



# MINNESOTA ZOO™

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## **REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE** **LEGACY AMENDMENT FUNDS** **REPORTING PERIOD JULY 1, 2009 – JANUARY 15, 2010**

### **BACKGROUND**

Laws 2009, Chapter 172, Article 4, Section 2, Subdivision 5(f) states that:

All recipients of funds under this subdivision shall report to the legislature by January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year on uses of those funds.

The Minnesota Zoo entered into an interagency agreement with the Department of Administration on October 22, 2009 based on the following language in the bill:

Zoos. \$450,000 in 2010 and \$450,000 in 2011 are appropriated for the programmatic development of Minnesota's zoos. Three-quarters of this fund in any year shall be reserved in equal portions each for the Minnesota Zoo, the Como Zoo, and the Lake Superior Zoo. The remainder may be apportioned through a competitive grants process or may be allocated by the commissioner to zoos that are accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums or that demonstrate to the commissioner a plan for working toward that accreditation during the biennium ending June 30, 2011.

The interagency agreement provides \$112,500 in Fiscal Year 2010 to design a Black Bear exhibit on the Medtronic Minnesota Trail with an emphasis on interpreting the history and place of black bears in the state.

**PROJECT NARRATIVE:** The black bear is an iconic animal in Minnesota. Two years ago the Minnesota Zoo refreshed our Minnesota Trail exhibit, adding wolves and coyotes to an already comprehensive collection of Minnesota species, improving interpretation and providing enhanced spaces for both guests and the animals. At the end of the Trail is a wooded area that has not been developed. There has been a long-standing plan to develop that space into a habitat and interpretive exhibit area for black bears. While the recently-completed grizzly bear exhibit has exceeded our expectations, and led to record-breaking attendance and membership, we nevertheless receive regular comments from guests who strongly desire to see a black bear exhibit.

There are approximately 20,000 - 30,000 black bears living in Minnesota in the wild. At one time they could be found throughout the state, but are now found primarily in northern Minnesota. This funding will provide for the design of both the exhibit and the interpretive program. With these design packages in hand, we will be able to raise public and private funds for construction. We anticipate there will be opportunities to collaborate with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Minnesota Historical Society, and perhaps other organizations with interest and expertise in black bear biology, natural history and management.

### **WORK COMPLETED JULY 1, 2009 – JANUARY 15, 2010**

To date the Minnesota Zoo has developed our internal work team, which has begun to meet.

We have developed the conceptual plan for the physical exhibit and will develop a Request for Proposals for design and award a contract by March 31, 2010. Schematic design will be due by May 31, 2010 and construction documents by September 3, 2010.

Meetings have begun with staff at the Historical Society and research is being reviewed on the cultural heritage of black bears in Minnesota.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Working with partners, the interpretive story and elements to tell that story will be decided by June 30, 2010. The Foundation and Zoo will begin fundraising efforts to build the exhibit, including the interpretive elements and construction documents will be complete by August 2010.

Funding was also appropriated for Fiscal Year 2011. The interagency agreement with the Department of Administration provides that the Minnesota Zoo will develop, pilot and initiate a distance learning program for schools throughout Minnesota to build awareness, knowledge and understanding of Minnesota's rich cultural and natural heritage and current wildlife conservation efforts. This work will begin in July 2010.

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