



2026 DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION

Woodland Park Zoo submits an Annual Plan to the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation as specified by the Zoo Operations and Management Agreement between the City of Seattle and the Woodland Park Zoological Society. The plan highlights key programs and capital improvements we intend to conduct in the next calendar year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment on this plan is encouraged and accepted from December 1, 2025, through midnight, December 31, 2025. A media advisory will be issued to notify the community of the plan's availability on [zoo.org/reports](https://www.zoo.org/reports). A hard copy will be available for pick-up at the Center for Wildlife Conservation administrative offices during zoo hours upon request by emailing zooinfo@zoo.org or calling 206.548.2500 in advance. The Center for Wildlife Conservation offices are located at 5500 Phinney Ave N., Seattle, WA 98103. The community is encouraged to comment by email with Annual Plan in the subject line to zooinfo@zoo.org.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

ADMISSIONS PRICING

Effective January 1, 2026, the cost of daily admission for adults and children will increase according to the pricing plan approved by the office of the Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation in 2025. We will continue to offer a multi-tier flexible pricing structure. Flexible pricing allows guests to plan their visit with additional opportunities to save, empowers our guests with more choices and helps the zoo incentivize a distributed visitation model to maintain excellent standards of guest experience. With this pricing structure, General Admission pricing will start as low as \$22.95 for adults and \$14.95 for children during non-peak season weekdays (Mon-Thu) and increase to \$37.50 for adults and \$24.75 for children during peak season weekends (Fri-Sun) and holidays. Free admission will remain for children 2 and under. The price increase includes a technology fee of 3%.

Membership prices will also increase on January 1, commensurate with admissions pricing. The build-your-own Annual Pass membership will be \$89 per named adult, \$45 per child ages 3 - 18 and \$109 per flexible guest; the Family Passport membership will be \$299 and the Conservation Partner membership will be \$399. These prices also include the technology fee.

Discounted or free admission and membership programs will continue in 2026. Details are outlined in the Equitable Access section below.

FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS

Woodland Park Zoo will host events and fundraisers to diversify our revenue sources and create exciting engagement opportunities for our guests.

The following events are tentatively planned for 2026:

- June - September: ZooTunes Concert Season
- June 20: Tasting Flight
- June 22 - August 28: Summer Camps
- July 10: 50th Annual Jungle Party
- August 1: All You Can Zoo
- September 12: Meadowfest
- October 3: OktoBEARfest

- October 24: All You Can Boo
- October 31: Pumpkin Bash
- November 1: Animal Ofrenda
- November 13 - January 17, 2027: WildLanterns

EQUITABLE ACCESS

Woodland Park Zoo is committed to increasing opportunities for equitable access to the zoo and zoo programs. Opportunities include free or discounted admissions and memberships, and partnerships with community organizations.

DISCOUNTED EXPLORER PASS MEMBERSHIP AND DISCOVER TICKET

The zoo's \$40 Explorer Pass Membership and \$5 Discover Ticket will continue to be available for purchase for foster and kinship families or recipients of EBT/Washington Quest, SUN Bucks or WIC assistance.

DISCOUNTED TICKET PROGRAM: KID AT HEART

Kid at Heart is a series of discounted days throughout the year when “whether you are a kid or a kid at heart” you can enter Woodland Park Zoo for the price of a child's ticket. This is a special program to increase opportunities for community members of all income levels to visit the zoo.

2026 confirmed dates:

- January 25-26
- February 8-9
- February 22-23
- March 1-2
- March 8-9
- March 15-16
- October 4-5
- October 18-19
- November 1-2

Additional discounts will remain in effect as part of our robust public benefits offerings, including discounts for military members, seniors and persons with disabilities, including free admission for their aides.

COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM

Woodland Park Zoo is committed to expanding access and helping our community overcome economic, cultural and ability barriers to visiting the zoo. In 2026, we will continue to offer 100,000 free General Admission tickets to address these barriers. We will continue to offer additional ways to increase access including a food and beverage discount, virtual zoo experiences, transportation assistance through a partnership with King County Metro, group visit assistance, sensory tools and accessibility offerings. Through our Hope & Healing program, we build partnerships with organizations that serve individuals facing life-altering experiences and offer joyful and accessible animal and nature encounters.

