

Communications Planning

Johnson, Debbie (MNZOO)

From: Ehmke, Lee (MNZOO)
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2012 5:21 PM
To: Watchmaker, Todd A; Cutler.Ken@dorsey.com
Cc: Melissa Lindsay; Debbie Johnson; Connie Brazier
Subject: Draft Task Force Charter
Attachments: Final Discovery Bay Dolphin Exhibit Task Force.docx

Ken, Todd:

Thanks for your thoughts on how to move forward quickly to resolve our “800 pound gorilla”: what to do about our dolphin situation....

Please review the attached draft document, which lays out a charter for the task force, proposes task force members (this is a longer list than what we discussed, and should probably be reduced), and sets out some of the basic issues for consideration.

After you’ve reviewed and commented, I’d like to move ahead. Ideally, we would schedule a meeting for the second or third week of March. Let’s talk about how best to schedule, recruit Board members etc.

Thanks for your support on this.

Lee

Lee Ehmke
Director / CEO
Minnesota Zoo
952 431-9299

Discovery Bay Dolphin Exhibit Task Force

DRAFT

February 27, 2012

Chair:

Todd Watchmaker

Proposed Board/Foundation Members:

Ellie Crosby, Barbara Ali, Dick Vogel, Julie Kunkel, Cassy Ordway, Ken Cutler, Jim Mayer

Mark Mortenson, Mike Happe, Betsy Weyerhauser ???

Proposed Staff Members:

Lee Ehmke, Connie Braziel, Kevin Willis, Peggy Adelman, Lars Erdahl, Melissa Lindsay, Tara Harris, Bill Von Bank, Tony Fisher, Diane Fusco

Potential Consultants:

Tom Otten (SAIC, former Director Pt. Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, Marineland of the Pacific—based in San Diego)

Jill Alread (Public Relations consultant to AZA, AAMPA—based in Chicago)

Jeanne Carpenter (Public Relations consultant—based in Minneapolis)

Proposed Charter:

--Review the multiple issues raised by the current situation of our dolphin facility and collection, including: capital and operating expenses, animal acquisition costs, USFWS and USDA licensure, AZA and AMMPA accreditation, industry trends, public opinion, and mission alignment.

-- Develop recommendations, in consultation with select Zoo staff and consultants, for collection and facility planning related to Discovery Bay, and assist in developing the institutional messaging to support these recommendations.

Proposed Process:

--Staff will develop a briefing booklet, containing relevant information covering the topics outlined below, to be distributed prior to the first Task Force meeting

--Task Force will meet with select staff and consultants

--Task Force will work with senior staff to prepare recommendations

--Recommendations will be submitted to the Zoo Board and Zoo Foundation Executive Committees for approval.

Background:

--Discovery Bay's Dolphin Exhibit and adjacent Dolphin Stadium area require significant remedial infrastructure work in order to maintain a viable exhibition and management facility for bottlenose dolphins (or any other marine mammal species). Our capital budget request this year seeks \$7 million to address these issues, with the possibility of additional Asset Preservation funding becoming available if needed.

--We have just accepted bids from an engineering firm to provide analysis, design services and cost estimation for the scope of infrastructure repair and enhancement work required and desired. We should have solid numbers and an action plan by summer 2012.

--Our current dolphin collection is minimal and unsustainable—two animals, neither of which we own, one of which is approaching 50 years old, a record or near-record captive longevity.

--We have experienced a series of apparently unrelated deaths in the collection—5 animals have died and one was stillborn over the past 6 years. This has led to unfavorable publicity and to frequent disruption or cancellation of public dolphin presentations.

--While we are participants in an informal “consortium” of zoo/aquarium facilities that hold and exhibit dolphins, the level of cooperation among members of the consortium has not been consistent. At this point, there is no defined action plan for obtaining new dolphins for the Minnesota zoo collection.

--Nationally and internationally, there is increased visibility and influence of groups opposed to the concept of keeping cetaceans in captivity.

--Despite the above, some recent polling shows strong support by the American general public for opportunities to experience dolphins in captive situations, particularly where close contact (“swim with dolphins”) is possible.

--Our dolphin exhibit and presentations consistently rank among the top offerings of the Zoo in our bi-annual visitor surveys, despite the fact we have had a small, somewhat dysfunctional group for a number of years.

--The Marine Mammal Department’s annual operating budget is approximately \$600,000. This includes staff time, food costs and some other expenses related to the sea otter collection, but does not include the Life Support staff time and supplies (salt etc.) or general utility costs related to operating the dolphin pools.

