

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Alaska Zoo****Federal Tax ID: 92-0039344****Project Title:****Project Type: Remodel, Reconstruction and Upgrades****Alaska Zoo - Polar Bear Transition Facility****State Funding Requested: \$1,800,000****House District: Statewide (1-40)**

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

Build an off-exhibit transition and holding facility to further our response capabilities for polar bears coming off the Slope and to augment research opportunities such as the de-oiling of polar bears.

Funding Plan:

Total Project Cost:	\$1,870,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$70,000)
FY2014 State Funding Request:	<u>(\$1,800,000)</u>
Project Deficit:	\$0

Funding Details:

2011: Portico Group \$33,000 concept design

2012: Alaska Zoo \$27,120 fundraising efforts

2012: ConocoPhillips \$10,000

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

The Alaska Zoo and the State of Alaska have partnered for 44 years to provide or find homes for the orphaned, injured and abandoned wildlife of Alaska. The Zoo seeks the State's help to build a dedicated Polar Bear Transition Facility at the Alaska Zoo. This Phase I project of a larger polar bear exhibit expansion is strictly an off-exhibit area and infrastructure project that furthers the Zoo's response capabilities to care for any polar bears transitioning off the North Slope.

Phase 1: Polar Bear Transition Facility

Animal welfare is paramount when transitioning animals from the wild into a captive situation. When animals first come into the Alaska Zoo, they are maintained in quarantine for thirty days or until they pass all health checks. During this time animals become familiar with captivity, including new food items, proximity to people, training, and enrichment. All of this is done in an off-exhibit area. We have a long history of transitioning all species of Alaskan wildlife into captivity in order to extend their life when they have been deemed by State and Federal agencies to be in peril in the wild. In order to step up our ability to help with polar bears we are working with Portico Group in Seattle Washington to fulfill our goal of building a premier polar bear habitat. The multifunctional habitat will increase our ability to take in, stabilize, and arrange shipment of wild North Slope polar bears to other facilities, and to allow successful breeding and rearing of polar bears that call the Alaska Zoo home, in accordance with the Association of Zoos and Aquarium Species Survival Plan. The first phase of this endeavor is the off-exhibit transition facility. This phase consists of two buildings- a transition building, the holding/maternity den facility, and three off-exhibit yard areas. The construction of phase 1 necessitates the relocation of our current moose exhibit and modification of some perimeter fencing around the existing polar bear/moose area.

The first building, the transition building a 1200 square foot building is a causeway, to move polar bears from the current habitat to an off-exhibit area. This increases resident polar bear welfare by increasing habitat space, ability to separate the bears and increase training capabilities which increases our ability to train voluntary behaviors, such as blood collection, allowing the bears to participate in more research studies. The causeway would have a training wall on one side and an observation window on the other side to potentially have students, researchers or others observe the polar bears during training sessions increasing the transparency of our procedures. This building also includes the filtration building foundation with excavation and stub outs for future exhibit water filtration systems in Phase 2 of the polar bear exhibit. The first outdoor, off-exhibit, area includes a pool and natural substrate. This area is connected to another yard by a shift door.

The holding/maternity den building is 1200 square feet, has 3 dens and a sound insulated mechanical room. These new dens will provide additional space for up to 6 polar bear cubs, or a family group or up to 3 adult bears. One of the dens could be used as a separate maternity den area designed to give a pregnant and/or new mother the "physical and psychological space" needed to care for herself and her cub. This den would be separated from the other dens and have a "bedroom" area incorporated into the den. This den building has two yards associated with it; one on either side of the structure with the maternity yard equipped with a shallow pool. It is not uncommon for multiple bears to come to the zoo at one time.

Polar Bear Research and Studies:

The Alaska Zoo has a long history of collaboration with wildlife agencies, zoological facilities, universities and organizations to further the scientific knowledge and behavioral study of our animals. We have provided biological samples to researchers throughout the world. We welcome projects as permits allow, when a valid research plan is submitted and the project passes the criteria of our Institutional Animal Use Committee. To view current and past projects visit our website at www.alaskazoo.org/research.

Current Research and Studies:

- The Zoo is participating in a reproduction research project on captive polar bears with the Cincinnati Zoo. The Alaska Zoo has provided samples for the last two years. One paper has been published, "Factors Influencing Annual Fecal Testosterone Metabolite Profiles in Captive Male Polar Bears (*Ursus maritimus*)". Other papers will be published in the future.

