



Moving forward

The next ten years at the National Zoo

**BY 2016,
WE WILL BE
THE WORLD'S
FINEST ZOO.**





FROM THE DIRECTOR

Challenges as opportunities

Our planet is amazingly rich and abundant with life. We share its land, water, and sky with a magnificent diversity of wildlife. We have a responsibility to conserve species and their habitats, so that we leave our children and grandchildren a world that is even richer and more abundant.

At the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park, we seek to inspire, train, and empower successive generations to care for the world's biological diversity. Our tools are our exhibits, science, outreach, and education programs. Ultimately, everything we do must be oriented toward protecting wildlife and other forms of biological diversity so that we, and future societies, continue to enjoy the incalculable benefits of our natural world.

Today, thousands of species—some of them in the care of the National Zoo—are facing extinction, and many fragile ecosystems critical to the well-being of societies around the world are under great strain from human activities. As the challenges of safeguarding the Earth's living heritage grow, so does the National Zoo's determination to play a leading role in shaping a brighter future for both people and wildlife.

The strategic plan outlined here is ambitious. By 2016, we expect to be recognized as nothing less than the world's finest zoo—an acknowledged leader in the areas of animal care, science, education, and sustainability. We start with many powerful assets. With hard work, commitment, enthusiasm, and the collaborative efforts of the Zoo's talented staff and dedicated friends, I am certain the National Zoo's best days lie ahead.

John Serrano

OUR MISSION

We are the Nation's Zoo,
providing leadership in
animal care, science,
education, and sustainability.

ANIMAL CARE

Provide the highest quality animal care.

SCIENCE

Advance scientific excellence in conserving wildlife.

EDUCATION

Teach and inspire people to engage in conservation of wildlife, water, and habitats.

SUSTAINABILITY

Practice conservation leadership in all we do.



Photograph courtesy of Carlton Ward, Jr.



WORLD'S FINEST

A ten-year vision

In ten years, when visitors enter the National Zoo's urban oasis, they will be even more inspired by state-of-the-art, innovative exhibits that reflect a deep commitment to animal care, science, education, and sustainability. These exhibits will connect visitors to our animals and immerse them in real-life stories of wildlife conservation, many

of them drawn from the work of Smithsonian scientists. Our outstanding education and outreach programs will inspire the public to learn and care more about the magnificent animals and habitats with which we share our planet, and about the Zoo's conservation and scientific initiatives.



Zoo

The National Zoo of 2016 will be internationally known for its long-term commitment to capacity building through professional training. Highly motivated individuals from across the nation and throughout the world will eagerly seek our professional internships, apprenticeships, and training programs. We will be renowned for developing leaders in the fields of zoo management, veterinary care, conservation science, and education. We will provide training opportunities for our own staff that will encourage each employee to fulfill his or her professional potential.

Our scientific staff will be respected around the world as leaders in animal and conservation sciences. We will share our science-based tools and information widely, empowering communities throughout the world to protect wildlife and their habitats. The Zoo's Conservation and Research Center in Front Royal, Virginia, will be fully utilized as a center of excellence in science-based conservation.

In sum, by 2016, the National Zoo will be recognized by its peers and by the public as the global leader in four core areas:

- ◆ **Animal care.**
- ◆ **Science.**
- ◆ **Education.**
- ◆ **Sustainability.**

To sustain pre-eminence in these areas, the National Zoo recognizes that it must be an exemplary manager of its resources—human, financial, and physical. To this end, the Zoo will do the following:

- ◆ **Practice core values.**
- ◆ **Establish a strong financial base.**
- ◆ **Strengthen staff and organization.**
- ◆ **Upgrade physical facilities.**





ANIMAL CARE

Provide the highest quality animal care.

The National Zoo's animals are its heart and soul. More than 2,400 animals live at the Zoo in Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C. A smaller number—primarily in research and breeding programs—live at the Zoo's Conservation and Research Center in Front Royal, Virginia. Staff from different departments, working together, support the environmental, nutritional, medical, and behavioral needs of the animals.

Strategies

Employ the most qualified animal care and management staff.

Establish an organizational structure that has clear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes and that enables staff to function as a high-performing, cross-departmental team.

Be a learning organization that applies the latest knowledge, technology, and best practices in animal care, including in the key areas of veterinary medicine and pathology, nutrition, enrichment, animal behavior, habitat design, and pest management.