--The Discovery Bay dolphin pools are purpose-built for dolphins. Modification to house other species will require extensive re-design and construction, at significant expense (several million dollars).

--The list of potential replacement species that meet the criteria of being partially aquatic and amenable to display as part of an above-water demonstration or “show” is very short. One of the most likely possibilities would be California sea lions, but the current status of the North American captive population of sea lions is—demographically—less favorable than the bottlenose dolphin situation.

Johnson, Debbie (MNZOO)

From: Connie Braziel [Cbrazie@mail.mnzoo.state.mn.us]
Sent: Friday, March 16, 2012 2:24 PM
To: Ted Christianson; Ken Cutler; Tricia Dirks; Todd Watchmaker; Peter Maritz; Cassy Ordway
Cc: L-Senior Managers; Kelly Lessard; Bill Von Bank; Debbie Johnson
Subject: Discovery Bay Renovation
Attachments: Discovery Bay Communications Plan 2012--Taskforce.docx

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in the discussion relative to the renovation of Discovery Bay. Based on the consensus reached at our meeting earlier this week, staff has prepared the attached communication plan. This is a work in progress, but I believe it is a good start.

You will note at the bottom of page 2 specific action steps. Lee and Peg met with Governor's staff today and the meeting went well. Staff was appreciative that they were first to hear of this potential change. Next week key legislators will be contacted. You will note that this communication plan includes members of the task force (you) calling some of your peers and discussing this topic with them. We hope you are willing to make the 4-5 calls; this will ensure all trustees receive information in a timely and appropriate manner. Senior staff are available to assist with this. You will receive a communication no later than next Tuesday giving you the names of the Trustees we would like you to contact.

We believe the attached document gives you the information needed to make these calls. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. A Q&A is being developed and will be available next week as well. Again, thanks for your guidance and advice; it is greatly appreciated.

Connie Braziel
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connie.braziel@state.mn.us

Minnesota Zoo
Discovery Bay Communications Plan/2012
3.16.12

Goals:

To ensure positive, consistent messaging to all audiences about the Minnesota Zoo's upcoming renovation to Discovery Bay, and the decision to potentially no longer exhibit dolphins.

To position the Zoo as potentially housing other aquatic animals, instead of dolphins, as it goes through master planning for the future.

To maintain credibility and continued state support from legislators, including financial support for the required renovations of the Discovery Bay facility even though dolphins may not return after the renovation.

General Messages (individual and combined):

The Minnesota Zoo has an immediate need to repair the infrastructure of Discovery Bay which currently houses two dolphins: "Allie," who is owned by the Brookfield Zoo in Illinois, and "Semo," who is a geriatric dolphin owned by the Dolphin Connection in Florida.

The work includes resealing the pool and reinforcing parts of the building adversely affected by salt water. This is part of the Zoo's master plan and requires that both dolphins move to ensure their safety during the renovations.

Dolphins are social animals; a social group is required in order to keep them. Because the Minnesota Zoo does not own a social group (we only own one dolphin, Spree, currently at the Brookfield Zoo) we are exploring various other aquatic animals that will continue to help guests understand the Minnesota Zoo's conservation and education messages.

As part of the master planning process that began in the fall of 2011, the Minnesota Zoo is evaluating other potential species of aquatic wildlife that could be featured in the pools when it reopens the area in mid-2013.

The health and well being of our animals is our top priority. Spree and Semo will be permanently moved this fall so we can repair our pool.

Semo is the oldest male dolphin in human care, a testament to the wonderful care he's been given for nearly 50 years.

Dolphins have been an important part of the Minnesota Zoo experience and we will continue to support our dolphin consortium partners, the public display of dolphins, and the science behind them. The Minnesota Zoo's Discovery Bay facility, 15 years old, is in need of structural work due to salt water damage. It will be less expensive to do the work now. With asset preservation funds, we can begin this work in the fall (October), and it will take nearly a year to complete. Our funding request was made to the governor in June of 2011.

