

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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# **Trust for Public Land Makes \$200,000 Gift to Naples Zoo For ReNEW the ZOO Campaign**

## *Campaign Also Set to Bring Black Bears to Zoo for First Time Ever*

**NAPLES, Fla.** – Naples Zoo announced a \$200,000 gift today from The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit conservation organization. The gift officially launches Phase 2 of the *ReNEW the ZOO* campaign to help restore and improve facilities damaged by Hurricane Wilma. Zoo guests will soon see a new leopard habitat, further renovation of hurricane affected areas, as well as an exhibit for a species never before seen at Naples Zoo.

Phase 1 donations to the *ReNEW the ZOO* campaign eased the financial burden Naples Zoo faced after being closed for one month and brought the Zoo back open with just two exhibits unoccupied. Naples Zoo, a nonprofit organization, is now entering the second phase of its *ReNEW the ZOO* campaign. "Naples Zoo was hit hard by Hurricane Wilma and we're happy to help in the reconstruction effort," said Greg Chelius, director of TPL's Florida office. "We are very proud and pleased to be making this gift, and hope it encourages people to provide matching funds to help the Zoo."

Additional donors will be needed to achieve the target budget of \$650,000 set for this phase of the campaign. "We've accomplished a great deal on a very frugal budget for years," explains Zoo Director David Tetzlaff. "This conservative figure continues that pattern." With this first gift of \$200,000 from TPL, Naples Zoo is well on its way to achieving this goal.

The gift is part of The Trust for Public Land's initiative to preserve open space and create parks, both in Collier County and throughout Florida. "This gift is made possible by the generous support of our donors in the Naples area and throughout Florida and we want to thank them for their endorsement of our mission," Chelius said. Funds donated by TPL will be dedicated to create a spotted leopard habitat in the African Oasis section of the Zoo. Damage from the hurricane made the previous exhibit uninhabitable since October. With money in hand, the Zoo will soon begin the new exhibit and guests are expected to see the leopards in their new home by the end of 2006.

The remaining dollars to be raised will benefit two other species and mark two historic occasions in the Zoo. Asian bearcats, also known as binturongs, are slated for a new habitat. The binturongs are currently in the last of the Zoo's 1970s era exhibits with bars and concrete floors. As funds have allowed over the years, the Zoo has torn these types of exhibits down to replace them with modern habitats and this will be the completion of that goal. "With no visual barrier in their new space, guests will be much better able to appreciate these extraordinary carnivores," explains Tetzlaff. Binturongs are the only Old World mammal with a prehensile tail. They also have a musk that smells like buttered popcorn. The new exhibit will be built near Tiger Forest.

The second species to benefit from the campaign has never been seen before in Naples Zoo: American black bears. Glass viewing windows will reveal bears playing in their naturalistic waterfall and pool along with other natural features. Following the pattern of African Oasis, Tiger Forest, and the soon to be opened African wild dog exhibit, the bears will have one expansive habitat in an area formerly used for multiple smaller exhibits.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to bring bears to Naples Zoo. Guests have regularly asked about bears over the years and now with support from the community, we intend to finally bring them to the Zoo. And like Panther Glade, a display the Zoo did in cooperation with National Wildlife Federation, this will give guests the chance to encounter a local imperiled species," says Tetzlaff.

Those interested in contributing toward bringing bears to Naples Zoo and the other projects can make a tax-deductible donation to Naples Zoo when they visit or by logging onto [www.napleszoo.com](http://www.napleszoo.com) and clicking on the *ReNEW the ZOO* logo. Those interested in major contributions and naming opportunities may contact Denise Rendina at 239-262-5409 x122.

Along with the tremendous voter support, TPL was a crucial player in saving the Zoo. "We're grateful to be the recipient of the continuing generosity of TPL and its donors in not only preserving but also growing the Zoo" adds Tetzlaff. The Trust for Public Land worked with Collier County in 2005 to preserve the acreage under and around Naples Zoo. When it became apparent that an agreement between the county and the landowner could not be reached, TPL intervened to purchase the property on its own, and worked out a long-term protection strategy.

"We were very pleased to be part of the solution to a long-standing conservation challenge in Naples," said Chelius, "and especially pleased to support the Naples Zoo." The Trust for Public Land has worked in Florida for more than 30 years, completing more than 300 land-conservation transactions and protecting more than 200,000 acres. This is one of several donations the organization has made in the past year to help communities develop parks. For example, TPL gave \$100,000 to help build a recreational trail between Venice and Sarasota. In Polk County, TPL gave the town of Lake Alfred \$25,000 to build a new park at the historic MacKay estate. And in Miami, TPL is investing more than \$250,000 to build a playground in the Overtown community for kids who don't have a safe place to play. Learn more at [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org).

Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens is nationally accredited by the prestigious American Zoo and Aquarium Association. The Zoo is located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road in Naples across from the Coastland Center mall. In addition to innovative presentations like *Serpents: Fangs & Fiction* and *Planet Predator*, the Zoo offers a historic botanical garden and many rare animals. Guests board the Primate Expedition Cruise to glide by islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes live in natural habitats. Admission (\$15.95 adult/ \$9.95 children) includes all shows and the boat ride. Visitors can also pick up a healthy lunch and snacks at the SUBWAY® Cafe and shop for wild gifts at tame prices in The ZOO Gift Shop. The Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:30 to 5:30 with the last ticket sold at 4:30. Discover more at [www.napleszoo.com](http://www.napleszoo.com) or call (239) 262-5409.

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