November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
C/O City Clerk
200 N. Spring St. Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Council File 08-2850

Dear Members of Council:

Numerous zoos in the United States and throughout the world are creating new and expanded elephant habitats. These new homes for elephants provide greater space, water features, and enrichment opportunities for the animals. They also provide opportunities for zoo visitors to experience and learn about elephants, thereby giving visitors a powerful connection to conservation programs. Without zoos, most people would never know about elephants or how to get involved in and support conservation.

At the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, we invested in an elephant habitat. Five years ago our first baby elephant was born. A second calf is expected this March and another cow is believed to be pregnant, too. New and expanded elephant habitats improve their quality of life and in our case, helped to begin a small herd of elephants.

I encourage you to support the current elephant project at the Los Angeles Zoo. The zoo’s professional staff will utilize their years of personal elephant experience and the latest scientific information available to provide an exciting new elephant habitat that will serve the entire Los Angeles community. In addition to providing for the physical, social and psychological needs of the elephants and for educational opportunities for the public, the L.A. Zoo will continue to be a valued partner with the Columbus Zoo and other accredited zoos as we work to provide the best care for our elephants and to assist with programs that help elephants worldwide.

Sincerely,

Jeffery S. Swanagan
Executive Director

JSS/lls
Los Angeles City Council
C/O City Clerk
200 N. Spring St., Rm. 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

November 24, 2008

Dear Council Members,

As an AZA Accredited holder of elephants I am writing you to support the Los Angeles Zoo’s efforts to complete construction of their new elephant habitat. I am sure that you have received and will continue to receive many letters supporting this effort from many other zoos, expressing how AZA zoos provide the finest care in the world to elephants in human care. I would like to impress upon you another reason for completion of this state of the art habitat.

As leaders of a large and diverse community, and one that has many challenges in front of it, having the ability to provide this kind of experience for your citizens is an extraordinary opportunity. As a former resident of the Los Angeles area, I am well aware of the difficulty faced by many of your constituents when it comes to experiencing first hand the wonders of nature and learning all the challenges that this world must face to preserve our planet for future generations. This new habitat will go a long way to allow ALL the citizens of Los Angeles, no matter their age, race, or economic status, the chance to experience first hand the majesty of these great creatures while at the same time teaching them how they as individuals can address these difficult problems. For many, if not most, this will be the only venue in which they can have this type of experiential learning.

Therefore, I urge you to continue to support the Zoo’s effort to bring this piece of nature to the backyard of everyone in Los Angeles knowing that these magnificent animals will have the greatest of care and knowing that you will have had a significant part in potentially changing the life, and world perspective, of many of your youngest and most impressionable constituents.

Sincerely,

Lawrence J. Sorel

2222 St. Paul Street • Rochester, NY 14621 • (585) 336-6324 • fax: (585) 266-6591 • senecaparkzoo.org
Accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association
November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
C/O City Clerk
200 N. Spring St., Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Council File 08-2850

Dear Los Angeles City Council:

As an AZA Accredited Institution and elephant care facility, we implore you to allow the completion of the elephant exhibit at the Los Angeles Zoo & Botanical Gardens. As this project is already 30% complete, it would seem very wasteful to not continue.

Not only will this new facility be beneficial for elephants, it will also educate Zoo guests and possibly encourage them to change their attitudes about elephants in Zoos. It may also encourage them to want to learn more about the conservation of these majestic creatures.

Elephants, both African and Asian, are in jeopardy. Zoos are learning about elephants in the wild and in managed collections and are doing something about their conservation; something the naysayers are not doing. Without breeding in managed collections, there is a great possibility that the elephant will not survive.

Nothing takes the place of close-up and personal experiences with animals, especially elephants. These experiences can truly change people’s lives. Please help by allowing the Los Angeles Zoo to help catalyze these changes.

