomplished with funds from the city's Metropolitan Park District levy.

While new animals come to the zoo monthly, and other animals are sent to other zoos, one significant new addition in 2016 will be two bontebok (a medium-sized African antelope), who will join other animals on the African Savanna.

A significant effort, on the part of the Woodland Park Zoo board, will be devoted to a search for a new President and Chief Executive Officer. A search firm retained late in 2015 expects to identify potential candidates in the first quarter of 2016.

### **2016 financial outlook**

The zoo anticipates fairly flat attendance in 2016, basing the revenue budget on estimated attendance of 1.33 million, which was a record in 2015. The annual operating budget of \$36 million also will be flat, but there will be a slight decrease in spending over 2015 levels.

No membership or admission rate increases are planned at the zoo this year, although daily parking rates will increase to \$6 from the current \$5.25. It is the first parking-rate increase since city parking taxes were increased in 2011. Zoo admission pricing is heavily discounted during the winter months. For 2016, the winter discount will end on March 31 and resume on Oct. 1.

A number of popular, special attractions will return in 2016, such as Bunny Bounce, Mom and Me, and others. New next year will be "Spring Safari: African Wildlife Conservation Day." The day will cap a week of activities – to coincide with spring break in Seattle Public Schools – that is to include programs and talks on conservation partners of Woodland Park Zoo who are operating animal-conservation programs in Africa. There also will be a focus on African animals in the zoo's collection.

### **Capital projects and major maintenance**

In long-term capital projects, the zoo will begin work to re-open the night exhibit, which was closed in 2010 because of budget and related issues. Zoo staff will begin preliminary design on renovations, and private fundraising will begin with a goal of opening the exhibit for the 2018 season. It is expected that parks district major maintenance funds will be used, in addition to more than \$2 million in private fundraising for the \$3.3 million project.

In addition, zoo staff will begin to develop plans for use of the former elephant yard and Asian Tropical Forest, a 3.4-acre area at the southeast part of the zoo. Animal-management staff will develop alternative plans for the area, and the zoo will initiate a public process to ask the community – members, guests, neighbors and other members of the community – to express their preference for future development of the area.

When the zoo first began operating as a private, non-profit after separating from the city of Seattle in 2002, about \$11 million in major-maintenance projects were identified, and the Management Agreement with the city provided funding accounted for about half the projects. Now that Parks District funding will provide about \$1.8 million annually for zoo major-maintenance, Woodland Park Zoo is again working to reduce the backlog.

Projects identified for 2016 include:

- Roof replacement, exterior masonry preservation and repair of interior holding areas in the Conservation Aviary.
- Deferred life-cycle replacement of pumps, mechanical systems and HVAC systems; painting and carpet and flooring replacement, and roof and skylight replacement in various buildings.
- Sidewalk and parking lot replacement and repairs.
- Replacement of zoo-wide irrigation-control system.
- Exhibit renovation, and removal and replacement of contaminated animal substrate.

The zoo will continue work on its goals in waste reduction, reduction in water use and carbon reduction with an overall goal of achieving carbon reduction to 1990 levels by 2020. Last year, use of natural gas was reduced by 11.5 percent (through the third quarter of the year,) electricity by 8.8 percent, water use by 4 percent and solid waste by 24.2 percent.

In addition, recycling increased by more than 25 percent, to 186 tons, and compost by 11.7 percent to 188 tons. (All figures are for the first three quarters of 2015.)

In 2016, the zoo's environmental services group will adopt Static Aerated Composting. The Static Aerated method composts more material in a smaller space and increases heat and vector control. There also are fewer odor, emissions and effluent issues. After this prototype has been tested, the zoo anticipates diverting more of our on-site generated food waste to composting as well, reducing the need to haul offsite.

