

February 25, 2015

Handouts

- Agenda Item 6.c Fresno Chaffee Zoo Corporation Financial Report for January 2015
- Recent Fresno Chaffee Zoo Press Release and Fresno Bee Articles

 **DRAFT**



FY15 January Financial Report

Board of Directors

Agenda Item 6.c

Discussion of Financial Results

As of January 31, 2015

- **Key Facts & Figures*:**

- The Accounting department is working on 2014 yearend entries, balancing revenue and expenses, and generating reports for the audit.
- Earned revenue was \$232,722 compared to budgeted earned revenue of \$246,308.
- Personnel expenses are 5% under budget and total operating expenses are 19% under budget.
- Surplus of \$48,069 compare to budgeted loss of (\$22,132) for the first month of 2015.
- January 2015 attendance of 33,933 compared to the budgeted attendance of 35,000.

* Excludes investment income (unrealized gain/loss on investments), capital fundraising, depreciation and capital expenditures.

Discussion of Financial Results

Liquid Assets:

	2014
	<u>Unaudited</u>
Cash	\$300,261
Short-term Investments	\$52,125
Long-term Investments	\$5,203,245
Endowment/Board Designated	<u>\$4,169,549</u>
	\$9,725,180

Accounts Receivable:

\$4,686,835

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$6,067,263
Accrued Liabilities	\$271,652
Line of Credit	<u>\$248,085</u>
	\$6,587,000

Net Assets:

Unrestricted	\$57,080,479
Temporarily Restricted	\$716,623
Permanently Restricted	<u>\$50,431</u>
	\$57,847,533

Measure Z Balance @ 1/31/2015

Operating	\$6,048,505
Capital Funds	<u>\$28,934,389</u>
	\$34,982,894

January 2015

MTD Attendance			Increase/ Decrease
	2015	2014	
Attendance	33,933	46,313	-27%
Paid	18,995	26,664	-29%
Members	12,274	16,645	-26%
Group	336	343	-2%
Other	2,328	2,661	-13%
Giraffe Feeding	6,198	5,832	6%
Capture Rate	18%	13%	45%
Stingray Bay	9,691	13,722	-29%
Capture Rate	29%	30%	-4%
Winged Wonders			
YTD Revenue			Increase/ Decrease
	2015	2014	
Admissions	\$101,767	\$140,611	-28%
Per Cap	\$3.00	\$3.04	-1%
Giraffe Feeding	\$12,448	\$12,247	2%
Per Cap	\$0.37	\$0.26	39%
Stingray Bay	\$10,943	\$16,003	-32%
Per Cap	\$0.32	\$0.35	-7%
Membership	\$44,604	\$62,661	-29%
Contracted Services			
Concessions	\$11,065	\$17,090	-35%
Per Cap	\$0.33	\$0.37	-12%
Gift Shop	\$14,230	\$18,986	-25%
Per Cap	\$0.42	\$0.41	2%

Key:		
Equal to or ahead of 2014		
2% or less behind 2014		
More than 2% behind 2014		

2014 Unaudited
703,325
371,843
155,659
74,159
101,664
86,107
12%
212,857
30%
121,032
\$2,176,323
\$3.09
\$185,653
\$0.26
\$284,447
\$0.40
\$830,088
\$288,513
\$0.41
\$357,104
\$0.51

Fresno's Chaffee Zoo Corporation
Balance Sheet
January 2015

	FY15 @ 1/31/15	2014 Unaudited
ASSETS		
Cash	\$17,799	\$300,261
Short Term Investments	\$0	\$52,125
Long Term Investments	\$9,316,680	\$9,372,794
Accounts Receivable	\$3,759,994	\$4,686,835
Prepaid Expenses	\$103,142	\$103,908
Inventory	\$0	\$0
Building, Equipment, Vehicle and Furniture (net)	\$2,843,353	\$2,866,677
Construction in Progress	\$39,092,147	\$36,977,966
Exhibits	\$10,073,967	\$10,073,967
TOTAL ASSETS	\$65,207,081	\$64,434,532
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable/Accrued Liabilities	\$4,865,479	\$6,338,915
Line of Credit	\$398,517	\$248,085
Total Liabilities	\$5,263,996	\$6,586,999
Net Assets		
Fund Balance-Unrestricted	\$59,175,304	\$57,080,479
Fund Balance-Temporarily Restricted	\$717,730	\$716,623
Fund Balance-Permanently Restricted	\$50,051	\$50,431
Total Net Assets	\$59,943,086	\$57,847,533
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$65,207,081	\$64,434,532