Sincerely,

J. Stephen McCusker
Executive Director

JSM:jpb
November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Council:

On Elephants:

THE ELEPHANT GOES AWAY TO DIE.
HE HAS TO SAY GOOD-BY TO GREEN FIELDS AND BLUE SKIES,
AND LOVE,
AND HE'S TOO BIG TO CRY.

I FAVOR the LA ZOO PACHYDERM Exhibit.

I would like my child to see the elephants, and, from what I have read about the planned zoo elephant area, I can’t believe that the elephants wouldn’t be happy there. They would have food and water and (soon more) company, and people would watch over them. They wouldn’t have to forage around in hot dusty lonely barren ground no one wants now. They would have their own place and they wouldn’t have to move when their grounds become more valuable. If you don’t protect elephants enough, someone will come along and kill them for their ivory tusks. If you’re going to move an elephant to the United States at all, a zoo is the best place for them. Otherwise, leave them in Africa but not India, because we read about what’s happening to them over there.

Also, if people have contributed to the Zoo for this, I can’t see how you can just keep their money and then not build. You would have to give back contributions that you could not expect to recover completely, or you could keep the contributions without building what the people contributed for, and be frauds.

Your constituent,

Candi Macias
1237 Stichman Avenue
La Puente, CA 91746
Los Angeles City Council
C/O City Clerk
200 N. Spring St., Rm. 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

November 24, 2008

Dear Council Members,

As an AZA Accredited holder of elephants I am writing you to support the Los Angeles Zoo's efforts to complete construction of their new elephant habitat. I am sure that you have received and will continue to receive many letters supporting this effort from many other zoos, expressing how AZA zoos provide the finest care in the world to elephants in human care. I would like to impress upon you another reason for completion of this state of the art habitat.

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Therefore, I urge you to continue to support the Zoo's effort to bring this piece of nature to the backyard of everyone in Los Angeles knowing that these magnificent animals will have the greatest of care and knowing that you will have had a significant part in potentially changing the life, and world perspective, of many of your youngest and most impressionable constituents.

Sincerely,

Lawrence J. Sorel
Honorable Council:

We have operated as a Union carpentry company in the Los Angeles area for thirty years.

We were tentatively awarded the carpentry work for the Pachyderm Forest Exhibit. This was good news for our workers, since most of them are laid off or facing a lay-off.

Then, the project was delayed for reasons we cannot comment upon.

We can only point out that the work involved in this project is crucially needed in this area. Our unemployed carpenters and their families have no options when building activity is as low as it has become during the last few months. Prevailing wage level work is so sparse that our local work force is enduring an unemployment rate far in excess of the national rates being publicized. Our work force has declined to less than half of its year ago level.

For prevailing wage or Union carpenters, this problem is particularly severe because no other work is obtainable. No matter where our workers go or what type of construction work they pursue, they find “not hiring” situations.

When a project such as the Pachyderm Forest Exhibit is deferred, there are human costs. Remember, this project would have provided work now and far into the future. We were also impressed with the design of the facility, and we feel that the exhibit envisioned would have properly housed any animal residents. Maybe the people objecting can’t appreciate how well this exhibit was designed.

We urge you to consider the human aspects of this issue. We urge you to go forward with this project.

Thank You,

Richard R. Milewski
D. W. McCasland, Inc.
November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
c/o City Clerk
200 N. Spring Street, Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Council File 08-2850

Dear Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council:

I have lived in the Los Angeles area all my life and a Zoo member for the past 8 years. My wife and two children love the Los Angeles Zoo and are impressed with the improvements to the front entry, seal exhibit, gorilla exhibit, orangutan exhibit, chimpanzee exhibit, and the Children's petting yard.

I have seen the space and the plans for the new Pachyderm Forest Exhibit at the Los Angeles Zoo and I feel it will be a tremendous addition. The Zoo needs a new home for the elephants and they do not belong in a sanctuary. They belong in the Zoo, where my children and the children of Los Angeles can see, hear, smell, and learn about elephants and their native habitats. The exhibit will also teach kids about conservation, the importance of habitats, and how to care for other beings.

