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POINT DEFIANCE ZOO, NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK AND LANCER HOSPITALITY TEAM UP TO ELIMINATE THE SALE OF DISPOSABLE PLASTIC BOTTLES AT BOTH ZOOS

TACOMA, Wash. - Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park and Lancer Hospitality are joining together to eliminate the offering of beverages sold in disposable plastic bottles at the sister zoos in Tacoma and Eatonville. This includes water, soda and juice.

This transition will begin in January.

Lancer Hospitality provides food and beverage concessions and catering services at the two zoos, which are operated by Metro Parks Tacoma.

“The world’s ocean waters are increasingly polluted with plastic waste,” Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Deputy Director John Houck said. “We are taking a bold step by ‘walking the talk’ of our conservation mission in a very real way.”

“Our duty is to do everything we can on behalf of the world’s wildlife and wild places,” he added. “While recycling helps, it is not the best solution, because much more plastic finds its way into our streams and oceans.”

While some businesses and visitor venues are taking steps to stop the sale of bottled water on their properties, the zoo, Northwest Trek and Lancer are going one step further by eliminating the sale of all beverages sold in plastic bottles, including soda.

“We are taking this step because we believe it’s the right thing to do for our oceans and for our environment,” Houck said. “We want to be a leader in engaging our visitors to take small sustainable steps to make a difference on a local level. And we are grateful that we have a corporate partner in Lancer Hospitality that embraces and validates our mission.”

Visitors to both sites are encouraged to bring reusable bottles they can fill at drinking fountains and special bottle-filling stations. And soda lovers will still be able to buy those beverages in paper cups.

The Pacific Seas Aquarium, to open in the summer of 2018, is now under construction at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. Visitors will be wowed by the many species of ocean dwellers there – including hammerhead sharks and green sea turtles. But it’s not only about seeing ocean animals; interpretive

signage, displays and interactive programs will engage visitors in learning steps they can take to help keep the world's oceans healthy.

In addition, the zoo will host the innovative Washed Ashore artwork exhibit from April through October next year. The giant depictions of a shark, puffin, penguin, jellyfish and other sea creatures are made exclusively from trash found on ocean beaches. Much of that pollution is plastic, so the artwork clearly demonstrates the problem of such material in the ocean, where it can harm sea turtles and other animals.

Because the production and disposal of plastic bottles is so costly from an environmental perspective, the zoo, Northwest Trek and Lancer decided to eliminate beverages sold in plastic bottles. While this decision will affect the three partners financially, it ensures that revenue streams align with the mission to practice and promote effective conservation that protects environments critical to the survival of the world's wildlife.

"By eliminating the offering of beverages in plastic bottles we are transforming an everyday behavior (having a drink of water/soda) into an authentic moment of engagement," Lancer Regional Director Susan Smith said. "This is a small sustainable step we hope will resonate with zoo visitors."

About Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium

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).

About Northwest Trek Wildlife Park

Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native Northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. The wildlife park, a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma, is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.

About Lancer Hospitality

Lancer Hospitality provides culinary management services throughout the country at cultural attractions such as zoos, aquariums and museums.

For more information, please visit www.lancerhospitality.com.

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