Fresno's Chaffee Zoo Corporation
Income Statement
January 31, 2015

	Current Month			Year-to-Date			FY14 Unaudited
	FY15 Budget	Month-to-Date Budget @ 1/31/2015	Actual @ 1/31/2015	Variance	Year-to-Date Budget @ 1/31/2015	Actual @ 1/31/2015	Variance
REVENUE							
Self-Generated Revenue							
Admissions	\$2,261,000	\$108,033	\$101,767	(5.8)%	\$108,033	\$101,767	(5.8)%
Adopt an Animal	\$40,000	\$5,000	\$5,225	4.5%	\$5,000	\$5,225	4.5%
Board Designated for Endow	\$50,000	\$0	\$473	0.0%	\$0	\$473	0.0%
Education	\$288,600	\$5,275	\$4,782	(9.3)%	\$5,275	\$4,782	(9.3)%
Food Services	\$319,000	\$11,500	\$11,065	(3.8)%	\$11,500	\$11,065	(3.8)%
Gift Shop	\$371,000	\$15,500	\$14,230	(8.2)%	\$15,500	\$14,230	(8.2)%
Giraffe Feeding	\$196,000	\$13,000	\$12,448	(4.2)%	\$13,000	\$12,448	(4.2)%
Grants/Fundraising	\$1,108,500	\$3,375	\$4,097	21.4%	\$3,375	\$4,097	21.4%
Group Event/Facility Rental	\$250,000	\$13,000	\$14,927	14.8%	\$13,000	\$14,927	14.8%
Interest Income	\$286,000	\$7,083	\$7,205	1.7%	\$7,083	\$7,205	1.7%
Investment Income	\$0	\$0	(\$62,478)	0.0%	\$0	(\$62,478)	0.0%
Memberships	\$820,000	\$50,000	\$44,604	(10.8)%	\$50,000	\$44,604	(10.8)%
Special Events	\$630,000	\$417	\$0	(100.0)%	\$417	\$0	(100.0)%
Stringray Exhibit	\$287,000	\$11,750	\$10,943	(6.9)%	\$11,750	\$10,943	(6.9)%
Other	\$54,500	\$2,750	\$1,992	(27.5)%	\$2,750	\$1,992	(27.5)%
Total Self-Generated Revenue	\$6,961,600	\$246,683	\$171,282	(30.6)%	\$246,683	\$171,282	(30.6)%
City of Fresno	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Measure Z-Capital Funds	\$23,250	\$1,938	\$2,109,172	108,760.5%	\$1,938	\$2,109,172	108,760.5%
Measure Z Operating Funds	\$4,500,120	\$242,099	\$259,147	7.0%	\$242,099	\$259,147	7.0%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$11,484,970	\$490,720	\$2,539,602	417.5%	\$490,720	\$2,539,602	417.5%

Fresno's Chaffee Zoo Corporation

Income Statement

January 31, 2015

	FY15 Budget	Current Month		Year-to-Date		FY14 Unaudited		
		Month-to-Date Budget @ 1/31/2015	Actual @ 1/31/2015	Variance	Year-to-Date Budget @ 1/31/2015		Actual @ 1/31/2015	Variance
EXPENSES								
OPERATING EXPENSES								
Personnel Expenses								
Administration	\$727,278	\$40,724	\$38,818	(4.7)%	\$40,724	\$38,818	(4.7)%	\$723,484
Animal	\$2,256,665	\$107,833	\$105,488	(2.2)%	\$107,833	\$105,488	(2.2)%	\$1,774,064
Education	\$788,645	\$41,572	\$39,362	(5.3)%	\$41,572	\$39,362	(5.3)%	\$611,480
Maintenance/Horticulture	\$667,149	\$37,232	\$33,767	(9.3)%	\$37,232	\$33,767	(9.3)%	\$502,999
Mem/Dev/Marketing	\$623,994	\$36,933	\$35,156	(4.8)%	\$36,933	\$35,156	(4.8)%	\$488,708
Veterinary	\$271,093	\$13,583	\$12,512	(7.9)%	\$13,583	\$12,512	(7.9)%	\$209,327
Visitor Services	\$690,153	\$36,326	\$32,988	(9.2)%	\$36,326	\$32,988	(9.2)%	\$632,985
Total Personnel Expenses	\$6,024,977	\$314,202	\$298,091	(5.1)%	\$314,202	\$298,091	(5.1)%	\$4,943,047
Other Expenses								
Advertising	\$315,300	\$16,567	\$660	(96.0)%	\$16,567	\$660	(96.0)%	\$321,971
Animal Services	\$361,500	\$20,125	\$12,125	(39.8)%	\$20,125	\$12,125	(39.8)%	\$331,958
Computer/Software	\$53,750	\$1,837	\$0	(100.0)%	\$1,837	\$0	(100.0)%	\$46,800
Conservation	\$70,000	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$80,053
Contracted Services	\$528,400	\$35,350	\$22,381	(36.7)%	\$35,350	\$22,381	(36.7)%	\$502,215
Depreciation Expense	\$346,380	\$25,868	\$23,644	(8.6)%	\$25,868	\$23,644	(8.6)%	\$298,101
Dues	\$39,105	\$14,384	\$11,336	(21.2)%	\$14,384	\$11,336	(21.2)%	\$35,840
Equipment	\$179,350	\$7,854	\$3,012	(61.6)%	\$7,854	\$3,012	(61.6)%	\$184,168
Fleet	\$33,220	\$2,352	\$817	(65.3)%	\$2,352	\$817	(65.3)%	\$20,012
Food/Catering	\$134,000	\$1,825	\$1,488	(18.4)%	\$1,825	\$1,488	(18.4)%	\$137,159
Insurance	\$155,000	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$150,755
Miscellaneous Business	\$89,668	\$2,781	\$641	(76.9)%	\$2,781	\$641	(76.9)%	\$55,894
Office Supplies	\$26,150	\$1,087	\$120	(89.0)%	\$1,087	\$120	(89.0)%	\$22,767
Postage	\$61,160	\$7,057	\$6,560	(7.0)%	\$7,057	\$6,560	(7.0)%	\$50,357
Printing	\$137,100	\$2,142	\$1,815	(15.3)%	\$2,142	\$1,815	(15.3)%	\$126,859
Professional Services	\$191,000	\$5,600	\$960	(82.8)%	\$5,600	\$960	(82.8)%	\$301,946
Repairs and Replacements	\$255,900	\$21,783	\$15,215	(30.2)%	\$21,783	\$15,215	(30.2)%	\$246,671
Service/Bank/Credit Card Fees	\$127,230	\$8,582	\$8,057	(6.1)%	\$8,582	\$8,057	(6.1)%	\$124,799