- De-oiling of polar bears: The Alaska Zoo is working with Alaska Clean Seas (ACS) and the USF&WS to develop a washing protocol for polar bears. This protocol has potential to be used in all countries that have oil development in polar bear habitat. We are in the final stages of this project and have just finished statistical analysis of data. Data was collected during an oiled pelt study to test several variables and determine the best combination to remove oil from oiled polar bears. In the event of an oil spill on the slope the Alaska Zoo would be one of the responding facilities to help deal with affected bears. In the case of a polar bear needing to be removed from the slope the Alaska Zoo is a contracted provider for Alaska Clean Seas.

- Characterizing Reproductive Cycles and Pregnancy in Polar Bears (*Ursus maritimus*): Assessment of Steroid Hormone Metabolites and Pregnancy Biomarkers in Urine. Katrina Knott, Ph.D., Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Conservation and Research Department, Memphis Zoo, Memphis, Tennessee. Andy Kouba, Ph.D., Director, Conservation and Research Department, Memphis Zoo, Memphis, Tennessee. Little is known about the reproductive physiology of polar bears. Relatively high mortality rates of cubs due to pregnancy loss and neonatal mortality is also of concern for both captive and wild populations. Urine is being collected from polar bears in North American zoos for non-invasive monitoring of

reproductive hormones (i.e., metabolites of estrogens, progesteragens, and testosterone) and an evaluation of potential pregnancy biomarkers (i.e., ceruloplasmin, prostaglandin, and cortisol). These data will be applicable to the conservation of both ex situ and in situ polar bear populations through characterization of reproductive events (i.e., optimal timing of breeding, implantation, pregnancy, and impending birth of cubs) as well as the concurrence of behavioral and physiological cues for successful breeding. Greater knowledge of the reproductive physiology of captive animals will also provide information regarding the timing and plasticity of reproductive events in free-ranging polar bears and insight into the potential causes of reproductive failures in declining populations.

Proposed Studies:

- Improving the use of stable isotopes to estimate diets of free-ranging polar bears. USGS Alaska.
 - The use of accelerometers to remotely identify polar bear behaviors and quantify energetic costs: the effects of declining sea ice on polar bear energetics. USGS & UCSC.
 - Exploratory Gene Transcript Study -- Environmental Stressors and Polar Bear Immune Function. USGS and Monterrey Bay Aquarium.
 - The UAA Environment and Natural Resources Institute has expressed interest in several study projects:
 - o Research on how the different foods consumed by study animals are imparted in the chemistry of their blood and hair.
 - o A first time fully articulated study on the fur growing patterns of polar bear and other species.
- "The studies of polar bear and gray wolf physiological ecology are programs that are especially important to us today, and the new facilities will greatly increase our ability to undertake collaborative studies with the USGS Alaska Science Center, the AKDF&G and the USFWS." -- Jeff Welker, UAA Environment and Natural Resources Institute

Project Support:

The Alaska Zoo has sought and garnered support for this project from a variety of avenues. The project has the support of:

- Mayor of Anchorage, the Honorable Dan Sullivan: "The new exhibit will undoubtedly serve our community and state for decades to come."
- Elizabeth LaVerne Smith, Acting Regional Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service: "Not only would this expansion provide an improved facility for the education of the public on Arctic ecosystems and polar bears, it would improve the Zoo's ability to care for orphaned polar bear cubs and provide new research opportunities on captive bears that may benefit their wild counterparts."
- Robert Buchanan, president of Polar Bears International: "I truly believe, along with our scientists, that Alaska Zoo's experience and tested knowledge makes it the best place to operate as a polar bear transition center."