Maintain an internal communication system that ensures the right Zoo staff have the right information at the right time.

Fully implement the Zoo Information Management System (ZIMS) so that the Zoo has a comprehensive, integrated electronic animal management record-keeping system, and link the Zoo's ZIMS with global databases.

Ensure that the Zoo's animal collection supports the Zoo's science, exhibition, and education priorities.

Work to establish healthy populations in the wild.

SCIENCE

Advance scientific excellence in conserving wildlife.

Scientific excellence is essential to the National Zoo's science-based approach to conservation, exhibitions, and education. The Zoo's talented scientists, who encompass a wide range of specialties, form one of the world's largest conservation science staffs. Their integrated research on both Zoo animals and species in the wild results in synergies that benefit the health and well-being of both populations, as well as the human societies that interact with these diverse animals. Not only do the Zoo's scientists advance and apply conservation science through their own work, they also train and support future professionals and collaborate with other scientists throughout the United States and the world.

Strategies

Discover new knowledge to address significant theoretical or applied conservation problems of importance to the survival and recovery of species and their habitats.

Develop science-based solutions to mitigate the loss of biodiversity, aid in the survival and recovery of species and their habitats, and ensure the health and well-being of animals in zoos and their counterparts in the wild.

Encourage science initiatives that involve basic and applied research on zoo and wild populations, highlight species maintained or exhibited by the National Zoo, and exhibit species on which research is conducted.

Build conservation capacity worldwide through professional training that emphasizes science-based approaches to conservation and decision making.

Provide a scientific basis for public education and outreach in conservation.

Engage in strategic partnerships with other Smithsonian units and external organizations to advance Zoo and Smithsonian priorities in science and conservation. Establish a Center for Conservation Biology as a Smithsonian-wide, multidisciplinary program focusing on promoting conservation worldwide through scientific research, education, and professional training.







EDUCATION

Teach and inspire people conservation of wildlife,

The National Zoo serves diverse audiences through a variety of channels and has a high profile locally, nationally, and internationally. Approximately two million people visit the Zoo every year, with slightly more than half of these visitors coming from outside the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. The Zoo's popular website, accessed by more than 20 million virtual visitors in 2005, offers behind-the-scenes views of zoological science, conservation science, and animal management. Through public programs, the Zoo educates and motivates people of all ages and backgrounds about animals, their habitats, the challenges to their survival, and the science and conservation programs underway to protect their future. The Zoo has a longstanding tradition of welcoming students and trainees in a variety of disciplines, inspiring them to pursue careers in animal care, conservation science, and science education.



to engage in water, and habitats.

Strategies

Provide inspiring and dynamic science-based Zoo experiences to the public.

Develop programming to attract new audiences to the Zoo and maintain the interest of past visitors to achieve overall Zoo goals.

Use marketing and the media to maximize the visibility of the Zoo's successes and strengths to local, national, and international audiences, including the public, professional peers, and other stakeholders.

Ensure that the Zoo's many education programs are driven by clear priorities, are well coordinated, and apply best education practices.

Engage in strategic partnerships in education and outreach with other Smithsonian units and external organizations.

Develop and implement regular, objective evaluation procedures for education, public relations, outreach, and training activities to constantly strengthen these functions.

Ensure the Zoo's audiences feel welcome and are well-served by superior visitor amenities, staff committed to outstanding customer service, and information that is accurate, up-to-date, interesting, and important.

SUSTAINABILITY

Practice conservation leadership in all we do.

Excellence and leadership in zoo and conservation science, and our science-based approach to animal management and public education, distinguishes us as the Nation's Zoo. Zoo scientists and their Smithsonian colleagues now constitute the world's largest assemblage of biodiversity and conservation scientists, linked to a global network of collaborators, laboratories, collections, and databases. As such, the National Zoo is positioned to be an important source of the conservation information and expertise that government authorities and other decision makers need, as well as a leader in catalyzing collaborative conservation efforts among U.S. zoos and conservation organizations.

Strategies

Demonstrate that the Zoo is a proactive conservation organization by ensuring Zoo priorities are aligned with international conservation priorities.

Be a leading national provider of objective science-based information and educational materials relating to the conservation of species and their habitats to policymakers, federal agencies, zoos and the conservation community, universities, the media, and the public.