In 2026 the zoo will run a pilot program with King County Metro offering free transit credits for General Admission ticket buyers and Community Access Program partners.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

In 2026, Woodland Park Zoo will enter the third year of our five-year DEAI Plan Building on the momentum of 2025, we will continue to foster a more inclusive, supportive, and engaged environment for staff, volunteers and the community. The following initiatives represent our commitment to our five-year DEAI Plan and reflect the values of our organization and our diverse community.

ENHANCED DEAI EDUCATION AND MANAGER DEVELOPMENT

- In 2025, we launched a Manager Development Series and specialized training to strengthen leadership skills and foster a more inclusive workplace across the zoo. In 2026, we will update the program and continue expanding manager training with a focus on inclusive leadership, communication strategies, accessibility, workload management and accountability.
- Building on feedback from internal listening sessions, we will implement equity-centered improvements to our performance review process. This includes offering targeted learning resources on effective performance conversations, staff feedback, and team wellbeing.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

- Our staff Fun Committee will continue to host staff appreciation events and launch a refreshed Employee Recognition Program to enhance workplace morale.
- Employee Resource Group (ERG)-led programming will remain a key driver of connection, recognition and inclusive celebration across the zoo. New ERGs will be developed in response to staff feedback and interest. ERGs are employee-led collectives based on shared identities or interests meant to provide a safe space for building a community and support network in the workplace.
- Action plans based on the Employee Viewpoint Survey will be developed to strengthen staff engagement and address key areas of need. A new strategy to encourage staff feedback will be developed.
- A second DEAI Survey will be administered in 2026 to assess progress and guide ongoing improvements.

IMPROVED HIRING AND INCLUSION PRACTICES

- We will continue refining our recruitment process through expanded bias training, detailed hiring metrics, and data-informed strategies to promote fair and equitable hiring.
- The Board Diversity Study and nomination process will be sustained and evolved, ensuring representation at all levels of the organization reflecting the diversity of our community.

WELLBEING AND CAREER SUPPORT INITIATIVES

- In 2026, we will deepen our holistic wellbeing strategy by expanding access to career and life coaching resources, mobile stress kits, a staff-led food pantry, a staff well-being support group (ZooCope) to create a supportive, safe space to bring ideas for compassion fatigue, mental health aid and support for the zoo community and mental health resources. Effectiveness will be measured through staff surveys, coaching session themes, and participation data to ensure offerings remain responsive to employee needs.
- DiSC® and other developmental assessments will remain a core component of our team support strategy, helping to strengthen communication, collaboration and conflict resolution across departments.

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION ENHANCEMENTS

- We will enhance emergency communication tools to ensure staff safety and readiness.
- Internal wayfinding improvements will be informed by visitor feedback and formative evaluation results gathered in 2025.

COLLABORATION WITH THE IDEA COUNCIL

- The Diversity & Inclusion Council has transitioned to the **IDEA Council** (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility), adopting a task force model focused on staff advocacy and action.

- We will continue supporting the IDEA Council's development and collaboration with leadership to amplify DEAI priorities and drive meaningful change.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESSIBILITY ENHANCEMENTS

- In 2026, we will strengthen cross-departmental collaboration to advance accessibility across the zoo. This includes leveraging relationships between the Disability ERG, long range facilities planning, and departmental work plans to ensure accessibility is embedded in both physical and digital infrastructure improvements.

DEAI PLAN PROGRESS REPORTING

- Following the release of our first DEAI Plan Annual Report in 2025, we will publish an updated progress report in 2026 to share outcomes, lessons learned and next steps with our community.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

GUEST AND VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

We will continue to develop new guest engagement programs and experiences to foster empathy for wildlife and enhance guests' connections with nature, conservation, climate resilience, and advocacy, specifically focusing on the new Forest Trailhead exhibit. 2026 initiatives include:

- Launching new programs to strengthen guest knowledge of animal care, wellbeing, and welfare and to foster empathy for animals as a pathway to conservation action.
- Focusing on public programs for a broad range of audiences including programming for our youngest learners to support social-emotional learning and foster young children's connection to nature.
- Continuously improving program accessibility throughout the zoo using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) components and supporting the development of programs to connect guests with animals in our new Forest Trailhead exhibit, opening in May 2026.
- Increasing opportunities for our 500+ volunteers to join projects that address the seasonality of our zoo programs.
- Designing and launching a new training system to increase opportunities for volunteers to participate in training to build their interpretation and guest engagement skills.
- Supporting volunteers to make our on-grounds experience as welcoming as possible by incorporating diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion training into volunteer training.
- Continuing the Senior Zoo Walkers program to provide opportunities for seniors to connect with the zoo's mission, animals and each other.