Budget:

Transition Building --Bear transfer from existing holding with filtration building foundation with excavation and stub outs for future exhibit water filtration system - 1,200 square feet at \$200/sf = \$240,000

Polar Bear (off exhibit) Yard Area - 5,000 square feet at \$100/sf = \$500,000

Polar Bear Holding/Maternity Den Building - 1,200 square feet at \$300/sf = \$360,000

Contingency 20% - \$220,000

Sub-Total for Construction Budgets: \$1,320,000 +/-

Moose relocation \$200,000

Perimeter fence modifications \$80,000
 Design Fees (Transition Facilities) -- architecture and engineering: \$160,000
 Design Consultant Expenses -- travel, printing, per diem - \$25,000
 Project Management Expenses and Permits: \$85,000
 Phase 1 -- Bear Transition Facility Total Budget - \$1,870,000

While the polar bear transition facility is Phase 1 of the larger Polar Bear Exhibit, it can be built independent of the public exhibit areas. Phase 1, the transition facility is the cornerstone of the project. It furthers our ability to partner with state and federal wildlife managers in transitioning polar bears off the Slope, industry on oil spill response and enhance our ability to participate in new research on polar bears.

Project Timeline:

Once funded, the project will take two Alaskan construction seasons to complete. We hope to begin construction in early spring of 2014 and have it up and running in September of 2015. Expenditures will begin in fall of 2013 with construction plans and permitting.

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Alaska Zoo

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Name: Eileen Floyd
 Title: Development Director
 Address: 4731 O'Malley Road
 Anchorage, Alaska 99507
 Phone Number: (907)341-6431
 Email: efloyd@alaskazoo.org

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? Yes No



Photos by John Gomes

Unlike anywhere else in our nation, Alaska is home to polar bears.

It is our unique experience to share.

POLAR BEAR PROJECT





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The Alaska Zoo



The Alaska Zoo is part of the fabric of our great state and community. For forty-three years, the Alaska Zoo, a private non-profit organization has provided a home to orphaned, injured, abandoned and endangered animals. Some 100 plus animals representing 53 species call the Alaska Zoo home. We have the widest variety of Alaskan animals in the State. The Alaska Zoo is located just 15 minutes south of downtown Anchorage on 25 acres in the foothills of the Chugach Mountains. We are proud of our long history of service to the people and wildlife of our State.

Services Provided

Our mission is to promote the conservation of Arctic, sub-Arctic and like climate species through education, research and community enrichment. To this end, we continue to enhance and develop our animal exhibit areas. Our educational department utilizes a variety of programs to engage a range of audiences—from toddlers to seniors, to residents and visitors. We offer programs for children on zoo grounds including adventure camps, story-time programs, sketch-n-safaris, zoo explorers for girl scouts, and organized school field trip activities. We host family nights twice a week with weekly lectures on Tuesday nights and live music on Friday nights in summer. In winter, we host the popular Wildlife Wednesday program. We provide a temporary home and care for Alaskan animals heading outside to permanent homes at other zoos and facilities. We have facilitated in placing hundreds of animals in the past 43 years. We are a breeding facility for Bactrian camel. We're a holding facility for Amur tigers and Snow Leopards.

Beneficiaries

The Alaska Zoo is one of the state's most popular family destinations. Millions of people have pass through our doors. In 2011, more than 172,000 people visited and our education department provided programs to 37,000 plus people. We work closely with the Anchorage School District, US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and the Bird Treatment and Learning Center. We partner with a number of organizations such as AARP, ACCESS Alaska, Boy and Girl Scouts, McLaughlin Youth Center, Anchorage's Promise and UAA to provide programs, research projects, opportunities and events for our community.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Alaska Zoo is embarking on the Polar Bear Project to expand our polar bear exhibit. We are the only State in the Union with these animals native to its lands, it is only fitting that Alaska have a premier exhibit on these marine mammals. The Polar Bear Project will create a world class polar bear exhibit.

The expanded polar bear exhibit will triple the size of the polar bear exhibit, give visitors unencumbered views of the bears and enable the Zoo to double its capacity for adult polar bears.

The new facility will provide new opportunity for research partnerships to advance the understanding and scientific knowledge on animals of the far north and in the captive community. It will require our current moose exhibit to be relocated, some perimeter fences modified and several trails to be re-routed. Consistent with our efforts to promote conservation on all levels, the buildings will be constructed utilizing materials with the highest practical Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating.

The Alaska Zoo is working with the award winning Portico Group in Seattle on the design and architectural plans for the Polar Bear Project. The Portico Group has worked with more than 30 zoos and aquariums in the development of their exhibits, master plans and facilities. They designed the award winning *Minnesota Zoo: Heart of the Zoo*, designed the much acclaimed *Penguin Plunge* at the Calgary Zoo in Canada, and the *Elephants of Asia* exhibit at the Los Angeles Zoo. Closer to home, the Portico Group worked with the Alaska Sealife Center in Seward, Alaska. They are no strangers to the intricacies of design to meet the varying standards required for animal species and excel at creating an inviting and exciting experience for visitors.

