



STATEN ISLAND ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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MAYOR BLOOMBERG, BOROUGH PRESIDENT MOLINARO, COUNCILMAN ODDO, AND OTHER OFFICIALS UNVEIL NEW AMUR LEOPARD EXHIBIT AT THE STATEN ISLAND ZOO

November 22, 2013 – Staten Island, N.Y. – Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Borough President James Molinaro, Councilman James Oddo, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin, Design and Construction Commissioner David Burney, and the Staten Island Zoological Society today unveiled a new 4,500-square-foot exhibit for the Zoo’s critically endangered Amur Leopards at a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Zoo’s West Brighton campus.

Amur Leopards are considered the world’s rarest big cat, with fewer than 40 existing in their native habitat in the Amur River Valley along the border of Russia and China. Three Amur leopards – Valeri, Kolya, and Fitty - will reside in the new exhibit.

“This exhibit is the latest example of how Staten Island has become a world-class destination – and an even better place to live. Soon to be joined by a brand new carousel and renovated aquarium, this expanded habitat for the three Amur Leopards marks another step forward for the Zoo, for Staten Island and for the whole City,” stated Mayor Bloomberg. “Valeri, Kolya and Fitty – congratulations on your new home. And best of luck with your neighbor, Chuck – I hear he’s not a morning person.”

“Thanks to the steadfast support of Mayor Bloomberg, DCA Commissioner Kate Levin, Borough President Molinaro and Councilman Oddo, the Staten Island Zoo is proud to unveil one of the largest leopard exhibits in the country and certainly the most spectacular,” said Ken Mitchell, Executive Director of the Zoo. “The outdoor exhibit features a naturalistic environment over three stories high, mirroring a Russian forest in the Amur Valley. The leopards have plenty of room to roam, climb, and even swim in a shallow pond. We hope and expect to have a breeding pair of these leopards in the future which will contribute to worldwide efforts to have a sustainable captive breeding program.”

Borough President Molinaro stated that, “the Zoo’s 175,000 visitors annually have a real treat in store with this magnificent leopard exhibit. Children in particular are going to be thrilled to see leopards up-close in their natural environment. I am proud to have played a part in funding this outstanding exhibit. I know that it is going to provide fascination and

education to Staten Islanders and tourists for decades to come. Congratulations to Zoo Director Ken Mitchell, and to the Zoo Board of Trustees and staff.”

The Department of Design and Construction managed the project, and, according to its commissioner, David Burney, “Staten Island now has one of the largest exhibits in the nation for some of the rarest cats in the world: Amur leopards. We’re proud to have delivered an opportunity for New Yorkers to see these magnificent animals in an environment that’s sensitive to the leopards’ mental and physical health. The new exhibit allows the leopards to climb and explore, while offering an immersive experience for visitors. We’re delighted to have worked with the Staten Island Zoo, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and Slade Architecture on this terrific new exhibit.”

According to Councilman Oddo, "This magnificent exhibit is important on so many levels. First and foremost, it helps to guarantee that this rare species of leopard will be spared from extinction - an obligation that we cannot shirk when we have the means and the will to help. For our borough, it is one more step of the many we will take to become a world-class island city, as we continue to strive to become a center of arts, education, commerce and culture. And finally, for adults and children alike, it will provide many hours of joy, transporting us to exotic locations as we view these fascinating creatures in a natural habitat."

The Amur Leopard exhibit was made possible with \$3.5 million in capital funds, allocated by Mayor Bloomberg through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the office of Borough President Molinaro, and Councilman Oddo. The project includes additional funding for a new carousel highlighting endangered species which will be completed later this year. Both projects were designed by Slade Architecture as part of the Department of Design and Construction’s Design Excellence program.

The Staten Island Zoo is an active and enthusiastic participant in the “Species Survival Program,” (SSP) an initiative of the national Association of Zoos and Aquariums to cooperatively manage specific, and typically threatened or endangered, species population. The Staten Island Zoo joins cooperating organizations in the SSP to breed and sustain these leopards in captivity, and possibly save the species from extinction. The Zoo’s mission is to identify Amur leopard population management goals and recommendations to ensure the sustainability of a healthy, genetically diverse, and demographically varied population.

Mitchell noted that graphics and other finishing touches to the Amur Leopard exhibit will be completed in the coming weeks. Mitchell explained, “The ceremony on Nov. 22 is presented as an unveiling, rather than grand opening. The event will focus both on the newly completed facility and the New York City government officials instrumental in funding the projects”.

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