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WASHED ASHORE

DRAMATIC ART EXHIBIT FEATURING SEA CREATURES SCULPTED FROM PLASTIC POLLUTION OPENS IN APRIL AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO

TACOMA, Wash. – You could call it Art to Save the Sea.

Or Pollution with a Purpose.

Washed Ashore, an intriguing exhibit of giant artworks sculpted from the myriad of consumer articles that land on the world's beaches in waves of junk, is scheduled to open in April at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. The exhibit will run through Oct. 21.

The sculptures are giant, colorful, and mesmerizing: a seal constructed of sand toys; a penguin of plastic bottles; a shark of shards.

Visitors will find themselves craning their necks to look up and around the towering sculptures - some as tall as nine feet – and thinking: “How’d they *do* that? Where’d they get *that*?”

It is, after all, amazingly impressive to look at a 10-foot-long shark, ferociously sharp teeth and all, and realize that someone sculpted it – or pieced it together like an uncommonly complex jigsaw puzzle, from pieces of plastic that washed up on beaches.



Visitors may want to return again and again to marvel at 10 artistic creations that will dot the grounds. The exhibit will include a leafy sea dragon designed and built to debut at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium; a 9-foot tall-by-12-foot-wide octopus; a 9-foot-tall-by-7-foot-wide penguin; a 10-foot-long shark; and a 9-foot-tall-by-7-foot-wide puffin.



The displays are the work of the Oregon-based Washed Ashore Project, where marine life is the theme, trash is the medium, and the message is clear: Reduce the use of plastic and save the ocean.

They will bring an entirely new dimension of interest and excitement to the zoo in 2017 as visitors roam the grounds to marvel at the detail work and learn more about the reasons behind their creation.

What are the white round pieces that make up the suckers on the octopus' arms? Is that really a duck or goose decoy beneath it? And what's up with those plastic coolers? Does all that stuff really wind up in

the ocean – and then on beaches?

While construction is underway on the Pacific Seas Aquarium, the Washed Ashore exhibit presents an opportunity to teach visitors about human impact on the ocean environment, said Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Education Curator Karen Povey.

“We want to inspire our visitors to reduce their use of single-use plastics and take action toward conservation.”

The new Pacific Seas Aquarium, scheduled to open in the summer of 2018, will allow visitors to get closer-than-ever views of marine life and learn from zoo educators about new and engaging ways to protect ocean habitat and the animals that live in and around the world's waters.

“This exhibit fits perfectly with the conservation messaging we want to get out to the greater Tacoma community, particularly young people,” said Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners President Erik Hanberg. “Environmental sustainability is at the core of everything we do to provide safe, healthy recreation opportunities and engage children and adults in activities that help save wildlife and wild places.”

Based in Bandon, Ore., Washed Ashore brings together volunteers and artists who collect, clean and sort trash from beaches. They have crafted more than 60 sculptures from some 38,000 pounds of plastic pollution since 2010. Washed Ashore Project artworks have traveled to zoos, aquariums and museums around the United States, including the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

Washed Ashore and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium share a commitment to conservation - and to educating the public about ocean pollution, which can drastically affect the world's waters and the animals that live there.

“Each of us can easily take small actions that go a long way in reducing our contribution to plastic pollution,” Povey said. “In restaurants, ask your server to skip the straw and refuse to use single-serving plastic drink bottles.”

The zoo long has banned the use of plastic lids and straws on drink cups sold on grounds.

Now, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park and Lancer Hospitality, which runs cafeteria operations at both places, have gone a huge step farther. Next month, Lancer will begin the transition to eliminate the sale of water, juices and soda in disposable, single-use plastic bottles at both sites.

Visitors will be encouraged to bring their own reusable bottles and fill them with water at special filling stations or drinking fountains located around the zoo and Northwest Trek.

Taking reusable shopping bags to the grocery store is another habit that makes a difference: The zoo supports the City of Tacoma's plastic-bag ban, which will go into effect next summer.

It's all part of the mission of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium—to respect and protect the natural world. And when it comes to plastics, visitors can join with the zoo to go plastic-free to save the sea.

For more information, visit www.pdza.org/washedashore.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and 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).

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