Fresno's Chaffee Zoo Corporation
Income Statement
January 31, 2015

	Current Month			Year-to-Date			FY14 Unaudited
	FY15 Budget	Month-to-Date Budget @ 1/31/2015	Actual @ 1/31/2015	Variance	Year-to-Date Budget @ 1/31/2015	Actual @ 1/31/2015	
Signage	\$21,050	\$1,754	\$0	(100.0)%	\$1,754	\$0	\$14,045
Specialized Services	\$30,500	\$3,917	\$64	(98.4)%	\$3,917	\$64	\$23,606
Staff Development	\$90,550	\$4,096	\$2,679	(34.6)%	\$4,096	\$2,679	\$73,406
Supplies	\$421,070	\$15,006	\$7,098	(52.7)%	\$15,006	\$7,098	\$359,671
Telephone	\$40,500	\$3,375	\$645	(80.9)%	\$3,375	\$645	\$39,992
Uniforms	\$34,900	\$5,075	\$4,476	(11.8)%	\$5,075	\$4,476	\$31,185
Utilities	\$560,000	\$27,000	\$22,164	(17.9)%	\$27,000	\$22,164	\$451,618
Other	\$26,075	\$792	\$0	(100.0)%	\$792	\$0	\$20,184
Total Other Expenses	\$4,328,858	\$236,207	\$145,958	(38.2)%	\$236,207	\$145,958	\$4,052,033
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$10,353,835	\$550,409	\$444,049	(19.3)%	\$550,409	\$444,049	\$8,995,079
Expansion/Nonoperating Exp.							
Expansion/Nonoperating Exp. \$100,000		\$8,333	\$0	(100.0)%	\$8,333	\$0	\$106,704
Total Expansion/Nonoperating Exp. \$100,000		\$8,333	\$0	(100.0)%	\$8,333	\$0	\$106,704
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$10,453,835	\$558,743	\$444,049	(20.5)%	\$558,743	\$444,049	\$9,101,783
BEGINNING FUND BALANCE	\$57,847,533	\$57,847,533	\$57,847,533	0.0%	\$57,847,533	\$57,847,533	\$27,737,148
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	\$1,031,135	(\$68,023)	\$2,095,552	(3,180.7)%	(\$68,023)	\$2,095,552	\$30,110,385
ENDING FUND BALANCE	\$58,878,668	\$57,779,510	\$59,943,086	3.7%	\$57,779,510	\$59,943,086	\$57,847,533

