

## Zoo New England Statement

In signing the FY10 state budget, the Governor used his line-item veto power to reduce the amount of funding approved by the legislature for the operation of Commonwealth Zoological Corporation d/b/a Zoo New England (ZNE) from \$6.5 million to \$2.5 million. The \$6.5 million figure was developed after careful consideration of all necessary expenditures and projected revenues, and represents a \$150,000 reduction from the total amount of operating funding that was provided to ZNE in FY09 after two 9C emergency cuts totaling \$400,000 (the funding level in the passed FY09 budget was \$7.05 million).

The funding level of \$2.5 million is not sufficient to continue operations of the Zoos and will actually cost the Commonwealth far more in FY10 expenditures than the \$4 million in "savings" represented by this cut, and cost the Commonwealth millions more in subsequent years. For this reason, Zoo New England and many of its supporters are calling for the legislature to override this veto and restore ZNE's FY10 funding (line item 7007-0951) to \$6.5 million.

Specifically, as explained in detail below, the ramifications of the Governor's veto are:

- Closing the Zoos to the public, at a projected cost to the Commonwealth of \$9 million in FY10, and millions more in subsequent years;
- Immediately forgoing more than \$4.35 million in earned revenue and private support that the Zoos are projected to generate in FY10 to offset operating costs (note: ZNE has been steadily growing its earned revenue and private support base, reaching record levels in both FY08 and FY09);
- Losing two unique, historic cultural institutions that attracted a record 568,797 people in FY09, including tourists from around the globe;
- Laying-off all non-animal care and facility maintenance staff – most of ZNE's 165 employees – as well as the 65 paid Zoo Teens and 25 interns;
- ZNE financial situation would necessitate the reverting of care, custody and control of the Zoos to the Commonwealth for operation and disposition of animals by October; and,
- Depopulating the animal collection. It is believed that a minimum of 20% of the animals would not be able to be placed, requiring either destroying them or the care of the animals in perpetuity.

According to the legislation that created the public-private partnership between the Commonwealth and the two Zoos, Massachusetts General Law 92B, should the Commonwealth Zoological Corporation d/b/a Zoo New England dissolve, the care, custody and control of the Zoos, including the care for the valuable animal collection, revert back to the Commonwealth.

Zoo New England has been a very responsible partner with the Commonwealth. Realizing the economic struggles, ZNE approached the legislature this year and instead of asking for increased or level funding, as many continued to do, proposed a reduction that would sustain the Zoos and benefit the Commonwealth.

The total operating budget for the Zoos is \$11 million. In FY 09, the Commonwealth contributed \$6.65 million of this and the Zoos - through admissions, food and gift concessions, family memberships, rentals, educational programs and fundraising - generated the remaining \$4.35 million. Additionally, ZNE is

currently the primary filming location for a major motion picture that will bring in many jobs, millions of dollars of revenue to, and significant national publicity for, the Commonwealth.

While it seems counterintuitive to reduce staff in revenue-generating areas, the very nature of the Zoos prevents the reduction of animal care staffing without beginning the depopulation of animals. Zoos are institutionally unique with a living collection, whose cost to maintain cannot be adjusted in the short term. Thus initially, the only areas left to cut are in non-animal care, revenue-generating departments. This would result in a bare bones staff that would care for the animals and the facility, but would eliminate any that would service the public. Based on a phased shutdown cost analysis previously prepared, the Zoos would take approximately 3 years to shutdown and with approximately 20% of the 1000+ animals remaining unplaced.

From a cost-benefit analysis perspective, it is simply less costly to maintain the Commonwealth's funding at \$6.5 million, enabling the Zoos to remain open, support essential functions, increase revenues, attract tourists and protect the Commonwealth's investment.

Closing the Zoos at this time would be a particularly devastating loss for the people of the Commonwealth, as ZNE has been having great success. Specifically,

--ZNE had record setting attendance of 568,797 visitors, an increase of 9% over last year, which was also a record setter.

--ZNE had record setting Zoo Membership of 14,100 families, an increase of 8% over last year, which was also a record setter.

--The number of donors to the Zoos in FY09 increased 8%.

--ZNE just replaced an old, dilapidated porcupine exhibit at Stone Zoo with a new Gibbon exhibit – it's receiving rave reviews and continues the positive momentum.

--Set construction for "The Zookeeper" movie is well underway at Franklin Park Zoo. The project is providing a significant economic boost to the Commonwealth in that it is creating so many jobs (lots of local tradesmen), filling many hotel rooms, apartments and local restaurants. It should also provide both short-term and long-term promotional value as the zoo in the movie will be called Franklin Park Zoo.

--The total number of visitors served in formal and informal education and interpretation programs increased by 30% in FY09 to 153,380.

--The total number of Massachusetts schoolchildren who visited the Zoos for free in FY09 was 39,282. ZNE conducts many teacher training programs to enhance in-school teaching/learning.

--ZNE's zoo education staff members are leaders in the education field and true resources to the Commonwealth as a whole, for example: ZNE's Director of Education was elected to chair the Massachusetts Environmental Learning Plan Committee, she is a member of the steering committee of the Secretary's Advisory Group on Environmental Education (SAGEE) and panel review member for MA Science, Technology & Engineering (STE) Curriculum Frameworks.

--ZNE provides employment to 65 inner-city teenagers through an award-winning working/learning summer program, ZooTeens, that has become a national model for effective youth employment and is just celebrating its 10th anniversary this summer. ZNE has a host of other youth programs including Zoo Teen Ambassador, Junior Zoo Teen, Youth Education Specialists (YES), ECOTeens and others. These

programs represent incredible, life-changing opportunities for young people, many of whom would be considered “at-risk.”