

2017 Annual Plan to the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation

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: The customary public comment period was observed December 1, 2016 through midnight, December 31, 2016. A media advisory to this effect was issued December 1. In addition, nearby neighborhood community councils were notified in a timely manner of the Annual Plan's availability and were encouraged to make comments. The plan was available for review and comment on the zoo website, <http://www.zoo.org/annual-reports>, and in hard copy at the zoo's administrative offices, 5500 Phinney Avenue N.



OVERVIEW AND MAJOR GOALS

An important milestone in 2017 will be the opening in May of an expanded raptor flight program which will incorporate animals other than birds of prey into the popular experience while formally integrating the raptors into the new Ambassador Animal Program. A newly renovated visitor viewing area will increase seating capacity by three fold and offer better vistas as well as an enhanced sound system. The expansion is part of a multi-year Ambassador Animal initiative which will increase the number and variety of awe-inspiring, live-animal learning experiences that WPZ offers to people on grounds, in schools and at community events. Visitors consistently report such encounters as among their favorites. Also, research shows that they promote peoples' increased feelings of empathy for animals, which leads to greater motivation to take conservation action.

Other important developments in 2017 include:

- The spring opening of a new pollinator garden adjacent to the new Molbak's Butterfly Garden, which will double the size of this new experience at the zoo and cultivate and sustain visitors' ability to protect the myriad pollinators which, from urban backyards to rural farms, help keep ecosystems growing healthy.
- Streamlining WPZ's varied community outreach and engagement efforts so as to increase efficiency and investment in new and potential partnerships, and to ensure broader community access to meaningful, mission-driven zoo experiences.
- Continued progress on WPZ's Capital Asset Management priorities, funded by the Seattle Park District levy, from replacing outdated inefficient roofs, structures and systems to repaving public areas to enhance visitor access, safety and enjoyment.
- Launching an organization-wide, Diversity and Inclusion initiative to ensure that WPZ maximally serves the region's rapidly evolving needs and that all colleagues and visitors feel valued and welcome at the zoo. The initiative will strengthen WPZ's organizational culture by better leveraging its qualities to attract and retain a diverse range of individuals into high performing teams who are courageous, genuine and skilled. Reflecting the zoo's own evolution, the initiative will support zoo employees' leadership skills both at the zoo and in our interactions with all communities.

Plans previously shared for re-opening the Night Exhibit, for which design and construction work was slated to begin in 2017, are on hold due to the December 15, 2016 fire which the zoo experienced and which also impacted the Day Exhibit. The zoo continues to evaluate information coming forth from damage investigations and analyses. Our hope is to be able to share, by the second quarter, viable options for moving forward. As [reported](#) on our blog and covered by several media outlets, successful animal rescues carried out by zoo staff and supervised by Seattle Fire Department firefighters saved 182 individual creatures, largely amphibians and reptiles, which were quickly and safely relocated to appropriate temporary housing areas elsewhere on grounds. They are doing well and some have begun successfully breeding again. They will continue to receive excellent care while we solidify long-term housing plans.

2017 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

WPZ projects overall attendance of 1.345 million visitors, an increase of approximately 1% over 2016. Projected admissions revenue of \$8.8 million is based on 636,000 paid visitors, which is also an increase of 1% over 2016. Membership is projected to increase over 2016 with the launch of a new membership level. The zoo's annual operating expense budget is proposed at \$37 million (subject to approval by the Board of Directors in the middle of December, 2016).

A modest, bi-annual admission rate increase is planned for next year, which will set base ticket prices at \$20.95 for adults (up \$1.00) and \$12.95 for children 3-12 years old (up \$.70) during the peak season, which is April 1-September 30. The zoo will continue to offer discounted admission, \$14.95 (up \$1.20) and \$9.95 (up \$.70), respectively, during the winter season, which is October 1-March 31. Entry for children 0-2 years remains free, and seniors 65+ years and people with physical disabilities continue to receive \$2 off of regular admission year round. Active, retired, and veteran U.S. military and their families also receive an admission discount.

It remains a top zoo priority to facilitate free access to the zoo for low-income, at-risk or underserved children, families and individuals in our community through the Community Access Program (CAP). CAP ticket distribution and redemption rates have doubled over the last three years, and for 2017 our goal is to invite more than 100,000 individuals to visit the zoo via our CAP partners: 600+ eligible human service nonprofits, foundations, state and local government entities, and indigenous community organizations which distribute complimentary tickets to the populations they serve. Proposed improvements to the CAP program are discussed in the Education segment of this annual plan.