Measure Z Revenue Summary of Tax Proceeds

	2005-2006 Actual	2006-2007 Actual	2007-2008 Actual	2008-2009 Actual	2009-2010 Actual	2010-2011 Actual	2011-2012 Actual	2012-2013 Actual	2013-2014 Actual	2014-2015 Actual
July	\$700,400	\$671,500	\$819,900	\$813,500	\$671,700	\$659,300	\$719,800	\$826,000	\$903,500	\$864,900
August	933,800	895,400	1,093,200	1,084,700	885,300	857,600	921,200	1,033,100	\$1,106,000	\$1,149,600
September	764,524	1,453,498	1,060,279	930,087	810,940	895,691	1,057,603	1,028,369	\$1,097,605	\$1,199,226
October	705,400	679,300	853,500	792,200	678,000	677,000	694,100	850,500	\$857,400	\$879,100
November	940,500	1,471,000	1,138,000	1,056,300	743,300	879,500	878,500	1,056,800	\$1,143,200	\$1,172,100
December	1,324,459	1,047,118	827,112	872,815	971,061	932,350	1,240,028	1,083,021	\$1,076,977	\$1,147,219
January	676,000	813,700	831,200	766,900	719,900	710,700	770,100	799,900	\$836,700	\$884,100
February	901,300	1,081,800	1,108,200	841,000	944,000	919,900	978,600	1,086,700	\$1,101,200	
March	1,319,000	905,577	762,907	959,801	628,563	821,858	1,006,649	1,021,734	\$1,113,584	
April	678,900	748,000	699,000	652,000	594,300	618,400	716,100	846,500	\$788,000	
May	905,200	997,300	932,000	860,800	847,200	876,500	897,100	1,493,700	\$1,050,600	
June	1,113,269	900,178	1,026,580	730,781	821,511	963,040	1,191,689	1,015,391	\$1,139,360	
Total	\$10,962,752	\$11,664,370	\$11,151,879	\$10,360,883	\$9,315,775	\$9,811,839	\$11,071,469	\$12,141,715	\$12,214,126	\$7,296,245

Total received from Inception \$106,692,907

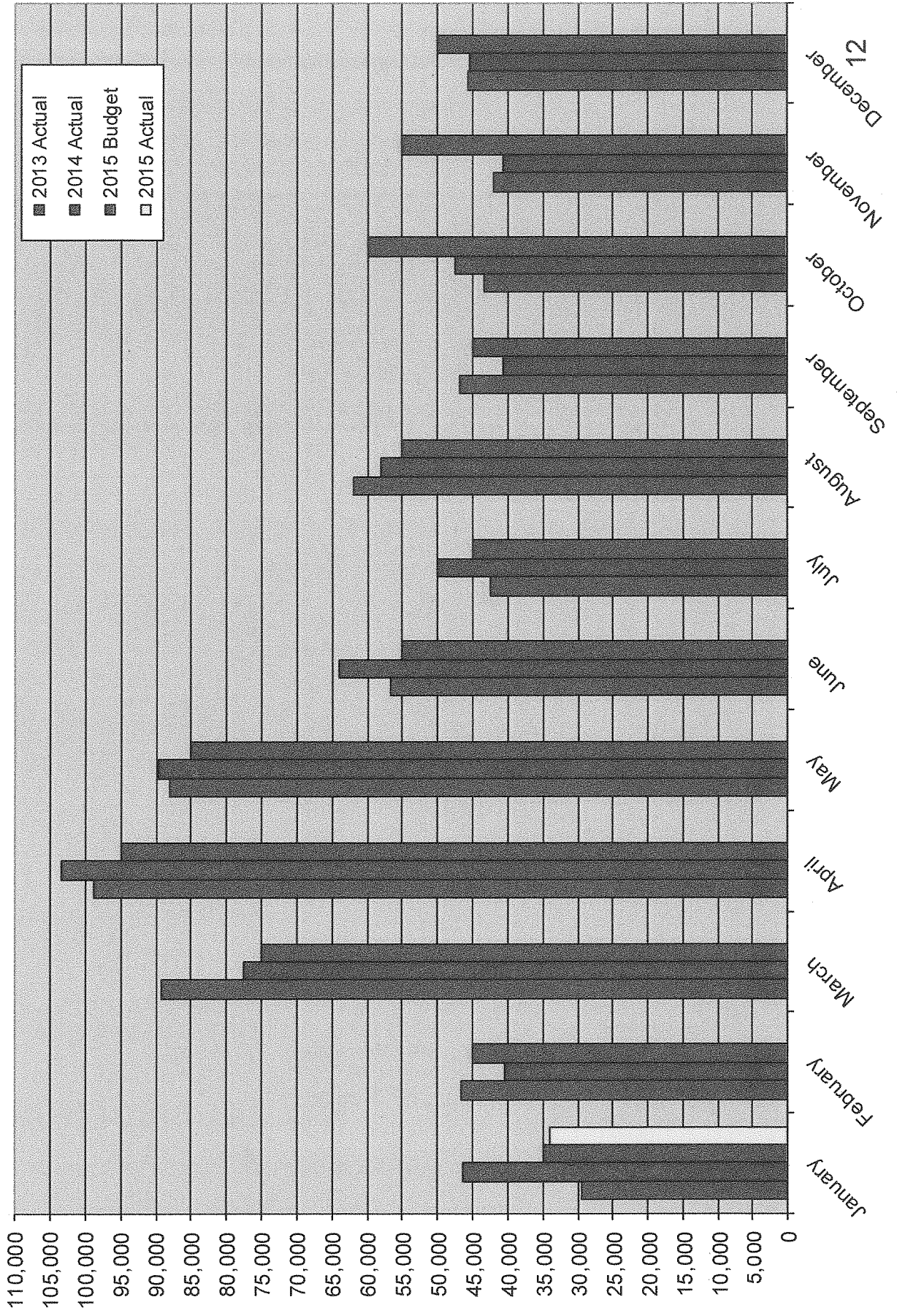
	2015 Measure Z <u>Operating Request</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>
<u>Revenue:</u>		
Measure Z - Operating Funds	\$4,500,120	\$259,157
<u>Expenses:</u>		
Animal Department	\$2,256,665	\$141,988
Maintenance Department	\$667,149	\$43,296
Veterinary Services Department	\$271,093	\$16,546
Visitor Services Department	\$690,153	\$48,138
Animal Food	\$300,000	\$8,525
Utilities	\$314,940	\$654
Service Charges	<u>\$120</u>	<u>\$10</u>
	\$4,500,120	\$259,157