“Our designs introduce visitors to the actions and motivations of animals, the value of environmental stewardship and most importantly, a world full of natural wonder.” – The Portico Group



Polar Bear Exhibit Expansion:

- expanded polar bear exhibit will triple the size of the polar bear exhibit
- add an additional 24,000 square feet to the current enclosure
- It will have a natural substrate area for the bears to roam
- a new water feature including braided streams and pool
- rock outcroppings for distance viewing for bears
- provide ample areas for bears to “retreat”
- natural substrate for bears to dig, scratch and create daybeds.
- Add holding/maternity dens along with a separate outside access area for mother and cub
- unencumbered views of bears for visitors



A covered pavilion area transitions the old exhibit with the new, allows visitors to view polar bear training by zookeepers on one side and lets them watch the bears in their pool on the other. The whale bone sculpture introduces visitors to another important marine mammal of the Arctic.

Visitors will have unobstructed views of the polar bears from an elevated bridge walkway and from several distinct ground level viewing areas.





Natural Substrate: The expansion project provides the much needed addition of a natural substrate area for the polar bears. The American Zoological Association (AZA) "Polar Bear Care Standards," the leading care standard for captive polar bears in the United States refers to the Manitoba Polar Bear Protection Act regulations that state "exhibit areas must include an area of ground at least 1350ft²

that is covered by soil, straw, wood chips or another suitably soft substrate” (PBPA, 2002). The expanded facility will provide approximately 15,000 square feet of soil for the bears to dig, scratch and play. Our current facility only has 80 square feet of natural substrate in a gravel “daybed.”

Water feature: The expanded facility will add an additional pool for the bears following the recommended sizes prescribed by the AZA. Visitors will be able to view the bears under a pavilion with radiant heaters for providing some ambient heat for de-fogging and de-icing the pool glass.

Transition Building: The 1200 square foot building is a causeway which will allow for bears to be transferred between the existing dens and the off- exhibit yard area. The causeway would have a training wall on one side and an observation window on the other side to potentially have students, researches or others observe the polar bears during training sessions increasing the transparency of our procedures. This building also includes the filtration building foundation with excavation and stub outs for future exhibit water filtration systems in Phase 2 of the polar bear exhibit. The first outdoor, off-exhibit, area includes a pool and natural substrate. This area is connected to another yard by a shift door.



Holding Dens: The 1200 square foot building, equipped with radiant heating in the floors (to prevent ice build-up), will house three dens – a maternity den and/or “holding” dens for any polar bear cubs being “transitioned off the North Slope.” It would also house the mechanical apparatus and pumps needed for the new facility in a sound insulated room as to not disturb the bears.

Maternity Den: A separate den area designed to give a pregnant and/or new mother the “physical and psychological space” needed to care for herself and her cub. The den would be separated from the other 2 dens and have a “bedroom” area incorporated into the den.

The Alaska Zoo has a long history of providing facilities and care for polar bear cubs transitioned off the North Slope of Alaska. The new dens will provide additional space for up to 6 (six) polar bear cubs. It is not uncommon for multiple bears to come to the zoo at one time.

Increased Capacity and Capabilities: The expansion of the polar bear facility will double the Alaska Zoo's capacity for adult polar bears. We could provide a home for up to 4 (four) adult polar bears. We'll be able to provide a temporary home and care for up to 6 additional polar bear cubs complete with closed circuit television for 24 hour monitoring. The expansion provides a maternity den with a separate outside access area with a shallow pool for the mother and cub(s) first ventures out of the den.

- If our polar bears were to mate successfully and a viable offspring produced, it would provide a new genetic line to the captive community of polar bears.



Polar Bear Research and Studies:

The Alaska Zoo has a long history of collaboration with wildlife agencies, zoological facilities, universities and organizations to further the scientific knowledge and behavioral study of our animals. We have provided biological samples to researchers throughout the world. We welcome projects as our permits allow, when a valid research plan is submitted and the project passes the criteria of our Institutional Animal Use Committee if the project calls for invasive research measures.

