

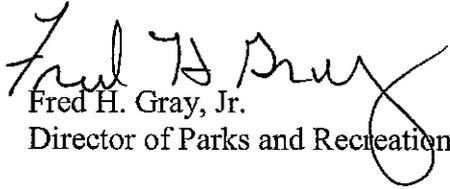


# MEMORANDUM

---

**DATE:** January 17, 2012

**TO:** Richard Miranda  
City Manager

**FROM:**   
Fred H. Gray, Jr.  
Director of Parks and Recreation

**SUBJECT:** Additional Update and Follow-Up on Reid Park Zoo Elephants

In response to ongoing communication and support from Tucson Mayor and Council members, Reid Park Zoo continues to evaluate every option for animal residents in its care. Mayor and Council unanimously agreed on November 22, 2011 that Zoo staff, as elephant experts and in agreement with San Diego Zoo Global and AZA, should continue work for the future of African elephants in Tucson in cooperation with AZA and the Species Survival Plan.

Tucson has made a decision to operate an accredited Zoo which receives widespread community support and has developed a strong partnership including financial support from the Reid Park Zoological Society. Therefore, it is appropriate that zoo animal management practices be implemented and supported.

### Option to keep Connie and Shaba together in current exhibit

The current exhibit has been adequate for two elephants for many years; however, it does not meet the needs of aging elephants and will not allow the introduction of additional elephants to increase the social opportunities for either elephant. The barn is small with concrete flooring. While it has been home to the elephants for many years, new and improved facilities are not available for them. The needs of older animals include sand floors, better heating and the ability to provide medical assistance as needed.

In order to keep Connie and Shaba together in Tucson and to continue to meet their needs, a new barn, additional space and at least one more elephant would be required. This involves considerable capital expense as well as ongoing operational and maintenance funding, none of which is available in our budget.

### Alternative plan with San Diego Zoo Global

Ongoing discussion with colleagues from San Diego Zoo, AZA and the African Elephant Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) have allowed staff to re-evaluate the plan to send Connie to San Diego and introduce Shaba to a breeding herd of African elephants in Expedition Tanzania while still meeting the original goals of the program. The experts at San Diego Zoo Global, Reid Park Zoo

staff, AZA and the TAG have agreed to send both Connie and Shaba to Elephant Odyssey in San Diego.

Current AZA standards state that new herds of elephants should have a least 3 animals and be comprised of a single species. San Diego Zoo currently houses one African elephant in the Asian Elephant Odyssey habitat. Like Reid Park Zoo, San Diego Zoo's goal is to work toward meeting all AZA standards. By moving both Shaba and Connie to San Diego Zoo same species companionship will be provided for all elephants involved, while still moving toward exceeding all standards.

San Diego Zoo remains confident that when given the opportunity to socialize with members of her own species Connie will bond well with fellow elderly Asian elephants. Similarly, they expect Shaba will find companionship with their single African, "Tembo." Experts will continue to evaluate individual animal behavior and relationships, as well as the needs of the entire Species Survival Plan, as future placement decisions are made for Shaba and Tembo together.

The decision to move Shaba to San Diego along with Connie allows Reid Park Zoo to continue to meet the long-established objectives of its elephant program:

- Provide both Connie and Shaba with additional space, superior whole-life care, and expertly trained staff at AZA institutions.
- Introduce both Connie and Shaba to additional herd members, as two-animal "herds" do not provide for long-term social needs for elephants.
- Continue to participate actively in the African Elephant Species Survival Plan and breeding program.
- Partner with fellow elephant experts for the future of elephants at AZA zoos.
- Provide an accredited Zoo in Tucson where guests have the opportunity to learn from elephants and are encouraged to form personal and meaningful connections with wildlife.

Staff concurs that the alternative outlined above allows the Zoo to move forward with plans to move elephants and open an exciting new exhibit. This decision allows the Asian and African elephant to remain together while they are introduced to the existing herd in San Diego. Expectations are that they will gravitate to their own species, providing an improved social situation for both, as well as for the solitary African elephant currently in the exhibit.

Therefore, it is our recommendation in cooperation with the San Diego Zoo, the AZA and the African Elephant Taxon Advisory Group to send both Connie and Shaba to Elephant Odyssey in San Diego.

