

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release | March 24, 2016  
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### Woodland Park Zoo Picks Alejandro Grajal as new CEO

*Senior executive at Chicago Zoological Society brings leadership, experience and vision*

*"A wonderful man with natural leadership skills who has dedicated his life to connecting people to nature and the world around them."*

SEATTLE (March 24, 2016)—Woodland Park Zoo has tapped Alejandro Grajal, currently a top executive at the Chicago area's Brookfield Zoo, to be its new president and CEO. He will start on May 16.



Grajal joined the leadership team at the Chicago Zoological Society, which manages the Brookfield Zoo, 10 years ago. He now serves as senior vice president for conservation, education and training. Before Chicago, Grajal was a top executive at the National Audubon Society, where he founded and ran its Latin America and Caribbean Programs. After earning a PhD in zoology from the University of Florida, Grajal started his career at the Wildlife Conservation Society as executive director for Latin America programs.

"Alejandro Grajal brings an unequaled set of skills and values to Woodland Park Zoo," said Laurie Stewart, chair of the Woodland Park Zoological Society Board of Directors. "An exciting new era for the zoo begins. First and foremost, he is a well-regarded animal welfare advocate whose work is known and respected throughout the country. Beyond that, Alejandro is a wonderful man with natural leadership skills who has dedicated his life to connecting people to nature and the world around them. He's going to fit right in here in Seattle."

Grajal has published more than 40 peer-reviewed articles and books. Much of his writings have focused on conserving wildlife and how climate change will affect animals throughout the world. In 2013, he was co-author of *Climate Change Education: A Primer for Zoos and Aquariums*.

"Zoos have a duty to educate and inform their communities about the impact of climate change by connecting them with animal species from around the world," Grajal said. "Zoos must be an active part of their communities and show people what's at stake. But we must go further than that. We must motivate them to act on behalf of our planet."

At the Brookfield Zoo, Grajal oversees 15 field programs in North America, Latin America and Africa. He directs an audience research program that explores the attitudes and understanding of zoo visitors toward animal welfare and conservation. In that role, he oversees how the zoo presents itself to the public on key issues.

Grajal develops and manages complex partnerships for the Brookfield Zoo. He leads the Climate Literacy Zoo Education Network, a coalition of 12 zoological institutions, universities and NGOs. He also directs numerous partnerships with schools and universities.

On a global scale, he has been part of conservation programs with the United States Agency for International Development, the Global Environmental Fund, the World Bank and the European Union.

Grajal and his wife, Helena Puche, are both natives of Venezuela. They both earned their PhD at the University of Florida. Dr. Puche is currently an adjunct assistant professor at DePaul University and an adjunct associate research professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The couple has two adult children.

[Click here](#) to see a video message from Grajal.

**About Woodland Park Zoo**

For more than 115 years, Woodland Park Zoo has served as a place where generations of families continue to gather to enjoy the natural world. The zoo spans 92 acres and is a major Washington state attraction. In 2015, a record-breaking 1.3 million guests visited the zoo to learn about the important connections between plants, animals, habitats and people.

The zoo manages the largest live animal collection in Washington state, with more than 1,200 animals, representing 300 species. It is the home for 47 endangered and 20 threatened or vulnerable animal species. The zoo's botanical collection includes more than 92,000 plants and trees representing more than 1,300 species.

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