Current Research and Studies:



- The Zoo is participating in a reproduction research project on captive polar bears with the Cincinnati Zoo. The Alaska Zoo has been providing sample data for a year and has been selected to continue with the project in 2012.
- De-oiling of polar bears: The Alaska Zoo is working with Alaska Clean Seas (ACS) and the USF&WS on a study plan to establish the best practice procedures for removing crude oil from an oiled polar bear. As Alaska Clean Seas is the organization that provides an oil spill response for the oil companies that operate on the North Slope, it is necessary for ACS to create a protocol for de-oiling a polar bear. The Alaska Zoo is a contract provider for Alaska Clean Seas on the North Slope.

Proposed Studies:

- The UAA Environment and Natural Resources Institute has expressed interest in several study projects:
 - Research on how the different foods consumed by study animals are imparted in the chemistry of their blood and hair.
 - A first time fully articulated study on the fur growing patterns of polar bear and other species.

“The studies of polar bear and gray wolf physiological ecology are programs that are especially important to us today, and the new facilities will greatly increase our ability to undertake collaborative studies with the USGS Alaska Science Center, the AKDF&G and the USFWS.” – Jeff Welker, UAA Environment and Natural Resources Institute

Moose Exhibit Relocation:

The new Arctic Complex Exhibit will require that the current moose exhibit be relocated to the northwest corner of the Alaska Zoo (utilizing the old elephant yard). This will be one of the first orders of business for the expansion project to proceed. The new moose enclosure will require new fencing, water tanks and feeders, and two outside shelters built. The relocation becomes an instant upgrade for the moose as they will have access to a pond in the new facility.

Trail Adjustments and Perimeter Fence Modifications:

The expansion project will require some of the gravel trails surrounding the polar bear exhibit to be re-routed to maximize the expansion project. Some of the perimeter fencing around the zoo will need to be modified to provide additional space for the polar bear exhibit expansion.

STATEMENT OF NEED:



Unlike anywhere else in our nation, Alaska is home to polar bears and the Arctic.

It is our unique experience to share.

It is only fitting that Alaska have a **premier exhibit** to celebrate our uniqueness. The fact that we as a state alone have polar bears native to our lands **and** are the only state with lands above the Arctic Circle is reason enough to build a first class exhibit. It is our story to tell. The new exhibit at the Alaska Zoo will speak directly to residents and visitors alike on the natural wonders of the northern latitudes through education, research and community enrichment

While the Alaska Zoo is one of the top tourist destinations in Alaska, it plays an integral role in our community and state - providing programs, events, educational opportunities, day in and day out - the Alaska Zoo is open to the public 363 days a year.



“The Alaska Zoo is an incredible asset to the citizens of Anchorage and to Alaskans, along with being a top destination to visitors. “ – Mayor Dan Sullivan

The world has a way of dropping by.

49% of the visitors to Alaska, come to Southcentral. - McDowell Group 3/10

With more than half of our state population living in Southcentral, building a premier exhibit in Anchorage at the Alaska Zoo makes perfect sense on many levels. This project is a natural progression with so much current national and international focus being placed on the Arctic and polar bears.

The Alaska Zoo is well versed for this project as we have 43 years of service to the community and state. The Alaska Zoo is home to more than 100 animals representing 53 species, of which, more than half came to the Zoo because they were orphaned, abandoned or injured in the wild. The Zoo also provides care, a temporary home and facilitates finding homes for and aiding in the transfer of countless other animals rescued from the wild.

The Alaska Zoo has assisted the USFWS for more than 35 years in caring for and providing facilities for polar bear cubs rescued off the North Slope. We have knowledge, capabilities and experience when it comes to polar bears. The Alaska Zoo has 105 years of staff experience working with polar bears cubs.

“No other facility in Alaska or elsewhere has the specialized facilities and trained staff to care for and rehabilitate rescued polar bear cubs.” – Geoffery L. Haskett, Regional Dir. USFWS

The Alaska Zoo is a contract provider to Alaska Clean Seas, the oil spill response cooperative for oil companies operating on the North Slope. The Alaska Zoo works closely with the Department of Fish & Game and the USFWS. We are in the unique position of being able to be “boots on the ground” in a matter of hours, when called, should an animal need assistance on the North Slope. We are proud of our long history of service and of our commitment to the wildlife of Alaska.

Time to step forward.