* YTD totals based on claims submitted to the Zoo Authority, and excludes accrual of salary and benefits.

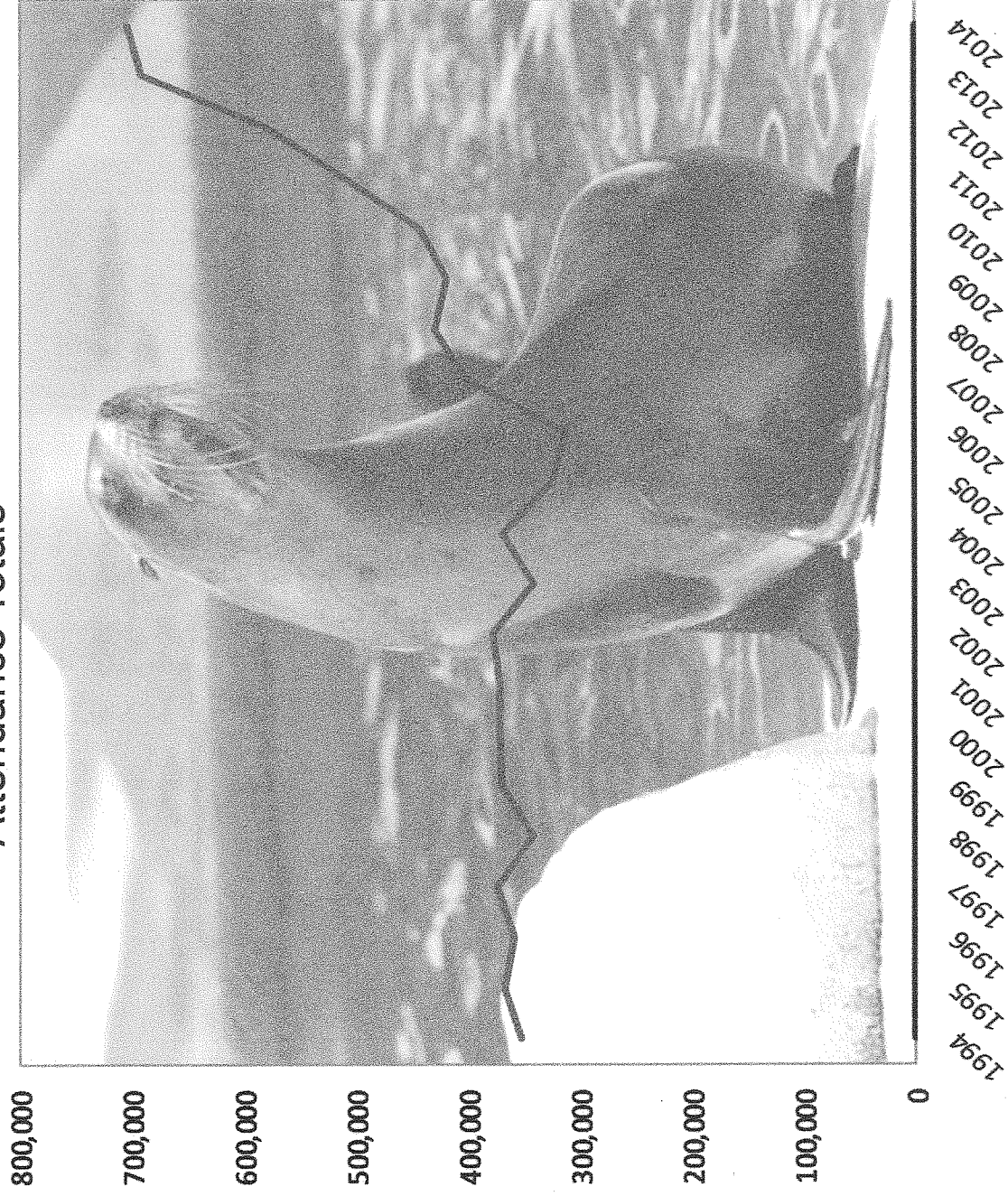
Accounts Receivable as of January 31, 2015