LEARNING PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In 2026, our programs will create a variety of opportunities for children in the King County area to participate in meaningful, impactful environmental education by:

- Continuing to offer digital content for students and educators to enhance their learning and engagement before, during and after field trips.
- Providing \$70,000 (pending fundraising) in scholarship funding for children from low-income households to attend the zoo's signature summer camps.

- Continuing to host school group field trips. Roughly 2/3 of field trip attendees come free of charge through King County Parks levy support or Washington State Low Income (WALI) field trip options, and the remaining third field trips visit at our reduced education rate.
- Relaunching the zoo's outreach efforts for schools and organizations that cannot readily travel to the zoo.
- Building relationships and exploring program collaborations with organizations that serve families and provide opportunities for nature-based learning to occur across generations.

Our teen and young adult programs activate our teen engagement strategy, with a focus on innovative programs connecting young people with nature, careers, conservation and climate action by:

- Continuing the zoo's successful internship program for young adults from backgrounds underrepresented in conservation and zoo careers. We will partner with additional organizations to recruit interns and diversify the zoo skill-building opportunities.
- Providing career-connected learning opportunities such as continuing Career Exploration Days and launching Teen Tours+. Teen Tours+ is a new flagship offering, born out of 2025's Teen Talks and Tours pilot, offered to partner groups such as Washington Alliance for Better Schools and Youth Environmental Service Corps.
- Continuing and expanding our Teen Ambassadors program, a summer volunteer opportunity for high school age teens.
- Building and nurturing partnerships with teen-serving organizations to co-develop and pilot new programs for teens, including leadership opportunities to co-design conservation and nature programs.

The Community Collaborative will continue to build and explore collaborative opportunities and partnerships in South King County by:

- Responding to community interests and priorities by engaging them in meaningful conversations, facilitating cross-organization collaborations, and exploring the co-development of community-led conservation action projects.
- Sustaining engagement by showing up consistently in partner communities, such as providing activities and sharing about zoo resources at community festivals and community-led events and initiatives, as well as distributing CAP tickets directly to community residents.
- Co-designing innovative, sustainable programs with key partners that uplift community perspective and youth leadership, including continuation and expansion of the Wonder in Nature Photography Camp and teen-led co-designs to expand access to nature-based programs in the community.

ADVANCING EMPATHY INITIATIVE

The Advancing Empathy initiative will continue to foster the power of empathy for animals to drive social change for conservation by:

- Facilitating the Advancing Conservation through Empathy for Wildlife® (ACE for Wildlife®) Network with 29 Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited partners. The Network will continue to develop effective empathy-informed practices and facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and data to drive conservation by fostering empathy for animals and the environment.
- Supporting AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums as a funding intermediary to implement and evaluate empathy-based programming and practices through a capacity-building grant program, with \$8M in grants funded to date and another \$1M to be distributed in the next two years.

NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

We are committed to sustaining strong communication and feedback channels with community members in the zoo's surrounding neighborhoods. In 2026, we will:

- Update our 2023 – 2025 neighbor communications plan for 2026 – 2028.
- Continue communication and engagement through our mailers, e-newsletters and annual neighborhood appreciation event.
- Communicate with the community through neighborhood community councils.
- Continue our partnership with Phinney Neighborhood Association and other local businesses.
- Continue to work with city agencies and lawmakers to collaboratively find solutions for neighbor concerns.

