

For immediate Release

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Sequoia Park Zoo Receives Top Honors in Exhibit Design for Watershed Heroes

Eureka, CA - September 14 – The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) today announced that the Sequoia Park Zoo has received Top Honors in the AZA 2016 Award for Exhibit Design for zoos with annual operating budgets under \$5 million category for Watershed Heroes, the Zoo's otter, salmon, and eagle exhibits, Learning Lab and watershed play area.

“The Sequoia Park Zoo has received this well-deserved award, which recognizes the Zoo's innovation and commitment in designing a dynamic, immersive habitat that provides the best in animal care and public education to help connect people with nature,” said Keith Winsten, Director of the Brevard Zoo and Chair of AZA's Honors and Awards Committee.

With its annual Exhibit Award, AZA recognizes excellence by an AZA-accredited Institution (US or International) in the areas of exhibit design and providing visitors with the opportunity to engage in observing and learning about the animals. The award, presented at the annual AZA conference in San Diego, was accepted by Gretchen Ziegler, Zoo Director, and Jeff Lamoree, Zoo Foundation Board Member and Founder.

Watershed Heroes is the successful result of a public/private partnership that brought together state, city, foundation, and local funding support. Opened in August 2014, the project was the biggest physical and financial undertaking the zoo has undertaken to date. The \$3.4 million, five-habitat exhibit has transformed the entry plaza into a visually engaging and interactive experience showcasing the relationships between North American river otters, bald eagles, local salmon, and humans, while teaching the importance of watershed health.

“Watershed Heroes has brought a new level of excellence to our regional zoo through these state-of-the-art animal habitats and facilities. It has truly been transformative for our zoo and our community, so it is especially gratifying to receive this recognition from our peers in the zoo world,” said Gretchen Ziegler, Zoo Director.

Watershed Heroes has had a positive economic impact for the local community. In 2015, the Zoo welcomed over 110,000 visitors—an increase of 25% over previous years. The number of tourists visiting the zoo from outside Humboldt County also increased greatly.

“The Zoo and Foundation gratefully share this honor with all our generous funders and donors whose support made this possible. This award, and the success of Watershed Heroes, has given us the momentum to move forward with the next exciting phase of our Master Plan,” said Julie Benbow, Foundation Executive Director.

Sequoia Park Zoo proudly acknowledges local project collaborator Greenway Partners for their project management and construction engineering expertise, and exhibit designers Studio Hansen|Roberts for bringing the zoo's vision to life.



Sequoia Park Zoo inspires conservation of the natural world by instilling wonder, respect and passion for wildlife.



About AZA: Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, animal welfare, education, science, and recreation. AZA is the accrediting body for the top zoos and aquariums in the United States and eight other countries. www.aza.org.

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Photo Captions:

1: Children interacting with the three river otters, part of the award-winning Watershed Heroes exhibit at Sequoia Park Zoo, Eureka, CA.
Photo credit: John Meyer, © SPZ 2016

2: L to R: Gretchen Ziegler, Zoo Director; Becca Hansen, Studio Hansen|Roberts; Amanda Auston, Animal Care Curator; Jeff Lamoree, SPZ Foundation Board Member & Founder; Chuck Dominick, SPZ Foundation Board Member; and David Roberts, Studio Hansen|Roberts.