

Transformational Change

Dear Colleagues,

I am incredibly grateful to be the 99th chair of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. It was great seeing you all at this year's Conference and being reminded of the impactful work being done across this community. Thank you to Columbus Zoo and Aquarium and The Wilds for being such welcoming hosts and providing the perfect atmosphere for us to come together as we continue to drive our imperative for the wellbeing of animals, our guests, and our teams.

As we approach our centennial, we are standing firm in our commitment toward a transformational change, and I am excited we have arrived at the implementation phase of some of our most important initiatives.

Because you recognize the need to control our own destiny, and you know the importance of sustainable animal populations for our zoos and aquariums, you have leaned into the accountability, work, and sacrifice to reimagine our Species Survival Plans® and work with intention towards aquatic sustainability.

SSPs Reimagined is center stage this year with the approval of the Elephant Sustainability Strategy. Our AZA elephant holding facilities came together in agreement that one of our most beloved but challenging species can grow and thrive in our care.

The board recognized this strategy is critical for a future with elephants, but even more importantly, it has implications for success beyond any one species. The plan is bold and challenging but achievable, and I know we will rise to the occasion. We always do!

I am also excited about the work being done to further the wellbeing of animals outside of our facilities. There is great progress in our mission to end wildlife trafficking by collaborating with key partners through the Not a Pet campaign and the Southern California Wildlife Confiscations Network.

AZA's Wildlife Trafficking Alliance and the International Fund for Animal Welfare have partnered on the Not a Pet campaign to raise awareness and change attitudes and behaviors related to the exotic pet trade in the United States.

The Southern California Wildlife Confiscations Network provides a cooperative and coordinated response protocol for the care and welfare of wildlife confiscated from illegal trade. This is a pilot program focused on the southern California region, which will serve as the model to scale up efforts around the U.S. and beyond.

We are the largest conservation movement on the planet, caring for and impacting animals no matter where they live.

I'm looking forward to learning from and working with you this year!

LISA NEW

AZA Board Chair

President and Chief Executive Officer, Zoo Knoxville



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