

**Woodland Park Zoo to say goodbye to beloved hippo, Water Lily**  
**Difficult decision has been made to humanely euthanize hippo**  
**after recent cancer diagnosis and declining quality of life**

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo is saddened to share it will soon say goodbye to the beloved hippopotamus Water Lily, who has experienced declining health and quality of life following a cancer diagnosis last month. Veterinarians and caretakers have made a difficult end-of-life decision for the 45-year-old hippo, affectionately known as Lily, who will be humanely euthanized early next week. She will be attended by her loving animal keepers and an empathetic, expert team of animal health professionals.



The zoo recognizes that our staff, volunteers, members, and community feel deeply connected to Lily and may wish to use the next few days to visit her or celebrate her life. Lily will continue to enjoy her pool and outdoor habitat over the coming days and should be visible to those who come to say farewell.

Community members may continue to see Lily through Sunday, April 28, after which time the pathway will be temporarily closed.

“Everyone who worked with Lily realized how special she was. For those she trusted, you got the privilege of knowing all her favorite things. The best spot to scratch her under her chin, her ear wiggles she would give as she surfaced in the pool when she heard you call her, and how she would always ask for a treat when she saw you even if it was just lettuce. But if it was something extra good, like a watermelon, she would suck every last bit of juice that spilled out of it. She touched the lives of every keeper who had the joy of working with her,” said a Lead Animal Keeper at Woodland Park Zoo, Lauren Sutherland-Cook.

Last month, Lily underwent an anesthetic procedure to evaluate her teeth as well as a wound and swelling on her cheek, a biopsy of which revealed a diagnosis of fibrosarcoma, a type of cancer of connective tissue. Her care team and veterinarians have been monitoring her health and overall wellbeing since the surgery, and have observed changes that indicate a declining quality of life for Lily including decreased mobility, unsteadiness, and having a harder time rising and getting out of her pool.

According to Dr. Tim Storms, Director of Animal Health at Woodland Park Zoo, “I am so thankful for our dedicated and experienced hippo caretakers who have been closely monitoring Lily for signs of decline since her cancer diagnosis, which they are now seeing and that we believe are irreversible. A euthanasia decision is always very difficult, but we feel strongly that now is the best time to intervene to prevent her from declining to the point where her bad days outnumber her good days.”

Lily was born in August 1978 at Houston Zoo and moved to Woodland Park Zoo the following year in October 1979. She shares her habitat with 25-year-old Lupe, who has been at Woodland Park Zoo since 2003.

With Lily's declining health, the zoo is also preparing for how to support Lupe during this time. Lupe will continue to receive the best possible care from her animal keepers and veterinarians and will receive extra enrichment and special attention as she adjusts. To provide for her ongoing wellbeing, Woodland Park Zoo is assessing options for Lupe to move to another accredited zoo, where she can have the company of other hippos as part of the Species Survival Plan. A public update will be provided once a new home and relocation timeline are identified. The zoo's hippo habitat is over 40 years old, and in acknowledgment of improving standards for space, exhibit functionality and sustainability, Woodland Park Zoo does not intend to bring new hippos and will focus on finding an appropriate social grouping for Lupe at another zoo with the help of partner organizations through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Woodland Park Zoo staff, Lily's dedicated animal keepers and her veterinary team are thankful for the outpouring of love and kindness over the past month. Community members who want to share their memories, photos, or support are invited to comment on the zoo's social media channels (@woodlandparkzoo) and those comments will be shared with staff. We ask that no memorial items be left at Lily and Lupe's habitat or inside the zoo, as those items might blow into animal habitats and cause unintended harm.

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