As an additional way to expand access for families in the region, the zoo will explore viable opportunities for "Kids Free Days" which would occur once per month in the off season (November-February). Efforts to include complimentary bus transportation to and from the zoo on these days will be explored, as well as potential sponsors for the new program.

Incremental improvements to WildLights, the zoo's popular winter festival, will be based on results from the event's fifth season, which concludes January 1, 2017.

CAPITAL PROJECTS, MAJOR MAINTENANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Major maintenance for 2017 includes several key projects to replace and upgrade aging infrastructure:

- Replacement of the gorilla area back-of-house HVAC systems, which includes replacing mechanical systems, ducting, structural supports and electrical infrastructure to facilitate code compliance.
- The back of house area at the gorilla and the Asian bear exhibits, to include design services for a complete replacement of roof, skylights and fall protection devices; construction will be scheduled for 2018.
- Design and construction services to replace the existing Northern Trail boardwalk.
- Repair and replacement of asphalt paving in public areas, to enhance guest access, safety and enjoyment.

Other significant capital asset improvements include: lifecycle and safety-driven replacements and upgrades of various outdated energy and lighting systems; renovation of animal exhibit spaces and back of house holding areas; and purchase of support vehicle equipment.

To enhance the guest arrival experience, new and improved signage on the west side of the zoo will facilitate ease of entry from the street via foot, bike or automobile. This will reduce wayfinding time, especially during the busy April-September peak months.

As a conservation organization dedicated to protecting healthy habitats for wildlife and people, WPZ is committed to long-term sustainability planning. An updated sustainability plan will go into effect in 2017, building on the previous five-year plan which the Board of Directors endorsed in 2011.

Priority green infrastructure projects include the implementation of new Interpretive Recycling Sort Stations around the zoo with food waste reduction messaging. WPZ will be among the first of major Seattle institutions to adopt a completely uniform sort station system with messaging that is much more consistent for users, which will better guide guest behavior to aid our Zero Waste Goal. Along with reducing litter and wildlife impacts, the system will improve the purity of compost diversion by lessening contamination significantly. The rodent, bird and rain proof stations are made of recycled water bottles. The stations are part of the WPZ Waste Receptacle Replacement project which is made possible by Seattle Park District levy funds.

Planned lifecycle replacement of key mechanical systems, such as Variable Frequency Drive motors for pumps, and similar replacements are part of important energy improvement opportunities for retrofitted and new installations and also are made possible by the Park District levy.

We will also implement a new Environmental Purchasing Plan to help staff identify, evaluate, and purchase economical and effective environmentally preferable products and services. In 2017, the zoo will establish a formal baseline for WPZ's environmental purchasing, as part of codifying and improving an already decades-long commitment by leaders and staff members to seek products and services that help reduce impacts on wildlife and habitats whenever practicable. The plan reflects investment from ongoing operating revenues and will have a beneficial impact on several projects funded by the Park District levy.

ANIMAL CARE AND MANAGEMENT

Several new animals are anticipated to take up residence at WPZ in 2017. In addition to two new Rocky Mountain goats joining the zoo, 8-year-old giraffe Tufani may have her first calf in May. And at least 15 native North American butterfly species will return for the Molbak's Butterfly Garden experience which opened in 2016.

WPZ will also continue to “head start” endangered native species and reintroduce them to protected wild sites, for example, the Oregon silverspot butterfly and Western pond turtle in the Pacific Northwest. The latter recently celebrated 25 years of successful native turtle breeding and recovery and is the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's longest-running species reintroduction partnership. It also earned top honors, shared with partner Oregon Zoo, in the North American Conservation Award category at the 2016 Association of Zoos & Aquariums' (AZA) annual conference. WPZ will also raise and rear *Partula* snails, once nearly-extinct in the wild, which will be sent to Tahiti for release to the wild as part of a successful species recovery collaboration.

Along with a three-fold increase in the visitor space of the raptor yard and visual and sound enhancements, the popular raptor program will transform into a new program by expanding the diversity of animals which visitors can experience in the dynamic encounters. The program will now also feature animals other than birds of prey. Possibilities include pot-bellied pigs, a kookaburra, a raven, a skunk, and an arctic fox, among others. This expansion is part of a multi-year Ambassador Animals initiative which will continue to increase the number and variety of up-close, live-animal learning experiences that WPZ offers to people on grounds, in schools and at community events.

SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING

A major focus next year is an institution-wide streamlining of WPZ's great variety of community engagement and outreach efforts. In late 2016, leaders of the varied efforts began a systematic review of existing and potential partners, identifying additional groups and populations in the community to engage and new ways for engaging them with partner opportunities better tailored to their needs. Already one of our signature efforts, the Community Access Program (CAP), is moving forward in 2017 with plans to increase redemption rates, and to engage more CAP participants in organized zoo learning programs in the community and on campus.

Similarly, we will continue to restructure school field trips and visits in order to engage more students in deeper education programming, beyond exhibit interpretive signage. Each year, about 70,000 students, teachers and chaperones participate in field trips and self-guided visits to the zoo, but on average only about 15% of them have been participating in content-rich programs delivered by zoo educators or docents. Last fall, a new pilot program began to help school groups and other visitors engage in deeper learning with educators and docents by exploring a “guiding question” on a science or nature phenomenon as they went through their day at the zoo.

WPZ has been involving the community in its AZA award-winning volunteer program for more than 75 years, largely through a traditional model of volunteer engagement. Currently, most of our 1,000+ volunteers commit long term to a certain number of hours each month. In 2017 our goal is to develop a more robust service model that can also offer episodic volunteer service opportunities (shorter term or one-time) to reduce barriers to involvement and increase the diversity of individuals and groups, including corporate groups,

engaging meaningfully in the zoo's mission. A volunteer needs assessment early in the new year will help determine the types of opportunities WPZ can offer.

Helping to achieve these developments and the next chapter of WPZ's evolution, a new vice president of Education will join the zoo in the New Year, likely in January or February. A priority will be to increase funding, especially to meet increased community demands for Early Learning and youth/teen programs, and to help WPZ share with broader audiences the myriad compelling stories of how zoo-based science and environmental learning changes minds, influences careers and impacts lives.

SAVING WILDLIFE LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

The zoo continues its efforts to strengthen its own animal and habitat conservation programs in the wild, as well as support programs with other wildlife conservation scientists that help achieve the zoo's overall mission. Highlights for 2017 include:

Living Northwest program priorities:

North American Rivers Otters of the Green-Duwamish River: Sentinels of Health is advancing into year two of an anticipated multi-year effort that, for 2017, includes collaboration with the Washington Department of Ecology. Field scientists will study this aquatic mammal's use of this iconic marine landscape. The contaminant load in these animals' scat provides vital clues to the waterway system's health. These data are especially pertinent to the clean-up efforts of the Lower Duwamish Superfund Site. In parallel, the citizen scientist project, Otter Spotter, continues its very successful effort to gather sightings from Puget Sounders whose observations of local otters help researchers better understand where they live.

Elsewhere in local-regional conservation, WPZ has recently partnered with Seattle University to help expand the new Wildlife Camera Network Northwest, an open access project. The database of the Wildlife Camera Network Northwest allows scientists and practitioners to easily and efficiently share images of the species they monitor by remote cameras, whether deep in the North Cascades or across the urban-rural spectrum. The expansion will improve communication among researchers doing non-invasive tracking of wildlife, developing new camera methods and protocols, and pursuing broad-scale camera surveys in the region. The purpose is to better understand and protect animals' use of ecosystems in areas where the impacts of humans and/or development may increase.

Partners for Wildlife/international priorities:

The receipt this year of a new \$50,000 Malayan tiger grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will increase the number of rangers WPZ is helping to put on the ground in Peninsular Malaysia in 2017. The conservation partnership between WPZ and Panthera will expand the local rangers' training in law enforcement and anti-poaching technology. It will also ensure that more monthly patrols are conducted jointly between the rangers and Malaysian law enforcement personnel, to protect tigers in the region in and around Taman Negara National Park.

In 2016 a five-year award of \$2.6 million from the United Nations Global Environment Facility (GEF) was made to the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program (TKCP) to strengthen the management of protected areas in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In 2017, more indigenous communities throughout the country will participate in the protected YUS Conservation Area – PNG's first and only Conservation Area, made possible in 2009 after many years of technical assistance and expertise from TKCP. The expansion will substantially increase

sustainable livelihoods throughout 50 villages living in and around the Conservation Area. The 20-year program was honored with a prestigious Equator Prize and was named by the UN as a model to guide development of national policies for protected area management.

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