



STATEN ISLAND ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY
614 Broadway Staten Island, NY 10310
www.statenislandzoo.org

November 4, 2016
For immediate release
Contact: Brian Morris
bmorris@statenislandzoo.org
718-442-6868

STATEN ISLAND ZOO BREAKS GROUND NOV. 4 FOR NEW AQUARIUM

November 4, 2016 – Staten Island, NY – New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelppearl, Design and Construction Commissioner Dr. Feniosky Peña-Mora, City Council members Steven Matteo and Debi Rose, officially broke ground with the Staten Island Zoological Society to build a dynamic and vibrant new aquarium through a major renovation of its current 30-year-old facility in the Zoo's main building.

A new, creative and comprehensive redesign substantially integrates and reconfigures 3,642-square-feet of space, installing four large tanks – virtually floor-to-ceiling – establishing an “immersion experience” for visitors. The new tanks will represent four distinct regions of the biosphere: *Tropical Coral Reef; Pacific Kelp Forest; Southeast Asian Freshwater Habitat, and Atlantic/Caribbean Sea Life.*

The Aquarium project was made possible with \$8.48M million in capital funds allocated by the Mayor's Office through the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Staten Island Borough President's Office and council members Matteo and Rose. Completion is expected in Spring 2018.

"Zoos bring the natural world to our front door with living collections that inspire and educate visitors of all ages," said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelppearl. "On behalf of the de Blasio Administration, we're proud to support this major aquarium renovation for the extraordinary Staten Island Zoo. With enhanced exhibition space and increased energy efficiency, we can ensure that the next generation of Staten Island

residents and visitors have opportunities to appreciate the beauty of aquatic life from across the globe."

Most importantly, the Zoo will expand its education programming through remarkable new exhibits that improve the visitor experience and spark the imagination of both adults and children. Included is a modern audio-visual system to support interactive and interpretive features that interest, inform and emphasize the message of conservation.

According to William J. Frew, Jr., president of the Zoological Society, the aquarium, which was installed in 1986, had been slated for replacement, and will accommodate the numerous technological advancements that have changed aquarium design over the last 30 years.

"What the public will witness is a dynamic and colorful space that will surround and immerse them with vibrant marine life," Frew explained.

Frew credited the steadfast support of the Mayor's Office, the Department of Cultural Affairs, Staten Island borough president, and Island's City Council members Rose and Matteo to bring this project to reality.

According to DDC Commissioner Feniosky Peña-Mora, "We live every day in New York City surrounded by water, particularly in Staten Island. Rivers, bays, beaches, the Arthur Kill and the Atlantic Ocean flank us on all sides. Children and adults travel over water on world-famous bridges and ferries. This proximity to the ocean makes a top-flight aquarium even more important for people to learn about our local wildlife and how we fit in this complex ecosystem." He continued, "DDC is proud to partner with Mayor de Blasio, Staten Island Borough President Oddo, DCLA, the Staten Island Zoo and City Council members Matteo and Rose to bring a state of the art aquarium to Staten Islanders."

Borough President Oddo commented, "The project modernizes the entire climate control system for the 1936-era Main Building which includes endangered species from the world's tropical forests, the African Savannah and the zoo's world-renowned reptile collection."

“It also completely replaces the zoo’s aquarium. When visitors, particularly children, enter the Main Building through this new aquarium, the experience will open their eyes to the wonders of aquatic life. As an educational exhibit, it will also enlighten visitors about the fragility of our ocean and fresh-water environments. We expect the project will help to generate more tourist and local visitor admissions, as the aquarium will be a genuine “immersion” experience, with floor-to-ceiling tanks giving the effect of being surrounded by four walls of water. Major improvement projects like this help to ensure that our cultural institutions on Staten Island remain popular attractions that people want to see and support,” Oddo explained.

Council Minority Leader Matteo added, "This groundbreaking marks the start of the long awaited renovation of the Staten Island Zoo's aquarium. As the hub between the Zoo's main exhibits, the section dedicated to aquatic life was a familiar and popular stop for Staten Island families as they traveled between its famous reptile house, the established tropical forest wing, and the newer African Savannah annex. Seeing the start of the improvement project for this Zoo mainstay is great news for our community. I look forward to seeing its progress and visiting it with my kids when it is completed. Many thanks to Borough President Oddo and Council Member Rose for their support of this project and to Ken Mitchell and his team for their continually successful stewardship of our Zoo."

Councilwoman Rose commented: “For generations, the Staten Island Zoo has provided people of all ages an oasis to experience the diversity of the natural world in a beautiful, park-like setting that mirrors our native natural environment. With the opening of this new aquarium, children and adults alike will have the opportunity to see beneath the waves in an immersive experience that explores sea life in four different fresh and saltwater environments. I’m proud to have supported this project—along with a project to modernize the zoo’s infrastructure—and I thank all those who have joined me in bringing the wonders of nature closer to Staten Islanders.

Kenneth C. Mitchell, the Zoo’s Executive Director, noted that the project represents a significant investment in the Staten Island community -- establishing an asset that

celebrates the natural world. Mitchell explained that the new design for the aquarium replacement better supports the Zoo's commitment to education, "where we can develop interpretive programs that help to educate and inform our visitors. In addition, we also envision a potential for internships in marine sciences."

The project also includes the replacement of three existing boilers with new, high efficiency sectional cast iron units that will reduce annual energy consumption by more than 11,000 therms.

The Staten Island Zoo is located at Barrett Park, 614 Broadway, Staten Island, NY 10310, on property owned by the City of New York; its operation is supported in part by public funds provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.