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**NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN FOR POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM'S PAW OF APPROVAL AWARD
RECOGNIZING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AMONG PIERCE COUNTY BUSINESSES**

Fourth annual award will honor efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

TACOMA, Wash. – Nominations are now open for the fourth annual Paw of Approval award, which recognizes work by Pierce County businesses to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



The award program is a joint effort of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and the Sustainable Tacoma Commission.

It honors businesses that have made significant strides toward reducing the impact their operations have on Earth's climate.

The warming of the planet threatens the sea ice on which polar bears do their hunting.

The deadline to apply for the Paw of Approval award is March 31. An application and detailed information on how to apply may be found at www.pdza.org/pawaward.

To receive a Paw of Approval, a business must demonstrate a three-to-five year record of measurable reductions in carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and/or fluorinated gases.

"This is important, pressing work, and businesses thousands of miles from the Arctic can make a tangible difference in the race to save polar bears," said Karen Povey, education curator at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

Totem Ocean Trailer Express, a shipping company that provides service between the ports of Tacoma and Anchorage, won the prestigious award in 2015. Totem Ocean, which supplies more than one-third of all goods to the state of Alaska, installed shoreside power for its ships in recent years, allowing them to recharge through the

electrical grid as they load and unload, instead of burning fuel oil while docked. The shipping company said this allowed it to reduce its greenhouse emissions by 2,600 tons per year.

Interstate Distributor, a Tacoma-based trucking company with worldwide clients, received the 2014 Paw of Approval. The company decreased carbon emissions per mile by more than 7 percent through retrofits and upgrades to trucks during the period from 2010 through 2012.

Three years ago, Unico Properties, LLC, Weyerhaeuser, Tacoma Community College and the Port of Tacoma were honored with the zoo's very first Paw of Approval award.

Polar bears are a threatened species, and sea ice is crucial to their existence. It's the platform from which they hunt the seals that sustain their lives.

Unchecked destruction of their hunting grounds due to climate change could bring about the extinction of these largest of land carnivores.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium long has aided polar bear research and conservation efforts. The zoo parking lots and drives are "idle free" zones, in which motorists are asked to turn their engines off while waiting for someone in order to reduce tailpipe emissions.

"The Paw of Approval award program is another piece of our longstanding commitment in this area," Povey said. "It rewards local businesses for their efforts and encourages others to curb their greenhouse gas emissions."

The 2016 Paw of Approval winner will be recognized in the zoo's ZooPoints publication; named in a news release as a leader in environmental stewardship; invited to exhibit at the zoo's annual Earth Day event; and treated to a special breakfast with the zoo's polar bears.

A nomination form may be accompanied by up to five pages of additional information, including photographs or other material. Self-nominations are encouraged. The form is on the zoo website, www.pdza.org/pawaward.

Nominators will be asked to describe actions taken; provide details on the amount of reduction that has occurred; and explain why the company should be recognized as a community leader in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).