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**MARYLAND ZOO IN BALTIMORE ANNOUNCES ELEPHANT
PROGRAM EXPANSION**

-More elephants to come to Zoo, elephant exhibit to be expanded-

BALTIMORE (October 5, 2006) - The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is taking an elephant-sized leap in the world of wildlife conservation.

The Zoo announced today that it will be welcoming three female African elephants from the Philadelphia Zoo. The trio will join The Maryland Zoo's two other African elephants, Dolly and Anna, giving the Zoo one of the largest herds of African elephants on the East Coast. In addition, the Zoo will embark on a major expansion of its elephant exhibit.

"Expanding our elephant program is the right thing to do for a variety of reasons," said Billie Grieb, The Maryland Zoo's president and chief executive officer. "Most importantly, a larger herd and exhibit will further enrich all of our elephants' lives. But these things also will benefit the Zoo itself and the public."

The Philadelphia Zoo's three African elephants -- Petal, age 50; Kallie, 24; and Bette, 23 -- are expected to arrive at The Maryland Zoo in spring 2007. It was a difficult decision for the Philadelphia Zoo to move their elephants to a new home. The park had envisioned a new elephant savanna that would provide a naturalistic habitat for elephants and a dynamic learning

experience for guests. However, rising construction costs and fundraising challenges led the Zoo's board to defer plans for a new exhibit. In addition, the Zoo determined that lower-cost short-term renovations at the existing exhibit would not serve the best long-term interests of its elephants or visitors and could jeopardize progress on other new animal habitats.

"We're glad that our three African elephants will remain part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) community," said Vikram Dewan, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Zoo. "AZA zoos have an important mission to educate the nearly 143 million people who visit each year about threatened wildlife and habitats and to engage them in efforts to help protect them. We know that our three African elephants will continue to inspire millions of visitors who may never have the opportunity to see elephants in Africa or Asia and that they will receive excellent care from an experienced and highly committed staff in Baltimore."

A larger elephant herd will allow The Maryland Zoo to accelerate its current breeding program. The Zoo has already been working to artificially inseminate Dolly, and would like to extend its efforts to include other elephants recommended for breeding by the AZA African Elephant Species Survival Plan (SSP). The Elephant SSP program oversees and coordinates all breeding of elephants in AZA-accredited zoos in order to ensure healthy breeding and continuation of the species in the North American population.

The expanded elephant herd also will allow for more social interaction among the elephants, which are social creatures by nature. And by committing to a serious breeding program, The Maryland Zoo also can take part in even more research that will help elephants in North American zoos and in the wild. The Zoo has contributed to at least three elephant research projects in recent years, with more planned in the future.

The exhibit expansion will make the Zoo a leader in providing an enhanced environment for the elephants. It will include an elephant "trek" walking path more than a quarter of a mile long, allowing more room for exercise. It will also incorporate flexible exhibit areas that will enable the Zoo's elephant team to vary the elephants' routines and environments.

By changing access to multiple enclosures, the elephant team can vary the way the animals utilize their enclosure each day. In addition, the flexible space will include several "activity stations," including watering holes, a wallow, and many areas for foraging. A covered outdoor structure will provide shade in summer and ensure that even during winter the elephants

will have the option to go outdoors for the fresh air and exercise they need. State and local officials say they're excited to hear about the Zoo's elephant program expansion.

"The Maryland Zoo is one of our state's greatest treasures and we are excited that our Zoo will now be able to share with the community and with the world one of the largest herds of African elephants on the East Coast," said Maryland Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. "The addition of these elephants to the Zoo's already extensive collection will add to the family-friendly experience at the Zoo and give children of all ages a unique opportunity to see these beautiful creatures up close."

"The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore continues to be one of Baltimore's premiere attractions for both visitors and residents," said Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley. "The expansion of the Zoo's elephant program will help to preserve the elephant population worldwide. The citizens of Maryland and I applaud the Zoo's efforts to continue to provide a wonderful retreat in Baltimore City for both visitors to the Zoo and its animals."

The decision to expand the Zoo's elephant program was guided by an initiative from the AZA which asked zoos to choose between becoming a holding facility for elephants or expanding their number of elephants and their exhibits in order to undertake a serious breeding program. Because of The Maryland Zoo's strong wildlife conservation mission and the strength of its existing elephant program, the expansion was a logical move, and one that will be good for elephants in general. For one thing, the vast majority of the North American population of African elephants will be beyond reproductive age in 20 years unless more breeding programs are developed. Even in Africa, where only 600,000 elephants remain, humans continue to crowd them out of their natural ranges, and they can rarely be seen outside national parks. "Problem" elephants that do not stay in the parks are often killed.

"Whether in Africa or the U.S., it is clear that elephants need help from humans to survive," said Michael McClure, The Maryland Zoo's elephant manager. "The Maryland Zoo is positioned to take a leadership role due to our strong elephant program, our availability of space, and our support from the community."

“The Maryland Zoo is one of nearly 40 AZA zoos in North America planning to expand or build new elephant exhibits in the next five years,” said AZA Executive Director Kristin L. Vehrs. “AZA members like The Maryland Zoo are working collaboratively and are committed to an aggressive vision that focuses on ensuring elephants are part of the world’s future. The overwhelming community support in Baltimore for its zoo and the zoo’s elephant program is part of making that vision a reality.”

There was a remarkable show of public support in 2003 when financial concerns nearly caused the Zoo’s elephants to be sent away. That led to a fund-raising campaign that brought in over a million dollars and allowed the Zoo to keep the elephants. In the expanded exhibit, Zoo guests will get the chance to spot elephants from more vantage points.

Planning for the expanded exhibit is already under way. The first phase of the expansion, in addition to renovations to the existing elephant exhibit, are expected to be completed within two years.

About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contributions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo’s varied natural habitat exhibits in areas such as Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the award-winning Children’s Zoo. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is fully accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit www.marylandzoo.org.

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