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March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018

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## **Jackson Zoological Society Approves Recommendation for Next Step towards New Zoo**

**Jackson, Miss.**— Today, the Board of Directors for the Jackson Zoological Society accepted and approved a task force recommendation to find a more optimal location for the animals and their visitors within the city of Jackson. The task force, comprised of zoo board members, local business leaders, city representatives, and city residents, spent months assessing the results of several feasibility studies compiled over the past decade. The final recommendation was to investigate the adaptation of 25 acres at the LeFleur's Bluff State Park into a new zoological and family attraction.

Although consistently recognized by visiting experts for its high quality of animal care and use of natural spaces, the nearly century old park has faced numerous challenges. The declining attendance (from over 185,000 guests in 2003 to barely 100,000 in 2017), aging structures, and budget cuts have caused the park to slowly fall behind other zoos of similar size in the areas of conservation and education. A new build at the proposed location would mean larger habitats for the animals, increased activity in Species Survival Plans, and the ability to expand the animal collection to include popular zoo species like lions, sloths, and a larger walk-through aviary. More up-to-date site planning would also make it possible for highly requested animal and human interaction, like giraffe feedings. In addition, the closer proximity to other educational attractions in the LeFleur's Museum District would allow guests a more integrated community experience, and expand opportunities for greater collaboration between museum staffs.

"The top priority of the Jackson Zoological Society has been, and always will be, giving all visitors a world class zoo experience," said Jackson Zoological Society Board President Jeffrey Graves. "This decision is the culmination of decades of research and discussion, but is just the beginning of a new and improved phase of the zoo. It will be a long process, but we now have an opportunity to give the city and surrounding residents and visitors the benefit of being a viable player in the world's wildlife education and conservation movement."

The next phase of the process will be raising funds for a site development study, where a team of experts and consultants will evaluate the current terrain and utility infrastructure of any proposed location. At the conclusion of the study, the team will then devise a development plan, including any necessary alterations or repairs, architectural and engineering designs, and timeline for transition. Also included in the proposal will be recommendations from city representatives, business owners, and residents for the positive re-purposing of the current zoo site at Livingston Park.

"We value our relationship and long history with the city of Jackson, and appreciate the leadership's ongoing efforts on behalf of the zoo animals and area residents," said Jackson Zoo Executive Director Beth Poff. "We are completely confident that as we continue to work together, there will be a positive outcome for all involved. Along with a real opportunity to give this state the great zoo it deserves, we are very proud to remain in Jackson, the Capitol City."

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*The Jackson Zoo is accredited by the Zoological Association of America, and certified by the Better Business Bureau. The mission of the Jackson Zoo is to provide visitors with a quality recreational and educational environment dedicated to wildlife care and conservation. For more information, visit The Jackson Zoo online at [jacksonzoo.org](http://jacksonzoo.org), or on [facebook.com/JacksonZoo](https://www.facebook.com/JacksonZoo).*