Model conservation best practices, such as recycling technologies and alternative energy use, in everyday Zoo operations, and publicize the results.

Use environmentally sound materials and practices in all Zoo operations and renewed facilities.



Four keys to achieving
the National Zoo's
mission and goals





KEY ONE

Practice core values

EXCELLENCE

We invest in our staff so that we can provide the highest quality care to every animal entrusted to us, and offer the best service to our visitors, constituents, colleagues, and collaborators.

CONSERVATION

We are passionate about conserving the Earth's natural resources; environmental responsibility is reflected in all our actions, practices, and programs.

INTEGRITY

We are forthcoming and open in all our internal and external interactions. We are transparent and accountable to the public. We take responsibility for our actions.

RESPECT

We treat our staff, our public, and our animals with dignity. We listen thoughtfully and communicate effectively to each other and to our public. We honor fairness and diversity.

UNITY

We work together as a team, with diligence and dedication, toward a common vision of a strong National Zoo.

COLLABORATION

We engage with our fellow Smithsonian units and other museums, universities, zoos, and organizations to create a thriving network of mutually beneficial relationships with the common goal of conserving our planet's biological riches.

FUN

We approach our work with energy, enthusiasm, and a desire to create enjoyable experiences for all, staff and public alike. The Zoo is fun!





KEY TWO

Establish a strong financial base

The National Zoo requires financial investment in three major areas: employee salaries and benefits; general operations; and facilities maintenance and major capital renewal. The Zoo's financial strength derives from three sources: an annual federal appropriation; trust funds made up of gifts, grants and contracts, endowment income, and sponsorships; and funds generated by Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ), the Zoo's nonprofit support organization.

Strategies

Set and meet ambitious development goals that ensure financial stability, fund the Zoo's priorities, and provide resources for future growth.

Present a strong business case to funders—including Congress, individuals, foundations, government agencies, corporations, and others—for supporting the financial requirements of the nation's only federal zoo.

Manage revenue-generating activities based on best business practices, allowing the Zoo to maximize income from these activities.

Develop and implement a capital campaign to improve facilities.

KEY THREE

A highly qualified and enthusiastic staff

National Zoo staff, both employees and volunteers, contribute the knowledge, initiative, and creativity needed to carry out the Zoo's research, engage audiences of all ages, and manage, study, and exhibit hundreds of species. Staff need a satisfying work environment, the opportunity to grow in their jobs, and recognition for excellent performance.