I understand the project is funded by Los Angeles City and County approved bond funds, GLAZA private donations, and some general funds. Please allow the Zoo and the City to complete Billy's home and to finish what the voters desired.

I ask you to vote to defeat Los Angeles City Council Motion 08-2850 and to support the Los Angeles Zoo's efforts to improve its exhibits, for the welfare of both its animals and its guests.

Sincerely,

Darryl L. Pon

CITY CLERK
2000 MAY 26 PM 2:53
November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
c/o City Clerk
200 N. Spring Street, Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Council File 08-2850

Dear Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council:

I have lived in the Los Angeles area all my life growing up in Silverlake. My husband and two children love the Los Angeles Zoo and are impressed with the improvements to the front entry, seal exhibit, gorilla exhibit, orangutan exhibit, chimpanzee exhibit, and the Children's petting yard.

I feel it is important to have a new elephant exhibit at the Zoo and that this project will be a great addition. The Zoo needs a new home for the elephants and they do not belong in a sanctuary. They belong in the Zoo, where my children and the children of Los Angeles learn about elephants and where they are from. The exhibit will also teach kids about conservation, the importance of habitats, and how to care for other beings.

I understand the project is funded by Los Angeles City and County approved bond funds, GLAZA private donations, and some general funds. Please allow the Zoo and the City to complete Billy's home and to finish what the voters desired.

I ask you to vote to defeat Los Angeles City Council Motion 08-2850 and to support the Los Angeles Zoo's efforts to improve its exhibits, for the welfare of both its animals and its guests.

Sincerely,

Carmen L. Pon
November 24, 2008

The Honorable City Council  
C/O The City Clerk  
200 North Spring Street, Room 360  
Los Angeles, CA  90012

Dear LA City Council:

This letter is written in support of the Los Angeles Zoo’s endeavor to construct a spacious habitat in which to maintain a group of elephants within your City’s zoo. In addition, we applaud the efforts of your zoo director and support staff for their commitment to elephants and their conservation.

By and large, animal care professionals working in zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) share a deep concern and respect for the animals whose well-being depends on their care and expertise. Many of these same individuals have shunned higher-paying career opportunities and options in order to follow their passion of caring for and about animals — both within a captive environment as well as within their rapidly diminishing native habitats.

Accordingly, we would like to offer some of the reasons for our support below:

The practice of keeping elephants in captivity does not have an adverse effect on wild populations of elephants.

Clearly, both Asian and African elephants in the wild are under assault on many fronts. Without a doubt, lack of suitable habitat poses the biggest threat. Wild elephants require vast amounts of territory in order to sustain themselves and maintain healthy populations. For this reason, game and park managers have been forced as a last and tragic option to cull wild elephants in order to preserve small but healthy populations. This further ensures the survival of the rest of the flora and fauna of that ecosystem in the face of limited resource availability. It follows that the animals currently held in captivity are not depleting wild populations.

Elephants in zoos serve as much more than ambassadors for their kind in the wild. They provide insights into proper maintenance of wild populations and opportunities for medical advances, thereby helping secure the future for those that still exist within their native habitat.

A problem confronting wild elephants is that of pathogens such as elephant herpes virus and encephalomyocarditis. Both viruses have been identified in wild free-ranging elephants as well as in animals maintained in captivity. Accordingly, the husbandry and science funded by and conducted in zoos
for the benefit of all elephants have been increasing exponentially in recent years, as have field-based studies by researchers. The information gained from both sources becomes a part of our collective knowledge base of these species, including its sociology and basic husbandry requirements within captive situations and in the wild.

Much of what is known about the behavior, biology and pathology of many species of wild animals stems from the daily observations and studies only possible within the zoo environment. Many of the medical advances in the anesthesiology, diagnosis of disease and disease treatment of wild animals are the result of American Association of Zoo Veterinarians and their foreign colleagues from zoos in the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and PANAB. These are joined by trained field biologists and behaviorists working in AZA zoos and aquariums.