• Fresno County Zoo Authority	\$3,434,294
• City of Fresno	\$ 139,562
• Sponsorships/Donations	\$ 94,750
• Insurance dividend	\$ 45,989
• 3 rd party concessionaire	\$ 29,321

Fresno Chaffee Zoo Attendance Comparison 2013 - 2015



Fresno Chaffee Zoo Attendance Totals



1994	351,373
1995	367,014
1996	359,444
1997	373,501
1998	341,498
1999	368,556
2000	371,911
2001	371,967
2002	377,174
2003	341,559
2004	368,782
2005	325,224
2006 *	311,247
2007	398,820
2008	429,272
2009	418,285
2010	443,251
2011	511,788
2012	580,226
2013	691,320
2014	703,325



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For Immediate Release

January 2, 2015

MALAYAN TIGER CUBS CELEBRATE FIRST BIRTHDAY

Fresno, CA – They grow up so fast! Fresno Chaffee Zoo is thrilled to announce that the four Malayan tiger cubs born on January 5, 2014 are celebrating their first birthday!

Join Zoo staff on Monday, January 5, 2015 at 11 a.m. as we celebrate the cubs' special day. Zookeepers have prepared enrichment activities for all four cubs, so come on out and join the fun as we watch each of the special birthday boys and girls open their very own "presents."

In 2014, Malayan tiger mother, Mek, and father, Paka, welcomed two male cubs (Berani and Cinta) and two female cubs (Arya and Batari). Both parents are part of the AZA's (Association of Zoos & Aquariums) SSP (Species Survival Program). The SSP works to maintain healthy, self-sustaining, genetically diverse captive tiger populations, as a genetic insurance policy for their wild counterparts. In addition, zoos also support tiger conservation and research, both in captivity and in the wild, and work to increase awareness about tigers and their conservation needs.

"I can't believe a year has already passed," said Lyn Myers, assistant curator for mammals at the Zoo. "The birth of such rare tiger cubs was an amazing start to 2014. All four cubs have grown in leaps and bounds and already weigh between 120 and 130 pounds."

Malayan tigers, *Panthera tigris jacksoni*, are only found on the Malay Peninsula and in the southern tip of Thailand. Since there are only approximately 500 Malayan tigers left in the wild, they are considered endangered.

Fresno Chaffee Zoo is open daily at 9 a.m. Closing times vary 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. by season (subject to change without prior notice) Thanksgiving (9 a.m. – 2 p.m.), and Christmas Day (closed). Visit our website www.fresnochaffeezoo.org for most current hours. General admission during regular Zoo hours is \$7 for adults and \$3.50 for children 2-11 & seniors 62+. Children under 2 and Fresno Chaffee Zoo members are free. Fresno Chaffee Zoo inspires wonder of our natural world, provides an engaging learning environment, and creates a passion for conservation. The Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

###

Spring-like weather draws crowds to Fresno Chaffee Zoo, Woodward Park on holiday weekend

By Andrea Castillo

The Fresno Bee February 16, 2015

Spring-like temperatures in the middle of winter, coupled with a long holiday weekend, sent Fresno-area residents in droves to parks and the Fresno Chaffee Zoo.

Fresno's high on Monday hit 76 degrees — 14 degrees above normal for mid-February. With many people off work and school for President's Day, Fresno Chaffee Zoo saw record-setting attendance, while Woodward Park buzzed with activity.

Around 1:30 p.m., Tiffany Moreno, 19, waited at the back of a line that stretched out from the zoo entrance and down the sidewalk. She was there with her boyfriend, friend, godson and 4-month-old daughter. It was her baby's first time at the zoo, and they decided to go because of the nice weather. Moreno said she'd never seen the zoo so full. "I knew there were no kids in school but I didn't think it would be this packed," she said.

Neither did zoo staff. Curator Dan Subaitis said Sunday's attendance of 7,400 people broke the record for any non-event day in zoo history. Last year, 4,700 people went the same day, he said, with temperatures around 70 degrees. By 2 p.m. Monday, nearly 5,000 people had been at the zoo. "Just a few years ago, 4,000 people would have been a big day for us," Subaitis said. He credited the zoo's improvements, including the national award-winning Sea Lion Cove, and an engaged staff for the increase.