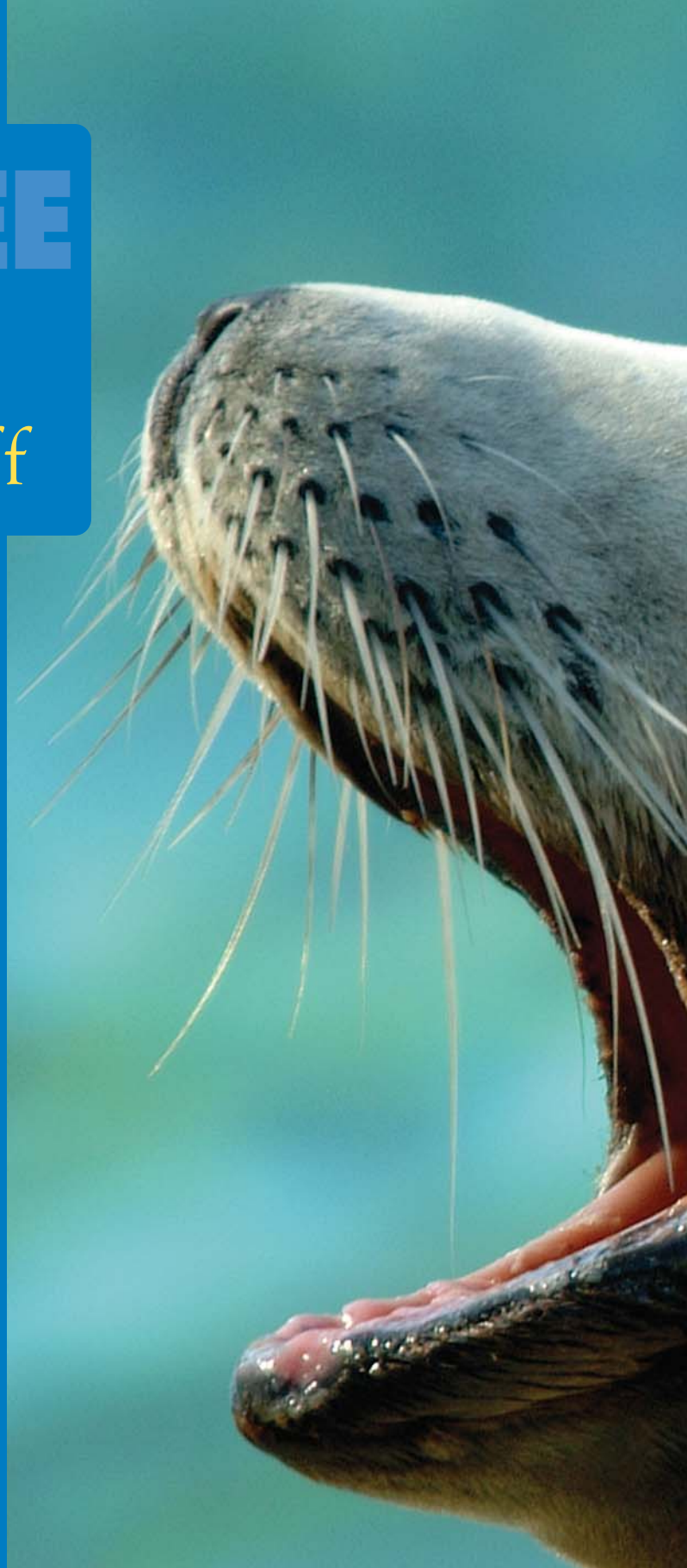
Strategies

Establish an organizational structure, management systems, and decision-making processes that reflect the Zoo's core values, support the accomplishment of its goals and priorities, and improve cooperation and coordination across departments.

Clarify roles and responsibilities to improve staff effectiveness and minimize redundancy across departments.

Provide staff at all levels with ongoing professional development opportunities consistent with their positions, as well as incentives and rewards for superior performance.

Develop exhibits, research activities, and other initiatives that encourage and promote greater professional interactions among staff at the Zoo and the Smithsonian as a whole.









KEY FOUR

State-of-the-art facilities and equipment

The National Zoo operates 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year at two sites: the 163-acre Rock Creek Park public zoo and research facility in Washington, D.C., and the 3,200-acre Conservation and Research Center, 70 miles away in Front Royal, Virginia. Facilities and equipment at both locations suffer from age and lack of preventive maintenance. Both sites need extensive upgrading to accommodate expanded programs and offset years of wear and tear. Animal habitats require constant renewal to keep pace with new knowledge about animal health and well-being. New science infrastructure, such as equipment and laboratories to support activities essential to keeping the Zoo at the forefront of conservation science, is long overdue.

Strategies

Implement a visionary master plan for renewed facilities at Rock Creek and Front Royal that capitalizes on the uniqueness of the Zoo's land and locations and is based on sound land-use practices, addresses infrastructure needs, and allows flexibility for future growth. The master plan will guide decisions regarding the Front Royal campus, including opening portions of CRC to the public and expanding facilities for professional training and animal research and care.

In conjunction with the Smithsonian Office of Facilities Engineering and Operations, ensure implementation of a preventive maintenance program for the Zoo's physical structures and equipment.

Increase significantly and then maintain the quality and quantity of visitor amenities, such as restrooms, shaded sitting areas, water fountains, recycling and trash collection points, information stations, and concessions.



2016: THE WORLD'S FINEST ZOO

The National Zoo's strategic plan is ambitious—to be the best zoo in the world. Success is possible because we are passionate about our mission and have a very solid foundation to build on. We will work as a fully integrated team, and enlist the support of our Smithsonian colleagues, funders, conservation organizations, and governments worldwide, to protect the world's wildlife and their habitats. We will also engage the public to play an active role in this critical effort. In this way, the National Zoo will play a major role in helping to ensure future generations will experience an even richer and more abundant world of wildlife.





Smithsonian
National
Zoological
Park



**Smithsonian's National Zoo
Friends of the National Zoo**

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As part of our continuing effort to conserve natural resources, this book has been printed on recycled paper containing postconsumer waste fiber and uses vegetable-based inks. ♻️