### **Field conservation**

The zoo continues its efforts to grow its own animal-conservation programs off-site, as well as to support programs with other groups that help support our overall mission. Among the projects planned in 2016 are:

**Winter Monitoring for Wolverines in the North Cascades Ecosystem:** Since 2013, Woodland Park Zoo's Robert Long, Ph.D., has been monitoring the recolonization of the North Cascades ecosystem by wolverines. In collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, North Cascades National Park staff, and students from the North Cascades Institute, the goal was to develop a noninvasive, remote camera-based wolverine survey method that could be used to monitor the species year round. Because summer detections were low, it created the challenge of determining a way to monitor during winter, when snowpack can make it difficult to hike in to change scent lures opposite camera traps. Long has teamed-up with Microsoft Research and Idaho Fish and Game to develop a new device that dispenses a very small amount of scent lure each day at each camera station, allowing better tracking of wolverines.

The dispenser is being tested at 25 stations in the North Cascades backcountry. If successful, we anticipate there will be a substantial demand for this device by other wildlife research projects, and that overall carnivore monitoring and conservation, possibly internationally, will benefit.

**Exploring Carnivore Habitat Use:** Woodland Park Zoo and the University of Washington School of Environmental and Forest Sciences are exploring how human development east of Seattle affects habitat use, patterns of activity, species composition, and diet for several local carnivores including bobcats, coyotes, cougars, black bears, red foxes and raccoons. Camera traps will be deployed along human and game trails, ridgelines, creek beds, or other habitats likely to attract carnivore use. Analysis will assess prey composition and be helpful for informing future outreach and planning of sustainable human communities.

**Papua New Guinea:** In 2016, the zoo's Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program (TKCP) working in Papua New Guinea (PNG) will implement a five-year \$2.5 million grant from the Global Environmental Facility and the United Nations Development Program. TKCP training efforts will strengthen the local management of the YUS Conservation Area (in northeast PNG) and support development of sustainable livelihoods throughout the 50 villages living in the YUS region.

**Enhancing the Zoo's Role in Conservation of Wild Tigers in Malaysia:** Additional messaging in the new Banyan Wilds exhibit will establish the connection between the zoo and researchers in Peninsular Malaysia who are supported by Woodland Park Zoo.

## **Education**

The zoo's Education Department in 2016 will restructure some of its programs to reach more students with educational content during their zoo visit, and to more directly align with the zoo's Community Access Program, which pro-actively offers free tickets to groups, social agencies and others focused on underserved populations.

Currently, more than 70,000 students and teachers attend school field trips to the zoo. Programs focus on science and environmental education and include tours to the Family Farm for kindergarten and first-grade students; lessons in the African Savanna on the influence of weather on organisms, aimed at kindergarten through second-grade students; tours of tropical and temperate forests for first- through third-graders; plant growth for second- through fourth-graders, and lessons in the Northern Trail exhibit on the elements of an ecosystem. These school-to-zoo programs are aligned with science kits and other science curriculum adopted by the Seattle School District. Schools with 30 percent or more students on free or reduced lunch rate are eligible for bus reimbursement to the zoo and free zoo admission.

Currently, most of these field trips are self-guided experiences without zoo staff or docent interactions. The zoo plans to restructure the offerings to reach more students and teachers by emphasizing programs in the zoo's PACCAR Auditorium, which will be used as an introduction to the zoo visit and on zoo grounds programs aligned with science curriculum which will be available to a greater number of visiting students.

Also, the zoo currently gives away more than 40,000 free tickets in a variety of programs. Changes in staffing in the Education Department will allow a focus on additional community engagement and include education programs linked directly to groups eligible for the Community Access Program. The community-engagement strategy will strive to expand science and environmental education programs done in cooperation with the Seattle Public Library and Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation.

### **Community relations and public affairs**

The zoo continues to grow its reach using various channels of social media. Woodland Park Zoo has more than 100,000 Facebook fans, an Instagram platform that reaches tens of thousands daily, Twitter, YouTube and beyond, and 1 million annual visitors to the website. Woodland Park Zoo is well positioned in 2016 to grow the reach of our mission beyond zoo walls. The zoo will engage its online community to take action for wildlife by: continuing to develop the online “Tiger Team” of conservation enthusiasts; promoting pollinator-friendly community and family activities in conjunction with the opening of the butterfly exhibit; and raising funds online through the annual GiveBIG and Giving Tuesday drives.