Our current polar bear exhibit does not meet AZA recommendations for natural substrate. The new complex would not only meet the recommendations, it would exceed the recommendations for more than 4 adult polar bears and a separate holding area for polar bear cubs.

Again, if our polar bears successfully mated and a viable offspring were produced, it would add a new genetic strain to the captive community.

Transition Area:

The Alaska Zoo has a long history of providing both a permanent and temporary home for polar bear cubs rescued from northern Alaska by USFWS. The expanded polar bear exhibit will double our capacity to care for such cubs. Last year, the Alaska Zoo was called in by USF&WS to respond to an orphaned polar bear cub on the North Slope after ConocoPhillips' employees at the Alpine Field spotted a lone polar bear cub needing assistance. (Cub pictured below). We consulted on the capture, provided formula and supplies, traveled to Kuparuk to assess her condition and accompanied on the transport to the Alaska Zoo for transition care.



The new transition area or holding area will be **dedicated** to polar bear cubs with both an inside den area and outside area equipped with a shallow pool for the cub(s) to wade in as recommended by AZA standards. (The Zoo has a cub facility to house adolescent bears brought to us by ADFG and USFWS, it is open to any species). It will also have 24 hour video monitoring capabilities in the dens to provide a valuable tool for both medical surveillance and cub research.





Zoos are cultural centers of a community. The animals are ambassadors of their species. It is incumbent on us to give voice to their story.

Budget

- Polar Bear Exhibit: \$7,180,000
 - Architectural/Construction Plans/Admin Costs/Equipment: \$1,000,000
 - Transition and Filtration Building from existing holding: \$240,000
 - Polar Bear Exhibit with water system and barriers: \$4,800,000
 - Polar Bear Transition (off exhibit): \$500,000
 - Polar Bear Transition holding /maternity: \$360,000
- Moose Relocation: \$200,000.
- Perimeter Fencing and Path Modifications: \$80,000.

Phase 1: Polar Bear Transition Facility: \$1,870,000

- Filtration and Transition Building
- Polar Bear Off Exhibit areas (3 Yard Areas)
- Polar Bear Holding/Maternity Dens
- Moose Relocation
- Perimeter Fence Modifications

Phase 2: Polar Bear Exhibit with water systems and barriers: \$5,600,000

Timeline: Funded, the Polar Bear Project would be completed in a two year time frame allowing for two complete Alaskan construction seasons.

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Office of the Mayor

Phone: 907-343-7100

FAX: 907-343-7180

Mayor Dan Sullivan

September 24, 2012

Re: Letter of Support for Alaska Zoo's Polar bear Project

To Whom it may Concern:

For 43 years, the Alaska Zoo has provided residents of Anchorage and Alaska, as well as visitors with unparalleled opportunities to view and learn about the wildlife of our state. It is an incredible asset to our community and state as well as a top tourist destination. The Zoo provides year-round quality educational programs, promotes wildlife conservation, partners with countless organizations and holds special events for the public all without municipal, state or federal support for its operational budget. It is a self-sustaining organization that relies on the hard work of the directors, staff and volunteers to solicit public contributions and garner financial support from private businesses, foundations and individuals to make ends meet.

The Alaska Zoo is seeking State support to expand its' polar bear exhibit to create a premier, world-class exhibit. The new exhibit will undoubtedly serve our community and state for decades to come.

Please consider the Alaska Zoo's capital budget request for the Polar Bear Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Sullivan".

Dan Sullivan
Mayor



POLAR BEARS INTERNATIONAL

www.polarbearsinternational.org
PO Box 3008
Bozeman MT 59772

October 22, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

The Alaska Zoo has been a key member within Polar Bears International's Arctic Ambassador Center network for more than eight years. They have consistently performed at our top level of excellence. Some highlights of their wide array of accomplishments:

- They have worked in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in caring for rescued, orphaned, and injured animals for 43 years.
- They have provided the US Fish & Wildlife Service with the highest possible standard of housing and husbandry of rescued polar bears and cubs for 35 years.
- Their staff has a combined total of over 100 years in direct care of rescued polar bears.