Minnesota Zoo
Discovery Bay Communications Plan/2012
3.16.12

Target Audiences:

Tier 1

Board Task force
Governor's office
Legislative leaders
Zoo board/Foundation board

Tier 2

Significant Donors
Marine mammal staff
Staff
Zoo Volunteers
Vendors (Lancer's, SSA, IMAX)
Dolphin Consortium Partners
AZA/AMMPA
Members/Adopt-A-Dolphin sponsors

Tier 3

Media
General public
social media

Strategies:

Prepare a statement for media
Send a letter to Zoo members
Post the statement on social networking sites/monitor posts/responses
Website updates
Review and edit all marketing materials to eliminate references to dolphins
Give staff and volunteers brief messages to use when asked about the dolphin decision

Communication Plan related to Discovery Bay Renovation:

Reaffirm direction from Task Force	Lee	March 16
Communicate with Governor's Office	Lee	March 16
Meet with Legislative Leadership	Lee	March 19-23
Communicate plan to all Trustees	Task Force/Lee	March 19-23
Share info with Staff/Volunteers/Partners	Lee/Connie	March 21-April 6
Discuss issues with Consortium partners	Kevin	March/April
Discuss issues with Alliance/AZA	Kevin	March/April
Members	Connie	
Dolphin Animal Sponsors	Melissa	
Media	Kelly	

- A statement will be drafted that can be shared with media at appropriate time.
- A Q & A will be developed for internal use with staff, volunteers and trustees.
- A social media strategy will be developed.

Minnesota Zoo
Discovery Bay Communications Plan/2012
updated 3.16.12 – v7

Goals:

To ensure positive, consistent messaging to all audiences about the Minnesota Zoo's upcoming renovation to Discovery Bay, and the decision to potentially no longer exhibit dolphins.

To position the Zoo as potentially housing other aquatic animals, instead of dolphins, as it goes through master planning for the future.

To maintain credibility and continued state support from legislators, including financial support for the required renovations of the Discovery Bay facility even though dolphins may not return after the renovation.

General Messages (individual and combined):

The Minnesota Zoo has an immediate need to repair the infrastructure of Discovery Bay which currently houses two dolphins: "Allie," who is owned by the Brookfield Zoo in Illinois, and "Semo," who is a geriatric dolphin owned by the Dolphin Connection in Florida.

The work includes resealing the pool and reinforcing parts of the building adversely affected by salt water. This is part of the Zoo's master plan and requires that both dolphins move to ensure their safety during the renovations.

Dolphins are social animals; a social group is required in order to keep them. Because the Minnesota Zoo does not own a social group (we only own one dolphin, Spree, currently at the Brookfield Zoo) we are exploring various other aquatic animals that will continue to help guests understand the Minnesota Zoo's conservation and education messages.

As part of the master planning process that began in the fall of 2011, the Minnesota Zoo is evaluating other potential species of aquatic wildlife that could be featured in the pools when it reopens the area in mid-2013.

The health and well being of our animals is our top priority. Allie and Semo will be permanently moved this fall so we can repair our pool.

Semo is the oldest male dolphin in human care, a testament to the wonderful care he's been given for nearly 50 years.

Dolphins have been an important part of the Minnesota Zoo experience and we will continue to support our dolphin consortium partners, the public display of dolphins, and the science behind them. The Minnesota Zoo's Discovery Bay facility, 15 years old, is in need of structural work due to salt water damage. It will be less expensive to do the work now. With asset preservation funds, we can begin this work in the fall (October), and it will take nearly a year to complete. Our funding request was made to the governor in June of 2011.

Internal Q & A:

Q: What's going on with your dolphins?

A: We are moving Semo and Allie because Discovery Bay, which is 15 years old, is in need of structural repairs due to salt water damage. The health and well being of our animals is our top priority; the dolphins must be relocated for their safety as we perform the necessary repairs.

Q: How does not having these dolphins impact staff?

A: Semo and Allie are wonderful dolphins and have delighted guests and staff for many years. While we will miss having these engaging animals, we understand the need to move them for their safety during the repairs to Discovery Bay.

Q: Are there risks with moving dolphins, especially one as old as Semo?

A: The health and well being of each of our animals is always our top priority. Although there are some risks in moving any animal, particularly an older animal like Semo, we will do everything we can to make sure their transports are as smooth as possible. As with all other animal transports, veterinarians and staff will accompany the animals, constantly monitoring them from beginning to end.

Q: Did the dolphin deaths prompt the decision to move Semo and Allie?

A: No. These steps are about the integrity of the Discovery Bay facility, including the pool which must be drained and resealed. The building, which is 15 years old, is in need of structural work due to salt water damage, and it is less expensive to do the work now. Our original funding request was made to Governor Dayton in June, 2011.

Q: Did animal rights activists/extremists influence any of this? What about The Cove movie?

A: The Zoo makes all of its animals decisions based on what is best for the animals, not on what animal extremist groups say or demand. Dolphins have been an important part of the Minnesota Zoo experience and we will continue to support our dolphin consortium partners, the public display of dolphins, and the science and research that is such a critical part of our Zoo's mission. We know from national public surveys that when people see live animals, like dolphins, they are more inspired and likely to want to take steps to help protect wildlife in the wild.

