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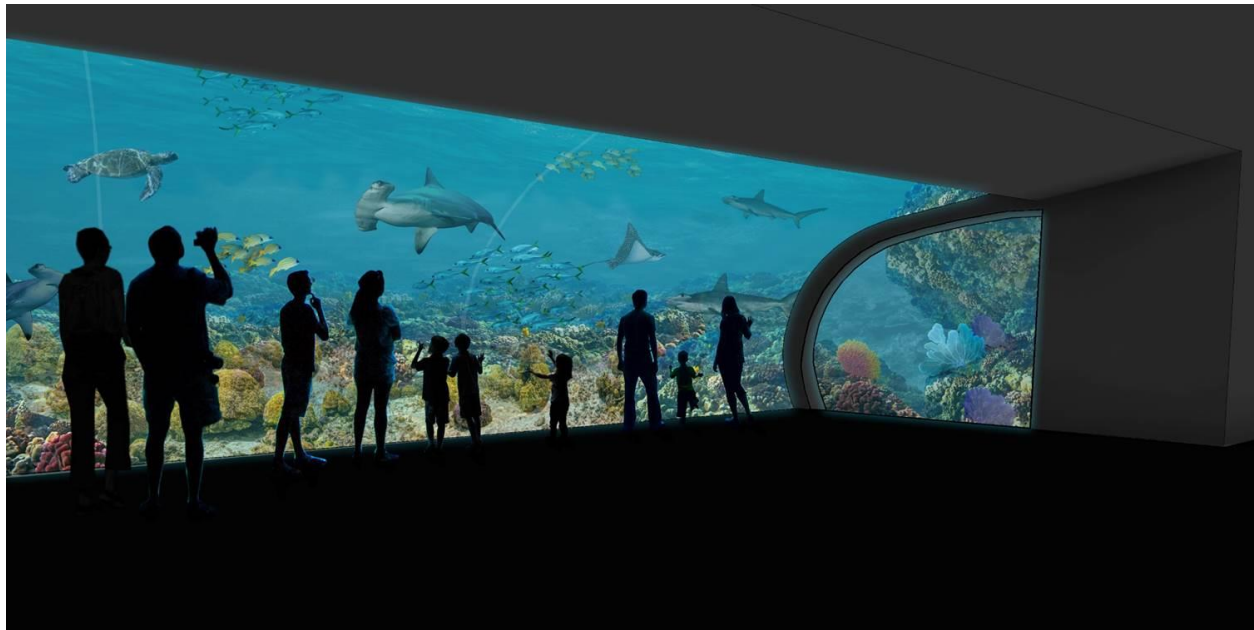
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SCALLOPED HAMMERHEAD SHARKS AND GREEN SEA TURTLES WILL JOIN OTHER MARINE SPECIES IN EXCITING NEW AQUARIUM PLANNED TO OPEN IN THE SUMMER OF 2018 AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

Public meetings are set for Sept. 28 and 30 to discuss details of the building's design and development

TACOMA, Wash. – Imagine scalloped hammerhead sharks gliding past a 32-foot-wide window, then swimming briefly out of sight, only to reappear *above* visitors in a part of the 250,000-gallon tank that arches overhead.

Elsewhere in the impressive exhibit, green sea turtles swim serenely amid other animals in a warm-water ecosystem displaying sea life that can be found in the great gulf waters between Baja California and mainland Mexico.



Architect's rendering shows scalloped hammerhead sharks and green sea turtles in the expansive 250,000-gallon, warm-water exhibit showcasing animals that can be found along the Gulf of California between the Baja Peninsula and the mainland of Mexico.

The hammerheads and sea turtles are two popular – and mesmerizing – sea animals to be included in a new, three-story aquarium that will soon be under construction at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

The approximately 34,000-square-foot structure is in the design and development stage and will be built as a replacement for the aging and deteriorating North Pacific Aquarium, which opened in 1963. It will be paid for with funds approved by voters in 2014 as part of a \$198 million Metro Parks Tacoma bond measure.

Construction is scheduled to begin next summer. The new aquarium will contain several galleries dedicated to marine animals found in Puget Sound, as well the near and far reaches of the Pacific Ocean. It also will include a larger replacement for the North Pacific Aquarium's Marine Discovery Center. The South Pacific Aquarium, home to Stingray Cove and a popular exhibit featuring 16 sharks and the Eye-to-Eye Shark Dive program, will remain in operation at its current location.

The new aquarium will be built on the northeast side of the zoo's grounds on a site between the Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater and the Rocky Shores marine mammal exhibit area.

Members of the public can learn details about the site selection, planning and design for the new aquarium during public meetings set for 5 p.m. Sept. 28 and 6:30 p.m. Sept. 30.

Here are the specifics for those meetings:

- **5-6 p.m. Monday, Sept. 28 at Metro Parks Tacoma headquarters, 4702 S. 19th St., Tacoma.** Zoo officials and representatives from EHDD, the architectural firm designing the aquarium, will make a presentation to the Board of Park Commissioners during a public review and study session. This meeting will include an open house for public viewing of drawings and other information at 5 p.m. and a board study session at 5:30 p.m. Members of the public who wish to share their views on the project may do so during the public comment period of the regular board meeting, which begins at 6 p.m.
- **6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 30 at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, North Pacific Aquarium, 5400 N. Pearl St., Tacoma.** Zoo officials and representatives of EHDD will provide an additional opportunity for members of the public to learn about the new aquarium and ask questions about the construction process and timeline.