Joseph and Santa Muñoz, ages 69 and 70, were treated to zoo tickets by their son, who had the day off work. The retired couple said the zoo is a lot of fun, but they normally wouldn't have gone in February. "It's usually cold," said Santa Muñoz, "so this is unusual."

Across town, Woodward Park hummed with people in motion: Joggers, bikers, equestrians, dog-walkers and sports players. It looked like an early spring. Butterflies fluttered overhead and birds chirped from the trees. The sun shone heavy and bright.

Erika Rivera, 23, had the day off work and school at Fresno State. She took advantage of the good weather by playing soccer and football with her boyfriend and family. Rivera said soccer is a good break from the stress of college. Her family usually plays on weekends in their yard but wanted a change of scenery. "Usually it's colder," she said. "Lately the weather has just been weird. We don't even know anymore what to expect."

Phong Nguyen, 42, brought his son and wife on a bicycle ride along his usual spot — the Eaton Trail. He took up bike riding three months ago and now hits the trail three times a week. "I just wanted to exercise," he said. "For me, it's hard to go to the gym. It's just boring instead of outdoor activity." Nguyen wanted to enjoy the beautiful day off with his family. His two daughters stayed home, he said, and missed out.

Sabrina Betz, 29, and her friend Alexis Clayton, 27, walked their dogs on the trail. Betz, a Fresno State graduate, moved back last month with her husband. She said they walk the trail with their dog Maverick, a border collie mix, almost every day. "We need our exercise," she said. "And so does he."



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For Immediate Release

February 19, 2015

FRESNO CHAFFEE ZOO WELCOMES TWO CALIFORNIA SEA LIONS

Fresno, CA – Two, male California sea lions can now claim Fresno Chaffee Zoo as home. Big Sur and Wishbone will be introduced to their exhibit, Sea Lion Cove, on Friday, February 20 at 10:30 a.m.

Both sea lions come to Fresno from Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo, California. Big Sur, 2, was born at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska and is at Fresno Chaffee Zoo on a breeding loan. Wishbone, 7, was originally a wild stranding found at Seadrift Beach in Marin County. Wishbone, who shares his name with a Catalina Island hiking trail, is completely blind.

"We are extremely excited to introduce two male sea lions that were in need of a home to our beautiful, spacious exhibit," said Sarah Romberger, zookeeper at Fresno Chaffee Zoo. "Both sea lions are already interacting wonderfully and enjoying the enrichment activities. We know that our guests will love to observe them swimming, playing and training just as much as we do, so we invite everyone to come meet them!"

Big Sur and Wishbone will share their exhibit with two, female California sea lions, Avila and Catalina, two, female harbor seals, Ariel and Jetta, and two, male brown pelicans, Monte and Cruz.

The California Sea Lion, *Zalophus californianus*, are sea mammals characterized by external ear flaps, long foreflippers, the ability to walk on all fours, and short, thick hair. Together with the fur seals, they comprise the family Otariidae, eared seals, which contains six extant and one extinct species (the Japanese sea lion) in five genera. Their range extends from the subarctic to tropical waters of the global ocean in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, with the notable exception of the Northern Atlantic Ocean. California sea lions have an average lifespan of 20 to 30 years. A male California sea lion weighs, on average, about 300 kilograms (660 pounds) and is about 8 feet (2.4 meters) long, while the female sea lion weighs 100 kilograms (220 pounds) and is 6 feet (1.8 meters) long.

Fresno Chaffee Zoo is open daily at 9 a.m. Closing times vary 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. by season (subject to change without prior notice). Thanksgiving (9 a.m. – 2 p.m.) and Christmas Day (closed). Visit www.fresnochaffeezoo.org for current hours. General admission during regular Zoo hours is \$7 for adults and \$3.50 for children 2-11 & seniors 62+. Children under 2 and Fresno Chaffee Zoo members are free. Fresno Chaffee Zoo inspires wonder of our natural world, provides an engaging learning environment, and creates a passion for conservation. The Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

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New sea lions, Big Sur and Wishbone, welcomed at Fresno Chaffee Zoo

By Marc Benjamin

The Fresno Bee

February 19, 2015

Fresno Chaffee Zoo's Sea Lion Cove has two new occupants, Big Sur and Wishbone, who will make their public debut on Friday. Both sea lions come from Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo. Two-year-old Big Sur is on a breeding loan. Wishbone, 7, was discovered stranded on a beach in Marin County. Wishbone, who shares his name with a Catalina Island hiking trail, is blind. Big Sur and Wishbone share the exhibit with two female California sea lions, Avila and Catalina, two female harbor seals, Ariel and Jetta, and two male brown pelicans, Monte and Cruz.

Fresno Chaffee Zoo previously was home to a blind sea lion, Pismo, which died last year. "I think Six Flags felt extremely comfortable sending him to us because we have experience with a blind sea lion," said zoo director Scott Barton. Pismo responded to "auditory cues" for training, such as baby rattles. "They can do pretty darn well, even being blind," he said.

