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**Date:** September 10, 2020  
**To:** Mayor Blad and Council Members  
**From:** Peter Pruett, Zoo Idaho Manager  
**RE:** Zoo Idaho – Revised 20 Year Master Plan

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### **Background Information**

Zoo Idaho's previous 20-year Master Plan was designed in 1998. The revised 20-year Master Plan is a long-term vision built on Zoo Idaho's mission of "Preserving Intermountain West Wildlife and Habitat through Conservation and Education". The Plan has been designed & prepared in collaboration between Zoo Idaho, Zoo Idaho Zoological Society (ZIS), the City of Pocatello Parks & Recreation Department, and public input.

Guiding principles used in development process of the revised Master Plan are as follows:

- Provide unique and meaningful animal, educational and play experiences that meet the high standards of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)
- Develop world class exhibits that exceed all husbandry standards, while remaining cost realistic
- Focus on gaining AZA accreditation
- Focus on Idaho conservation issues and educating the community on human/wildlife mitigation opportunities
- Reflect the community it serves, while providing opportunities for community support and inclusiveness
- Works within the complex & scenic natural landscape to build engaging and realistic/cost feasible exhibits
- Strategically mix major and minor improvements
- Improve guest amenities, including restrooms and rest areas
- Work to capture visitors along the I-15/I-86 Yellowstone corridor
- Emphasize local products and the community

The revised Zoo Idaho Master Plan is crafted to be a living document that allows for flexibility in Zoo Idaho's growth, and provides the ability to meet unforeseen challenges within its 20-year lifespan. The design places a high priority on efficiency and realistic costs, as funding will be derived through a combination of public & private sources, as well as grant opportunities and partnerships.

## **April, 2019 City Council Work Session Meeting**

Staff presented the draft revised Zoo Idaho Master Plan to Council at the April, 2019 Work Session meeting. At that time, Council was supportive of the Plan, provided Staff with positive feedback, and directed Zoo Idaho to continue solicitation efforts for community input & comments, and bring the Master Plan back at a future meeting for further consideration and direction.

## **Community Input/Comments Regarding the Revised Zoo Idaho 20-year Master Plan**

Following the April, 2019 Work Session presentation, Staff has used the following efforts to solicit community input regarding the draft Master Plan:

- Zoo Idaho Master Plan on-line Community Survey July 1 – August 31, 2019
- On-grounds Zoo Idaho survey July 1 – October 31, 2019
- Park and Rec Advisory Board Meeting February 7, 2019

A summary of community input & comments received to date is as follows:

- "I would like to see more people enjoy our zoo. Keeping fees reasonable will be a key".
- "Four habitats is a great focus but with all the improvements something must be done to make the areas more accessible. Many of the pathways are dangerous due to steep inclines and lack of security railings to prevent anyone from falling right off the edges. I had a zoo membership but I did not renew it because I felt unsafe making my way around. I did not enjoy taking my grandchildren anywhere but the farmyard tepee areas where I felt they were safe. Many of my friends will not visit at all. Improvements are needed in many animal areas but the people will not come until the safety issues also improve".
- "If you're going to invest in your zoo, do it for the animals first before worrying about how much fun and awe your visitors have".
- "After looking at the proposed plan, the bird habitat (owls, crows, vultures, etc.) is not going to be changing at all. I think that would be a mistake, they need more room to move as well. For the most part I think the changes will be great and help people think it is actually a zoo instead of an animal prison".
- "I am a disabled Senior. The last time I was at the zoo (as a paying customer) was about 10 yrs. ago. You had a golf cart taking people who cannot walk on a steep path around the zoo. Now I drive up to your main office area, in front of the new Animal Shelter (Ave. of the Chiefs), and love to see the bison, elk, etc. The bison are my favorite animals to see. I cannot see the Grizzly exhibit but would love to. Now I can no longer walk without someone to help me. I see you are changing the upper (bison, etc.) exhibit area so one cannot drive up to your office bldg., making it into a wetlands exhibit? Unless there is a road from So. 2nd leading up the up to the grizzly & bison exhibits, it would be impossible for me to view them. I tend to take a snack to eat in my car to see the animals. I would gladly become a member to view the animals from my car in order see them. I cannot begin to tell you how this will bring me such satisfaction and enjoyment in my later years! (I can drive by myself but getting in/out of my car

- is not do-able for me - I am an amputee and total disabled). Thank you for this opportunity to comment".
- "I love the proposed plan for improvements. My favs are definitely the wetlands, train, and snack/gift shop area. We were just there this weekend and were talking about the zoo needing these things like other zoos usually have!!".
  - "Well thought out w/different regional exhibits, linked by a train. The incorporation of water mammal viewing, hopefully w/below ground views is good idea. Carry on this this admirable project. It would be good to know the priority time lines and costs as well as capital accruement plans".
  - "Master plan looks great, but two other ideas, 1. How about adding a wolverine. 2. keep the zoo open longer at night in summer as to let visitors see the activity of the nocturnal animals more, also open earlier in the day in the summer, not as hot and animals more active when not as hot".
  - "I appreciate the move away from the stark, bare cages, although it is hard to tell if all those wire cages against the lava cliff will go away. I hope so. No more coyotes? I know the last set didn't work out, but does that mean we're done with them? I am happy to see that the cougars are being moved. I love the different habitats lined out like this. Also love the idea of a train".
  - "Any plans for a snack bar on the upper half? Would be a great revenue source".
  - "Give some kind of access to the attraction at the upper level of the park, please. I realize this might mean an extra manned/ticketed entrance, but it would really 'complete' the experience. Several times when we have taken out-of-town visitors to the Zoo, they always complain about not being able to enjoy the upper park for a while (since you have to make the HIKE!), BEFORE completing the rest of the zoo tour".
  - "I like most of this except that 2/3 of the zoo is going to be one giant pond with two swans in it. We have swan breeding grounds in Idaho already and I would rather see a smaller pond with room for moose in the grassland area".
  - "Our family would love to see the black bears and mountain lion out of a cement enclosure, would love to see them in an enclosure like the grizzly bears".

### **Request for Council Input and Further Direction**

After reviewing community input received regarding the revised master plan, and considering both the positive feedback as well as concerns expressed, it is felt that the revised Zoo Idaho Master Plan addresses most concerns expressed, while remaining cost feasible in proposed plan recommendations.

It is respectfully requested that Council provide additional input to Staff regarding the final draft of Zoo Idaho's revised 20-Year Master Plan, and if appropriate, direct Staff to present the Zoo Idaho 20-Year Master Plan at a future regular City Council meeting for a public hearing opportunity and approval consideration.