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SUBJECT: City of Duluth and Zoological Society Reach Consensus on Zoo/Fairmount Park Concept

BY: Communications Office

City and Zoological Society Reach Consensus on Zoo/Fairmount Park Concept

[Duluth, MN]—The City of Duluth and the Lake Superior Zoological Society plan to announce tonight at a Parks Commission meeting a consensus concept for the future of the Lake Superior Zoo and Fairmount Park.

The concept envisions a renewed zoo in a roughly 10-acre footprint (comparable to that of St. Paul's Como Park Zoo) and converts a portion of the existing zoo to become a top-quality free public park for the St. Louis River Corridor. The estimated \$15 million plan is less than half the cost of the \$40 million master plan approved in 2008.

"This concept, and the \$2.7 million of half-and-half funding already allotted to it, represent the most significant City commitment to zoo renewal since the construction of Polar Shores in the 1980s," said John Scott, Board President of the nonprofit Lake Superior Zoological Society, which operates the City-owned zoo under a management contract. "We are excited to work with the City and the community to develop this concept into a full-fledged plan and pursue funding to implement it."

The concept features:

- **Commitment to maintain American Zoological Association accreditation**, meeting or exceeding AZA's high standards for animal care, education and public safety.
- **Retention of large exotic animal exhibits**, including a new and improved bear exhibit that meets contemporary American Zoological Association animal care standards.
- **Renewal of several existing animal exhibits**, including those in the primate, farm animal and main building areas.
- **A new Forest Discovery Zone exhibit** featuring regional animal species in a natural forest habitat.
- **New destination outdoor play spaces** in the zoo and the adjoining park.
- **A new indoor play space** to meet Duluth's need for indoor recreational opportunities and the Zoo's need for off-season income.
- **ADA-accessible trails connecting the Zoo and adjacent neighborhoods to the St. Louis River** via a trail under the new Grand Avenue bridge.
- **A signature creek-side park and community event space** that will include an amphitheater, picnic facilities, native landscaping, restored stream banks, open lawns and a destination playground.

"This concept will re-establish the Lake Superior Zoo as a top-quality zoo and Fairmount Park as a destination park with added accessibility and connectivity," said Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration for the City of Duluth. "In this concept, the park and zoo will complement each other as well as other St. Louis River Corridor destinations, making all of the amenities more valuable for visitors and residents."

The City and the Society have set an aggressive timeline for public input and review. The proposed public review process spans four months:

- **November and December**—Development of the concept into a full-fledged plan by a team of City, Zoological Society and Parks Commission representatives as well as a zoo architect.
- **January**—Presentation of the plan to a City Council Committee of the Whole meeting.
- **Late January**—Host a special public open house, convened by the Parks Commission, to take public comments on the plan.
- **Early February**—Parks Commission meeting to take additional public comment and for the Commission to make a recommendation to the City Council.
- **Mid-to-late February**—City Council meeting, with additional public comment, where the Council will vote on the plan.

The City of Duluth and the Zoological Society plan to work collaboratively to pursue financial support to implement the consensus concept and achieve AZA accreditation in the upcoming months.

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