



8403 Colesville Road, Suite 710
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3314
301-562-0777 tel 301-562-0888 fax
www.aza.org

November 21, 2011

Steve Kozachik
Midtown Ward Six
3202 East 1st Street
Tucson, Arizona 85716

Dear Council Member Kozachik:

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is writing to express strong support for the Reid Park Zoo, which has made an extraordinary commitment to the care and welfare of elephants. Recognition of this commitment is especially important as the Reid Park Zoo faces unwarranted attacks from anti-zoo groups that lack the expertise to address issues of elephant care.

As the independent organization with accreditation oversight of the Reid Park Zoo, AZA can assure you that this institution meets the highest standards of animal care and welfare. AZA Accreditation Standards are high and always rising, and include thorough Standards for Elephant Management and Care. The completion of a new, 7-acre state-of-the-art elephant habitat will not only allow the Reid Park Zoo to meet these rising standards, but it also puts the Reid Park Zoo in a leadership role among zoos caring for elephants.

In addition to the physical facilities the Reid Park Zoo is putting in place, it is planning to form a new and growing herd of African elephants. This will help ensure the survival of the species and fully engage the Tucson community in the critical mission of elephant conservation.

The movement of elephants between AZA-accredited facilities is often necessary as standards rise, as facilities expand, and as there are changes to the composition of the elephant herd in North America. When the experts at the Reid Park Zoo engage in these transfers, we know that they will be highly sensitive to the needs of every individual elephant involved. They will also be adhering to the AZA Standards which state:

Due to multiple species differences and possible disease transmission issues, when forming new herds, Asian and African elephants should not be placed together in the same enclosure.

In AZA's oversight role over the Reid Park Zoo, along with 224 other exemplary institutions that meet high standards of animal care and welfare, our role is also to assure you that animals leaving the Reid Park Zoo for another AZA-accredited institution will receive a high level of care from experts who are passionate about animals. While those who question the Reid Park Zoo's decision-making process may share this same passion for animals, they lack the hands-on expertise and years of experience that reside with zoo professionals. We urge you to trust the experts at the Reid Park Zoo and to rely on them as you review this matter.

AZA is available to answer questions you may have. We want to reassure you, the Mayor and Members of the City Council, that the Reid park Zoo and its programs are in compliance with high standards for animal care and welfare. Your community is fortunate to have the Reid Park Zoo, and your continuing commitment to this facility and its outstanding elephant program is much appreciated.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin L. Vehrs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kristin L. Vehrs
Executive Director