EXCEPTIONAL ANIMAL CARE

Woodland Park Zoo's most important guiding principle is to provide exceptional care for every animal residing with us. We are committed to making sure that our animals are thriving mentally, emotionally and physically. The zoo is proud to have held the meritorious distinction as an accredited Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) member since 1982. As an accredited institution by AZA, the zoo is connected to a network of top tier animal care experts in the Species Survival Plan (SSP) programs that collaborate to create roadmaps for breeding and transfers to ensure genetically diverse and healthy animal populations. In 2026 the zoo will:

- Open Forest Trailhead, a new habitat featuring Matschie's tree kangaroos, red pandas, keas, and multiple reptile and amphibian species that will highlight the biodiversity of forest ecosystems.
- Open a paid experience near the present Family Farm that will feature lorikeets and lorries of multiple species in an interactive aviary. Zoo visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy up-close experiences with these colorful birds.
- Continue Malayan tiger introductions for breeding under SSP recommendations.
- Introduce young pair of Malayan tapirs per SSP breeding recommendations.
- Acquire a female Canada lynx for potential future breeding.
- Continue to head start and release western pond turtles and Oregon silverspot butterflies.
- Continue SSP-recommended breeding of 51 avian species, including Humboldt penguins.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

In 2026, Woodland Park Zoo will launch the first year of its new conservation strategy, a five-year plan positioning the zoo as a global leader in the conservation of forest species and landscapes. Anchored by the opening of the Forest Trailhead exhibit, the strategy aligns conservation, education, and sustainability efforts around a shared focus on forests as vital to climate resilience and biodiversity. Key priorities for 2026 include:

- Leveraging our expertise to advance forest species conservation.
- Developing new wildlife monitoring technologies and impact evaluation methods.
- Driving people-powered conservation and sustainable practices.
- Advancing public engagement and policy advocacy drives measurable conservation outcomes.

NORTHWEST CONSERVATION

Woodland Park Zoo advances the conservation of wildlife in the Pacific Northwest through collaborative wildlife

research and monitoring, restoring populations of imperiled species, and proactive outreach and engagement to promote human-wildlife coexistence. In the coming year, the zoo will:

- Continue to coordinate and facilitate the Cascades Carnivore Monitoring Program by providing the methodological, organizational, and data management architecture necessary to carry out a coordinated camera-trapping effort that supports conservation planning on behalf of wolverines, lynx and other carnivores in the Cascades.
- Continue to build and supply scent dispensers to researchers across North America as part of our innovative carnivore scent dispenser project.
- Continue the management of the Washington Wolverine Database in coordination with other members of the Washington Wolverine Research and Monitoring Working Group. Continue to coordinate and facilitate the Washington Wolverine Research and Monitoring Working Group, whose mission is to support a community of practice across wolverine researchers and conservationists in the region.
- Pilot new camera trap technology that allows real-time, AI-assisted notification of species detections; explore application of this technology in the Olympic Marten Recovery Project to enable genetic studies of these marten populations. Provide input on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's population augmentation feasibility study for martens in the Olympics.
- Continue to gather new camera trap data through the Seattle Urban Carnivore Project and encourage community members to share urban carnivore sightings on Carnivore Spotter. Continue data processing (with the assistance of volunteers) of camera trap images and undertake new analyses to better understand our urban carnivores; leverage information from camera trap data and public observations to support human-carnivore coexistence.
- Undertake new analyses of data collected through the Amphibian Monitoring Community Science Program from 2012-2025 to explore trends in local amphibian breeding patterns; share findings with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and local land managers to inform amphibian conservation actions.
- Continue to play a pivotal role advocating for the recovery of grizzly bears in the North Cascades Ecosystem and participate as a member of the Friends of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear coalition.
- Continue active involvement in northwest butterfly recovery programs. Continue to headstart and release larvae and pupae under our Oregon Silverspot Butterfly Recovery program, of which the zoo has been a partner since 2001. Continue our involvement with partners in rearing endangered island marble butterflies in a lab on San Juan Island for release into their San Juan Island habitat.
- Continue to headstart western pond turtles at the zoo over winter and release approximately 30 turtles in partnership with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to a Pierce County protected site in the summer; hold public events at the zoo (preparing turtles for release) and at the release site (for the release). Continue to support pond turtle recovery in the Columbia River Gorge area by monitoring and maintaining a 10 kilometer "bullfrog free" buffer around key recovery sites, which allows for the survival of juvenile turtles.
- Continue bat acoustic monitoring research efforts and co-lead the Bat Activity Trends (BAT) Community Science Program, in collaboration with Bats Northwest, to better understand local bat activity and to inform conservation efforts.
- Conduct a pollinator conservation outreach campaign to inform the public about new legislation restricting the use of harmful pesticides and to promote home gardening practices that support pollinators.

INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

Woodland Park Zoo's international conservation programs work to save endangered and threatened species and their habitats, and foster coexistence between local communities and wildlife. Our international programs and partners contribute to wildlife conservation outcomes through research, rehabilitation, recovery, education, and anti-poaching patrols.

In 2026, Woodland Park Zoo's Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program will strengthen the protection of Papua New Guinea's Yopno-Uruwa-Som (YUS) Conservation Area and the environment, by:

- Providing technical assistance and support for community-led conservation actions in YUS, including reforestation of buffer zones to increase habitat connectivity.
- Pursuing expansion of the YUS Conservation Area's boundaries to encompass high-integrity forested areas in neighboring Nayudo LLG (30,000 hectares), in collaboration with communities and government partners.
- Continuing activities that support YUS Conservation Area's adaptive management including: protected area patrols; monitoring species, threats and natural resources; community-based land use planning; and more.
- Facilitating feasibility analysis and approach design for establishment of a Provincial-level Protected Area Network spanning the entire Huon Peninsula (15,500 square kilometers).
- Partnering with Morobe Provincial Health Authority to facilitate improved access to essential health services among remote villages in YUS, including village midwives and community health workers.
- Continuing distribution of solar home lighting systems among homes throughout YUS to reduce firewood consumption and smoke exposure.
- Facilitating market access and logistical support for conservation-friendly income generating products in YUS including coffee, cocoa and vanilla.
- Providing targeted technical assistance for improved productivity and sustainability of priority income-generating activities among communities in YUS, including installation of a solar-powered coffee huller.

CAPITAL PROJECTS AND MAJOR MAINTENANCE

The zoo's key capital projects and maintenance plans for 2026 include:

CAPITAL PROJECTS

- Construction completion for the Forest Trailhead exhibit. Exhibit opening May 2026.
- Complete construction for a lorikeet feeding experience.
- Complete construction of an Aldabra tortoise exhibit to open in spring 2026.
- Complete Family Farm Phase 2 design stage.
- Complete Long-Range Facilities Plan Draft for approval by the Parks Superintendent and City Council.
- Design and construct a new flamingo experience.

MAJOR MAINTENANCE

In 2026, the tentative estimated cost for projects funded by City major maintenance support is \$2,678,396 and may include the following upgrades around the zoo:

- Field operations complex power upgrades at Zoo Doo yard.
- Commissary walk-in freezer renovation.
- Living Northwest Trail electrification (bear exhibit and Cathy Herzig Basecamp Northwest kitchen).
- Snow leopard, kea and pudu mesh replacement.
- Ostrich, gazelle, and red panda habitat renovations.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS MAINTENANCE

Woodland Park Zoo manages the grounds and horticulture of the neighboring parks as outlined in our Operations and Management Agreement with the City of Seattle. In 2026, the zoo plans to:

- Continue care for three new copper beeches.
- Work to rejuvenate an existing dogwood tree and possibly plant three additional dogwoods in the adjacent area.
- Remove and replace a large holly tree, an invasive species, in West Woodland Park.
- Replace hazardous volunteer pine tree along Phinney Avenue N.

SUSTAINABILITY

As a leading conservation and environmental science institution, we are committed to making improvements to our facilities and systems to create a more climate-conscious and sustainable organization. In 2026, the zoo plans to:

- Conduct a WPZ campus electrification feasibility study.
- Perform improvements for the winter browse garden.
- Install EV charging stations (DCFC and L2).
- Continue to expand the fleet electrification program.
- Replace water meters with smart water meters and install flow sensors at irrigation.
- Stormwater mitigation design in Bear parking lot.
- Increase on-site renewable energy generation with rooftop solar on Forest Trailhead.
- Procure sustainable jackets for zoo staff uniforms.
- Electrify/decarbonize Zoo Doo facility.
- Install LED lighting in Zoomazium theatrical light fixtures.
- Expand zoo durables program to reduce single use waste.