

September 11, 2012

King County Parks Levy Task Force
Louise Miller, Jeff Watling and
Kathy Surace-Smith, co-chairs
King County Parks Division, King Street Center
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Chairs Miller, Watling and Surace-Smith, and Members of the Task Force:

Woodland Park Zoo is very pleased to have been included in and benefitted from the 2007 King County Parks Levy, which provides about 10 percent of our annual operating budget and has been responsible, over the past five years, for thousands of school visits, for new equipment and capital repairs at the zoo, and for budget stability in a difficult economic period for many of our other programs, including environmental education and care for endangered species.

The economic conditions of the past four years have required the zoo, along with many other public and private institutions, to carefully monitor the bottom line, to reduce staff, curtail programs, close an exhibit, and to require staff to take unpaid furloughs and forego pay raises and retirement matches in selected years. The county levy has been an essential element, along with support from the city of Seattle and private philanthropists that has allowed us to continue to manage and improve our programming through this difficult period.

So it is on behalf of our 1.2 million annual visitors, 40,000 members, 700 volunteers, 80,000 annual school visitors and others that we request inclusion in the county's upcoming parks levy when it is renewed in 2013.

King County has a record of recognizing Woodland Park Zoo as a valued regional institution. That recognition goes back to the Forward Thrust bonds, as well as the county-wide, 1986 bond issue that helped support – along with private donations – many of the exhibits that have been built since that time.

We know that 75 percent of our visitors come from King County, and 25 percent of our members and 43 percent of our school visits come from outside the city of Seattle. These individuals recognize that that in an urbanizing area that is increasingly disconnected from the natural world, the zoo offers a great place for a family to spend the day, for children and adults to learn about animals and their habitat, and to get back in touch with nature in a unique way.

Our representatives have attended all of the meetings of the Task Force thus far, and we are very aware of the necessary balancing of needs the task force members are weighing as the design a program for the next six years.

When the last parks levy was approved, the zoo received one cent (20 percent) of the capital levy. Because of the decline in county-wide assessed valuation, the levy now appropriates 1.3 cents to maintain the zoo's portion. In 2013 dollars, that will provide \$4.07 million for the zoo, which allows us to continue programming and capital expenses at the current level.

Were the zoo's allocation to revert to 1 cent, which translates to \$3.04 million in 2013, the zoo would be forced to make significant cuts in current programming, particularly in the area of environmental education and in our ability to reach many school children in King County. By contrast, increasing the zoo's share to 1.5 cents, or \$4.7 million in 2013 would allow us to

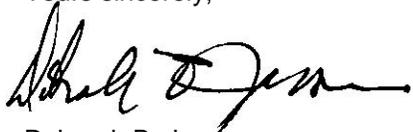
Deborah B.
Jensen, Ph.D.
President and CEO

make significant inroads to our long-term major maintenance backlog, adding markedly to the environmental sustainability of the zoo and could help close the fundraising gap needed to complete work to renovate our exhibit for Asian sloth bears and tigers.

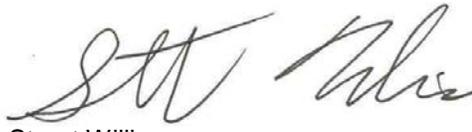
We recognize that all the regional parks in King County have significant financial needs and appreciate the opportunity to be included in the levy renewals in 2013. We look forward to working with the County and the Council to ensure a successful levy renewal to support the well-loved King County parks and the zoo.

Please feel free to contact me for more information, or to solicit help from David Schaefer, Director of Public Affairs, who is in attendance at your meetings.

Yours sincerely,



Deborah B. Jensen
President & CEO Woodland Park Zoo



Stuart Williams
Chair, Woodland Park Zoo Board of Directors