Architect's rendering shows the new aquarium from one of the pathways in the zoo. Though exterior materials have not been selected, the sketch depicts how the aquarium will fit into its surroundings.

Both meetings will include information on how the site was chosen and the aquarium's projected size and cost, as well as exciting details about the various galleries of marine animals that will be included in it.

"We are pleased to present members of the public an opportunity to learn about details of the new aquarium and offer their comments about the process," said Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners President Tim Reid. "This is an important piece of our communication with the community and our voters, who approved funds for this project through a bond issue."

The new aquarium will be about 12,000 square feet larger than the half-century-old North Pacific Aquarium.

“We see it as a moderately sized replacement, but it will feature technological advancements and enhanced visitor experiences that will make it “feel” even larger and more impressive to our guests,” said Gary Geddes, Director of Zoological and Environmental Education for Metro Parks Tacoma.



Architect's rendering shows a view of the aquarium from Five Mile Drive. Though exterior materials have not been selected, the sketch depicts how the aquarium will fit into its surroundings, keeping with the sense of place in Point Defiance Park.

Members of the zoo's aquarium, education and operations department staffs are working closely with the architects to ensure that the building provides space and life-support systems critical to ensuring the best care of the marine animals, as well as the tools needed to tell visitors the story of the oceans that surround us, Geddes said.

The new aquarium will, in many respects, be a marriage of old and new. It will provide exhibit space for the Puget Sound native species and other animals visitors long have grown to love and study in their North Pacific Aquarium home. When the replacement building is completed, the inhabitants of the aging structure will be moved to their new home.

The popular Jammin' with Jellies exhibit that opened over the summer will be relocated to the new aquarium, too.

And there will be a larger Marine Discovery Center with touch tanks set at various heights so visitors from toddlers through adults will be able to closely examine sea creatures that live in the tidal near shore environment and learn more about them.

In addition to the eye-popping warm-water replication of Baja California waters, new exhibits planned for the aquarium include:

- **Puget Sound Community tank:** At 75,000 gallons, with a 25-foot-long-by-10-foot-high viewing window, this exhibit will spotlight the marine life that lives in our own backyard.
- **Kelp Forest:** Giant strands of artificial kelp will wave in the gently flowing waters of a 12,000-gallon tank, giving visitors standing at the 9-foot-long-by-10-foot-high viewing window a glimpse of underwater plant activity generally only seen by scuba divers.
- **Marine Science Classroom:** A lower-level classroom will provide space for the study of marine ecosystems, with easy access to Point Defiance Park and Puget Sound. A short walk from the building will allow students to collect water samples, for example, and return to the classroom to analyze them.

Still other tanks will focus on the schooling habits of fish; depict the area beneath the Tacoma Narrows Bridges, complete with replicated Galloping Gertie debris; and exhibit spider crabs, an octopus and other sea creatures.

Visitors will enter the new aquarium on the upper level and descend along stroller-and-wheelchair-friendly ramps through galleries dedicated to various species or areas of the ocean. They'll wind past an upper level Tidal "Wave Pool" or "Surge Channel," suggesting the experience of entering the shore. They will also encounter spider crabs and schooling herring before moving on to a middle gallery level focusing on Puget Sound.

The dramatic centerpiece of the aquarium – that 250,000-gallon habitat for hammerheads, sea turtles and other animals – will sit in the lower gallery. The 25-foot-deep tank will provide a rich viewing experience for visitors who can stand and watch sharks, turtles and fish dip and dart through the water. Plus, it will reach out about 10 feet over the heads of aquarium guests, with a 10-foot-deep section that will leave the impression of being surrounded by a tunnel of water.

The Marine Discovery Center and a gallery dedicated to actions visitors can take to help the oceans and the animals that live in them also will be located on the lower floor.

Throughout the visitor experience, the guiding theme will relate to our shared responsibility for the protection of the world's oceans.

In keeping with the zoo's commitment to the environment, sharp attention is being paid throughout the design and construction process to sustainability and conservation of resources wherever possible. This will include modern, energy-efficient drum filtration of seawater. Engineers also are exploring ways to maximize the efficiency of other life-support systems for the animals that live in the aquarium.

Since the building is still in the development stages, decisions are yet to be made about the materials that will cover its exterior. But an overarching principle is that it must fit harmoniously within zoo grounds while reflecting the meeting of forest and Sound that occur within the boundaries of Point Defiance Park.

The new aquarium project is part of Metro Parks' Destination Point Defiance, a long-term planning initiative for Point Defiance Park. More information about Destination Point Defiance may be found at www.metroparkstacoma.org/DestinationPointDefiance.

San Francisco-based EHDD is a world-class architectural and engineering firm that designed the renowned Monterey Bay Aquarium and has worked on other aquarium projects around the world. The company's clients have included the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, Calif., and the recently renovated Toledo Aquarium in Ohio.

The company's architects are working closely with zoo leaders to design an aquarium that is unique to the Northwest and its park location, taking advantage of the sloping site for galleries that maximize views into the large central tanks.

Turner Construction Co. of Seattle is working alongside the architects during the pre-construction portion of the project.

The building has a \$48.5 million budget.

"This is an exciting time for Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium," Geddes said. "The voters put their faith and trust in us to build our community a new aquarium that will last for generations. We are excited to be moving forward in fulfilling that commitment."

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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).