Q: Are you afraid this will hurt attendance?

A: The Minnesota Zoo prides itself on its innovative exhibits and exciting new experiences that introduce guests to live animals from around the globe. We will continue to provide the same quality experience to all our guests every day with over 2,400 animals, a variety of daily shows, and a beautiful, family-friendly landscape.

Q: How will this affect members/membership costs?

A: The Minnesota Zoo's membership packages will continue to be one of the best deals in town.

Q: Didn't you ask for money from the legislature to repair the pool for dolphins?

A: We made a funding request to Governor Day in June 2011. The money was asked to repair the structural work to the Discovery Bay pool due to salt water damage.

Q: When will the Discovery Bay facility be available to rent?

A: We will have more information when the 2012 legislative season is complete.

Q: Why can't you borrow dolphins from other zoos/aquariums?

A: For the wellbeing of dolphins, they need to live in social groups, and at this point, we only own one dolphin. We would need several (at least 3 or 4) dolphins to create a social group, and at this time, there are not that many dolphins available from other institutions.

Q: How will this impact admission? I assume your admission fee is going down, right?

A: The Minnesota Zoo prides itself on its innovative exhibits and exciting new experiences, introducing guests to animals from around the globe. We will continue to provide the same quality experience to all our guests every day with over 4,200 animals, a variety of daily shows, and a beautiful, family-friendly landscape. The dolphin exhibit is one part of the Minnesota Zoo experience; we are adding a black bear exhibit in the fall of 2012 and are continuing to make improvements to the overall Zoo experience.

Target Audiences:

Tier 1

Board Task force

Governor's office

Legislative leaders

Zoo board/Foundation board

Tier 2

Significant Donors
 Marine mammal staff
 Staff
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- A social media strategy will be developed.

Minnesota Zoo
Dolphin and Discovery Bay
Internal Q&A
5.14.12

Q: What's going on with your dolphins?

A: The Zoo just received \$4 million in the 2012 Capital Investment Bill passed by the State Legislature and signed by Governor Dayton, allowing the Zoo to begin addressing its most pressing asset preservation need: Discovery Bay. We are moving dolphins Semo and Allie because Discovery Bay, which is 15 years old, is in need of structural repairs due to salt water damage. The health and well-being of our animals is our top priority; the dolphins must be relocated as we perform the necessary repairs, which requires draining the pools for a significant period of time.

Q: Are there risks with moving dolphins, especially one as old as Semo?

A: The health and well being of each of our animals is always our top priority. Although there are some risks in moving any animal, particularly an older animal like Semo, we will do everything we can to make sure their transports are as smooth and uneventful as possible. As with other animal transports, veterinarians and staff will accompany the animals, constantly monitoring them from beginning to end.

Q: What prompted the decision to move Semo and Allie?

A: These actions are necessary for the integrity of the Discovery Bay facility, including the pools which must be drained and resealed. The pools and surrounding building, now 15 years old, are in need of structural repair due to salt water intrusion over the years. Our original funding request was made to Governor Dayton in June, 2011, as part of a larger overall request for asset preservation funds for a number of zoo facilities.

Q: Did animal rights activists/extremists influence any of this?

A: No, not at all. The Zoo makes all of its animal decisions based on what is best for the animals, not on what animal extremist groups claim or demand. Dolphins have been an important part of the Minnesota Zoo experience and we will continue to support our dolphin consortium partners, the public display of dolphins, and the scientific research that is such a critical part of our Zoo's mission. We know from national public surveys that when people encounter living animals--including dolphins--in a zoo/aquarium situation, they are inspired and are more likely to take steps to help protect animals in the wild. Much of the enormous interest in and awareness of dolphins and other marine mammals has been facilitated by encounters with these amazing animals in zoos and aquariums.

Q: Are you concerned this may hurt attendance?

A: The Minnesota Zoo prides itself on its innovative exhibits and exciting experiences that introduce guests to living animals from around the globe. We will continue to provide a high quality experience to all our guests every day with over 4,200 animals, a variety of daily shows, a number of interesting new exhibits, and a beautiful, family-friendly landscape.

Q: How will this affect members/membership costs?

A: The Minnesota Zoo's membership packages are one of the best values in town. For one low cost, Zoo members can enjoy the Zoo year-round, receive free parking and special member-only benefits throughout the year, including discounted admission at many other accredited zoos throughout the country.

Q: Didn't you ask for money from the legislature to repair the pool for dolphins?

A: We made a funding request to Governor Dayton in June 2011. A portion of the funds requested were