Sea Lion Cove is designed for up to a dozen seals and sea lions, which means more sea lions could be added through breeding, Barton said. "If we did (breed sea lions), we could keep the youngsters and it could be a lot of fun," he said.

The zoo, he said, works with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Marine Mammal Center to house seals or sea lions that are unable to return to the ocean.

The California sea lion, *Zalophus californianus*, is a sea mammal with a range extending from the subarctic to tropical waters of the global ocean in both the northern and southern hemispheres, with the notable exception of the northern Atlantic Ocean. California sea lions have an average lifespan of 20 to 30 years. A male California sea lion weighs, on average, about 660 pounds and is about 8 feet long, while the female sea lion weighs about 220 pounds and is 6 feet long.

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Fresno Chaffee Zoo's 13-acre African Adventure will offer close-up views of lions, elephants

By Marc Benjamin

The Fresno Bee

February 20, 2015

Fresno Chaffee Zoo's 13-acre African Adventure project is about two-thirds complete and is expected to open in October. The lack of rainfall has accelerated construction of the \$55.7 million project. But zoo director Scott Barton is hesitant to move up the opening date because the project is not just about exhibit readiness.

Most of the animals — about 100 in all — have to be delivered, quarantined for 30 days and then acclimated to their exhibits and each other, which will likely take a couple months.

Growth at the zoo will not end with the first Africa phase. With the November election's extension of Measure Z, the tenth-of-a-cent sales tax to support zoo projects and programs, the zoo will begin seeking designers for the next phase of growth. An additional 8 acres will push the zoo to a total of 39 acres when completed.

"We think that acre-for-acre, we will be one of the best zoos in the world," Barton said. "Measure Z allows us to do all these things without having to compromise for our guests or these animals."

The African Adventure entry sign is in place east of the zoo's bear enclosure, and cheetahs will be the greeters at the African savanna's entrance.

A few yards to the east is the African Lodge, which will offer a place to rest or eat and also views of lions and the main savanna area with rhinoceroses, ostriches, giraffes, zebras and elephants. A waterfall will cascade as the backdrop to the elephant area.

Lion and elephant enclosures will have close-up views similar to those in the Sea Lion Cove project, separating visitors by just a thick pane of glass from some of the world's most charismatic wildlife, Barton said.

Zoo officials also designed the project with Roeding Park's large, century-old tree canopy in mind. The lion exhibit was situated around a large oak tree dubbed the "lion tree," Barton said.

"We hope you can see lions at rest on the tree and we placed a viewing area right in front of it," he said.

His hope is echoed by the zoo's African Adventure insignia that shows a lion walking on a tree limb.

The lions also will have a view of nearly all 13 acres from a rock perch 20 feet above ground. The zoo exhibit will have three lions to start and build up to a "natural pride," which could have eight to 10, Barton said.

Elephants also will live in a typical matriarchal setting as they do in Africa. Barton said the zoo will start with three and could build up to six or eight on the 4-acre portion of the expansion.

The Africa project impressed Lee Ehmke, Minnesota Zoo president and also president of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, who visited Fresno last month and took a tour with Barton.

Ehmke, who spent a year in Corcoran as a child, said Fresno Chaffee Zoo was the first zoo he visited. He appreciated the long views from the African Lodge that will show the expanse of the exhibit and the animals.

"You can see the scale and from what I could see, the level of detail, all the finishes on the buildings, the landscaping, the sight lines, are really well-thought-out," he said.

The rock facings, Ehmke said, also reflect what is seen in Africa.

"It's being done with a real sense of accuracy of what you'd see in east Africa," he said.

Another important touch is keeping Roeding Park's existing trees, he said.

"That is one of the things that's unique," Ehmke said. "A lot of big zoo projects come in with a bulldozer and wipe the slate clean, but this will have an instant feel like it's been there forever."

It all adds up to "a highly detailed, naturalistic exhibit," Ehmke said. "The overwhelming feeling I got was that it's just big."

The project will affect the way zoo visitors encounter animals and has a design both good for animals and visitors, said Susan Chin, vice president of planning and chief architect for the Wildlife Conservation Society, which operates four zoos and one aquarium in New York City.

"It's going to be a really attractive feature for people," said Chin, who also toured the site with Ehmke and Barton. "This project has a lot of vision and a lot of ambition."

Visitors, she said, will be able to connect with animals. The close-up views will emphasize the importance of preserving wildlife.

"This exhibit is going to make a huge impact on the visitor experience," Chin said. "It will be a very rich wildlife experience."

Chin also appreciated the park's trees that "you do want to build an exhibit around."

"A lot of zoo exhibit design is based on landscape architecture and looking at what we do have on the site that adds value to what we want to do," she said, "to take you to a different place."