They have been and continue to be involved in polar bear research and studies. They are currently participating in the following research projects:

- **Reproduction Research:** In conjunction with the Cincinnati Zoo, they have been providing sample data for reproduction research on captive polar bears for the past year and have been selected to continue with this project for 2012.
- **De-Oiling of Polar Bears:** The Alaska Zoo is working with Alaska Clean Seas (the organization that provides an oil spill response for companies that operate on the North Slope) to establish a protocol of the best practices and procedures for removing oil from a polar bear.

They plan to take part in the following projects proposed by UAA Environment and the Natural Resources Institute:

- A study to determine how food consumed by polar bears is imparted in the chemistry of their fur and the degree of change when diet is altered.
- A first time fully articulated study on the fur growing patterns of polar bears as well as other species.
- In conjunction with Polar Bears International they have been part of a support team for our maternal den studies on the North Slope.

Conservation through research, stewardship, and education

Polar Bears International meets all the standards of the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance.



bbb.org/charity

As an Arctic Ambassador Center they have aligned themselves with strong conservation education programs:

- Leadership Camp: Every fall the Alaska Zoo has participated in a series of leadership camps for motivated teens, zookeepers, and communicators. Participants observe polar bears in the wild and learn how to become community stewards.
- Tundra Connections: The Alaska Zoo participates in broadcasts from scientists and educators who are on the tundra surrounded by polar bears to various audiences around the world.

The Alaska Zoo has the full support of associates and agencies such as the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Polar Bears International, the Mayor of Anchorage, and the Anchorage Assembly. To quote Geoffery L. Haskett, Regional Director of USFWS: "No other facility in Alaska or elsewhere has the specialized facilities and trained staff to care for and rehabilitate rescued polar bear cubs."

I truly believe, along with our scientists, that Alaska Zoo's experience and tested knowledge makes it the best place to operate as a polar bear transition center. Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, whatsoever.

Warmest regards,



Robert Buchanan, President/CEO
Polar Bears International®
P. O. Box 3008
Bozeman, MT 59772
Phone: 813-335-3585
Email: tinkan@me.com





United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



IN REPLY REFER TO:

FWS/AFES

OCT 21 2012

Patrick S. Lampi, Director
Alaska Zoo
4731 O'Malley Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Dear Mr. Lampi:

I am writing this letter in support of the Alaska Zoo's proposal to turn its current polar bear facilities into a world-class polar bear exhibit, triple in size to the existing exhibit, allowing the Zoo to increase its capacity for both adult polar bears and cubs. Not only would this expansion provide an improved facility for the education of the public on Arctic ecosystems and polar bears, it would also improve the Zoo's ability to care for orphaned cubs and provide new research opportunities on captive bears that may benefit their wild counterparts.

Your facility's long history of assisting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in handling orphaned polar bears is greatly appreciated. Located in Anchorage, the Zoo is the nearest facility available for rehabilitation in vicinity of the Arctic region where polar bears live. Additionally, Zoo staff have extensive experience in polar bear care and rehabilitation and have demonstrated significant dedication to this mission. For example, in 2011, you and your staff played a prominent role in the successful rescue, stabilization, temporary holding, and transport of the orphaned polar bear cub, Qannik, from Alaska's North Slope. The Zoo provided excellent daily care for the cub, shared information on her health and well-being with many interested parties, coordinated media events and conservation/education messages with our External Affairs Office, and worked diligently to successfully transport the cub to its final permanent home in the Louisville Zoo.

The Zoo has also been working closely with the Service to improve oil spill response capabilities for polar bears in Alaska. For example, in 2012 you and your staff worked with the Service, Alaska Clean Seas and others to: 1) purchase, stage, and maintain medical and other equipment that would be needed to treat oiled polar bears on the North Slope; 2) led efforts to identify a safe and effective way to remove oil from polar bear fur; and 3) hosted marine mammal oil spill response meetings at your facility. You have committed to helping with oil spill response for wildlife in the future, and your efforts have greatly contributed to the Service's response capabilities for polar bears, as well as for other marine mammals.

**TAKE PRIDE[®]
IN AMERICA** 

Patrick S. Lampi, Director

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I understand that one of the major aspects of the new polar bear expansion effort is to build an additional "transitional area" for polar bear cubs rescued off the North Slope. The new holding area would add space for holding of up to six cubs and allow for their immediate care and rehabilitation before transiting to a permanent home. This meets our mutual goals of polar bear conservation; therefore, I wholeheartedly support your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Sube Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Regional Director