As in the case of the approved strategies to address the global amphibian extinction crisis and the Asian Turtle Crisis, information gained from the study and perpetuation of elephants within approved AZA institutions provide one more possible hedge against extinction.

AZA has developed rigorous requirements for enclosure design, nutrition, reproduction, enrichment, and veterinary care to ensure high-quality zoo habitats for elephants. The Los Angeles Zoo has made a long-term commitment to elephants by meeting and exceeding these requirements.

Institutions such as the Los Angeles Zoo, which have the focus and financial wherewithal to construct an elephant habitat that is suitably spacious and able to accommodate a family or well-socialized group should be supported and applauded. This further supports their commitment to the worldwide survival of elephants and their ecosystems.

In conclusion, while AZA zoos and aquariums are not the panacea for saving all imperiled flora, fauna and ecosystems of our planet, they do represent a tremendous resource of dedicated professionals and are one of the planet’s major in situ conservation supporters. Kindly look favorably upon the LA Zoo’s request to proceed with their plans for a new elephant exhibit. You can be assured that you have the wide support of other AZA zoos and elephant care professionals.

Sincerely,

Patrick M. Burchfield, Ed.D., M. Sc.
Director
Promoting the stewardship of nature through enjoyment, understanding and involvement.

(Reference Council File 08-2850)

November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
c/o City Clerk
200 N. Spring St. Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Council Members,

Your support of completion of the new elephant exhibit currently under construction at the Los Angeles Zoo is strongly encouraged.

Benefits of this project are not limited to the wonderful new habitat that it will provide for high quality care and management of individual elephants at the Zoo. The benefits of this exciting and progressive new environment also include ensuring the continued growth in our collective knowledge of elephant care, management and conservation.

The future of elephants worldwide is facing severe pressure as habitats are lost or degraded, conflict with growing human populations accelerates and poaching continues. Zoos have been leaders in raising awareness of these concerns, assisting conservation programs in elephants’ home range countries and generating elephant conservation support worldwide.

High profile institutions, such as the Los Angeles Zoo, are positioned to significantly advance the progress that has been made to ensure a secure future for elephants. The elephant exhibit work in which you have been engaged promises to dramatically improve the visibility of the challenges facing elephants in the wild by educating and influencing those who visit and support the Los Angeles Zoo. Funding this project is a great investment for the animals ... and for the public who will learn and be inspired through its existence.

Nothing can substitute for the impact of seeing and learning about wildlife first-hand. This is true for all species, but particularly true for animals such as elephants whose size, appearance and behaviors are so remarkable. Those who experience these animals in quality settings that meet their physical and social needs are forever changed.

Los Angeles leaders are to be commended for embarking on such an important and far-reaching project. Please do all that you can to ensure completion of the plans for the new Los Angeles Zoo elephant exhibit. Doing so will serve the animals at the Zoo, the public that is awed and inspired by them and the species' future that may well depend on such well-planned, progressive projects in the jigsaw puzzle that is elephant conservation.

With kindest regards,

Kenneth C. Nieland, Director
Mickey Grove Zoo
November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
c/o City Clerk
200 N. Spring Street, Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Reference: Council File 08-2850

Dear City Council Members:

I am writing to urge your continued support of the elephant program and capital investment in the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens. The Zoo and the elephant program are important quality of life amenities for all of the residents of the Greater Los Angeles area. A small group of radical extremists are trying to eliminate elephants from zoos and are using naive citizens to advance their agenda.

AZA zoos, including the Los Angeles Zoo, are at the forefront of elephant care and conservation which is a multi-faceted complex discipline. The critics who suggest stopping the elephant program at the Los Angeles Zoo do not have any training or background in captive elephant management.

Elephants in zoos are important conservation ambassadors. They teach and inspire all who visit them. Please do not take away this wonder from so many people to appease a few.

