



City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

City of New Bedford
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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Buttonwood Park Zoo achieves esteemed AZA accreditation

New Bedford zoo achieves fourth consecutive five-year accreditation from Association of Zoos & Aquariums since 2003

Silver Spring, Maryland- The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) has announced that the Buttonwood Park Zoo was granted accreditation by AZA's independent Accreditation Commission.

“Only the very best zoos and aquariums can meet AZA’s accreditation standards for animal care and conservation, which are universally acknowledged as the ‘gold-standard’ within the zoological profession,” said AZA President and CEO Dan Ashe. “By achieving accreditation, Buttonwood Park Zoo demonstrates a commitment to protecting animals around the world and inspiring their guests to do the same.”

To be accredited, the Buttonwood Park Zoo underwent a thorough review to make certain it has and will continue to meet ever-rising standards in categories which include animal care and welfare, veterinary programs, conservation, education, and safety. AZA requires zoos and aquariums to successfully complete this rigorous accreditation process every five years in order to be members of the Association.

“Buttonwood Park Zoo’s accreditation is an affirmation of the skill and hard work of its staff, and its commitment to the highest industry standards,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell. “With its recently added exhibits and programs, the zoo has solidified its standing as one of the best small zoos in America.”

The accreditation process includes a detailed application and a meticulous on-site inspection by a team of trained zoo and aquarium professionals. The inspecting team observes all aspects of the institution’s operation, including animal care and welfare; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; visitor services; and more. Finally, top officials are interviewed at a formal hearing of AZA’s independent Accreditation Commission, after which accreditation is

granted, tabled, or denied. Any institution that is denied may reapply one year after the Commission's decision is made.

Buttonwood Park Zoo has been an accredited AZA member since 2003. Accreditation periods last five years; this is the Buttonwood Park Zoo's fourth consecutive accreditation.

Zoo Director, Keith Lovett stated, "Over the last five years the Zoo has made significant improvements to its animal habitats, physical facilities, and grounds. These physical improvements combined with the development of regionally and nationally recognized programs in the areas of animal care, environmental education, and wildlife conservation was recognized by AZA, thus allowing us to achieve the highest zoological accreditation status in the world."

The AZA inspection team reported on a number of particular strengths observed during their site visit in June stating the Zoo grounds appear clean, well maintained and beautifully landscaped with off-exhibit areas free of clutter, nicely maintained and well organized. They referenced the pride, energy and leadership exhibited by staff, the Zoological Board and the Mayor for the Zoo and the progress made on the new programs and master plan.

The Zoo's commitment to green practices, a strong recycling and water quality program all received high marks as well as their strong educational message and graphics and the new Rainforests, Rivers & Reefs building.

The Zoo's education and community partnerships were also recognized as dynamic and impactful with the New Directions partnership and Science On a Sphere® programming specifically called out.

Other areas the Buttonwood Park Zoo was recognized include the recently revamped and certified volunteer program, its comprehensive veterinary preventive health program and the quality of its hospital for a zoo of its size.

About AZA

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, animal welfare, education, science, and recreation. AZA is the accrediting body for the top zoos and aquariums in the United States and eight other countries. Look for the AZA accreditation logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. The AZA is a leader in saving species and your link to helping animals all over the world. To learn more, visit www.aza.org.

About Buttonwood Park Zoo & Zoological Society

The Buttonwood Park Zoological Society (BPZS), a private, non-profit organization, was founded in 1969 to support the Buttonwood Park Zoo (BPZ) so that the Zoo will be a significant contributor to the conservation of nature both at home and throughout the world. Buttonwood Park Zoo (BPZ) features over 180 animals and 30 exhibits, including elephants, bison, mountain lions, bears, eagles, seals, otters, and farm animals. BPZ is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and has been called "one of the finest small zoos in the United States" by that organization. For more information, visit www.bpzoo.org or call (508) 991-6178.

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Please contact Paula Montgomery at Buttonwood Park Zoological Society at (508) 991-4556 ext. 119 for additional information about the facility, including special events and activities for visitors and its ongoing commitment to wildlife conservation and science education.