Sincerely,

Dr. Chuck Brady
President/CEO

CAB/cc
November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
c/o City Clerk
200 N. Spring Street, Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Council File 08-2850

Dear Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council:

The Los Angeles Zoo is currently in construction on the Pachyderm Forest, its new state-of-the-art Asian elephant exhibit, scheduled to be completed in Summer 2010. The exhibit is now 30% complete and will be home to Billy, the Zoo’s male Asian elephant, plus a small group of female Asian elephants to be acquired in the future. The Pachyderm Forest is part of the Zoo’s Master Plan, and was previously moved for approval 13-2 by the Los Angeles City Council in 2006.

This $42M exhibit is funded by Los Angeles City and County voter-approved bonds, City funds, and nearly $5M in donations to the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA). If abandoned, the project is more likely to cost the City money than save money. The City will likely be required to repay Los Angeles County nearly $5M in expended Proposition A funds. Additionally, the mandatory return of GLAZA’s dedicated donations for the Pachyderm Forest will severely impact future fundraising efforts for the Zoo.

The L.A. Zoo’s Pachyderm Forest encompasses a total area of six acres with 3.6 acres dedicated solely for the elephants to roam. The exhibit will provide its elephants with a varied environment including pools, mud holes, a waterfall, varied topography and walking surfaces, and a modern elephant barn. This exhibit will set a global standard for exhibit size and zoo care of Asian elephants, and will provide them with the highest levels of veterinary care and animal management.

With only 30,000 Asian elephants left in the wild, it is important to encourage conservation by providing a comprehensive exhibit for guests to encounter this endangered species. The Pachyderm Forest visitor experience will address the species survival challenges elephants face in Thailand, Cambodia, India, and China. It is the Zoo’s intent for the Pachyderm Forest to educate its 1.6 million annual guests about Asian elephants and inspire action to protect their future.

The Zoo faces opposition to this carefully and extensively planned ongoing exhibit from a small group of critics who feel unregulated sanctuaries should be the final stop for elephants. Unlike a sanctuary, the new Pachyderm Forest will provide an accredited, enriching space for the conservation and preservation of Asian elephants in America.

Please vote to defeat Los Angeles City Council Motion 08-2850 and support the Los Angeles Zoo’s efforts to improve its exhibits, for the welfare of both its animals and its guests.

Sincerely,

Anna Selene
24 November 2008

Los Angeles City Council, C/O City Clerk, 200 N. Spring St. Room 360, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Council File 08-2850.

As the Director for Happy Hollow Zoo in San Jose, I’d like to express my support for the new elephant exhibit currently being built at the Los Angeles Zoo.

There is a strong emotional connection between the public and animals in zoos/aquariums, especially elephants. For some children in urban and rural communities, the zoo/aquarium is their only opportunity to make a real life connection between humans and animals and nature.

Zoos and aquarium play an increasingly critical conservation role in helping to manage sustainable populations of endangered species and should not be limited in their ability to play this role through the use of arbitrary space standards.

Activists move from cause to cause – however the professionals at AZA accredited zoos and aquariums continue to put their time and energy into what they do every day -- working tirelessly and selflessly to insure that all wildlife, including elephants have a future.

A recent Harris Interactive Poll shows that an overwhelming majority of the public (95%) agreed that seeing elephants in real life helps people appreciate them more and encourages people to donate money or time to animal conservation efforts.

More than 40 accredited zoos across the country are planning to open, expand or enhance elephant habitats and conservation programs in the next five years. This is a testament to the dedication that accredited zoos have to elephant conservation programs, both in zoos and in the wild.

I strongly urge the City Council of Los Angles to allow the Los Angeles Zoo to continue with this enormously important project so that future generations of children will be able to experience the majesty of elephants.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Gregg Owens, Director
Happy Hollow Zoo
Los Angeles City Council
c/o City Clerk
200 N. Spring St. Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Council Members,

Your support of completion of the new elephant exhibit currently under construction at the Los Angeles Zoo is strongly encouraged.

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Los Angeles leaders are to be commended for embarking on such an important and far-reaching project. Please do all that you can to ensure completion of the plans for the new Los Angeles Zoo elephant exhibit. Doing so will serve the animals at the Zoo, the public that is awed and inspired by them and the species’ future that may well depend on such well-planned, progressive projects in the jigsaw puzzle that is elephant conservation.

With kindest regards,

Kenneth C. Nieland
Micke Grove Zoo

November 24, 2008
November 24, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you concerning on-going efforts by animal extremist groups, including In Defense of Animals (IDA), as well as misguided, but well-meaning individuals to influence the City of Los Angeles’ decision to construct a new elephant exhibit at the Los Angeles Zoo.

First, please understand that IDA and other animal extremist groups represent an ideology whose ultimate goal is to close all zoos. While you may be addressing their attack on the new elephant habitat today, rest assured that they will challenge your zoo’s decisions on other charismatic species for years to come. Some have likened their overall strategy to death by a thousand cuts – elephants today, gorillas tomorrow and big cats after that.

Secondly, do not be misled by their use of out-dated anecdotal data or exaggerated “facts.” The truth is that today zoos are doing a far better job of managing their elephants than ever before. Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoos are making an incredible financial investment in elephants. This commitment is not based upon pressure from animal extremists as some would have you believe, but on a better understanding of the unique biological needs of elephants. As a zoo professional with 35 years experience, I have seen this phenomenon before. As recently as the 1970s, gorillas fared poorly in zoos. They were often kept singly or in pairs in sterile, indoor exhibits. Today, gorillas are thriving in AZA zoos, including Los Angeles. They are now housed in appropriate family-sized groups in lush, outdoor exhibits. And they are breeding – so well in fact that the AZA-managed gorilla population will be self-sustaining for many years into the future.

It is my understanding that you are also being asked to render a decision on the new elephant habitat based upon capital and operating costs. This is, to me, clear evidence of the “death by a thousand cuts” philosophy of the animal extremist community. It is no secret that zoos are expensive endeavors. Providing superior care and housing for exotic animals is not cheap, especially for charismatic species like elephants. The long-term extremist strategy is quite clear here – eliminate all costly animals from zoos so that ultimately they will exhibit only small, “uninteresting” species and their popularity will suffer. Do not fall for this deliberate ploy.

The fact is; elephants need zoos. It is not secret that elephants are rapidly declining in the wild. They will only be saved by caring, passionate and inspired people and people are inspired in zoos everyday. No matter how big your television screen or whether or not you have HDTV, the experience cannot compare to that of standing before a living, breathing elephant. Indeed, some of the world’s foremost conservationists trace their interest and passion for wildlife to their childhood experiences at their local zoo.

I urge you to support the Los Angeles Zoo in their desire to provide the citizens of Los Angeles with a world class elephant experience. Your citizens and your elephants will thank you.

Sincerely,

Satch Krantz
Executive Director

Accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums—Member of the American Public Gardens Association
November 24, 2008

Los Angeles City Council
c/o City Clerk
200 N. Spring Street, Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Reference Council File 08-2850

Dear City Council Members:

I am writing to urge your continued support of the elephant program and capital investment in the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens. The Zoo and the elephant program are important quality of life amenities for all of the residents of the Greater Los Angeles area. A small group of radical extremists are trying to eliminate elephants from zoos and are using naïve citizens to advance their agenda.

AZA zoos, including the Los Angeles Zoo, are at the forefront of elephant care and conservation which is a multi-faceted complex discipline. The critics who suggest stopping the elephant program at the Los Angeles Zoo do not have any training or background in captive elephant management.

Elephants in zoos are important conservation ambassadors. They teach and inspire all who visit them. Please do not take away this wonder from so many people to appease a few.

Sincerely,

Dr. Chuck Brady
President/CEO

CAB/cc