

Policy for Full Participation in the Species Survival Plan® Program

Cooperative animal management and conservation are among the primary goals of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). These goals are best exemplified by the Association's shared commitment to its cornerstone animal management and conservation program: the Species Survival Plan® (SSP). The AZA Board of Directors recognizes that: 1. Cooperative animal management is vital to the long-term survival of professionally managed zoological parks and aquariums and their valuable and often irreplaceable live animal collections; and 2. All AZA-accredited institutions and Certified Related Facilities should be fully committed to the animal management, conservation, and public education goals as well as the collaborative spirit of the SSP partnership. Therefore, in 2000, the Board adopted the first policy of Full Participation in the SSP program by all AZA member institutions.

An SSP Master Plan articulates long- and short-term goals for a population. It plans the "family tree" of each managed population to minimize the rate of loss of genetic diversity and maintain the long-term demographic stability of the population. Breeding and other population management recommendations are made for each animal with consideration of logistical feasibility, animal welfare, and other factors that can improve SSP outcomes. In addition to breeding recommendations, Master Plans also include a recommendation not to breed certain animals for sound husbandry reasons and the betterment of the population. The Board recognizes that, in the collaborative process of managing the SSPs, the responsibility of each SSP Management Group is to make sound Master Plan recommendations, and also recognizes that, at times, these may conflict with a member institution's plans.

The Board emphasizes the responsibility of all institutions to cooperate in SSP Master Planning. If differences occur between an SSP's recommendations and a participating institution, the SSP Coordinator and the IR have a joint responsibility to work collaboratively to resolve it. When an SSP recommendation is fundamental to the collaborative management of the *ex situ* population, then the SSP recommendation should take precedence. In this process, all institutions' clearly stated and reasonable needs will be considered. If an SSP recommendation is not fundamental to the collaborative management of the *ex situ* population, then the SSP Management Group may elect to change it before the Master Plan is finalized. Thus, when an SSP Master Plan is approved its animal management recommendations will accurately reflect the vital needs of both the SSP and the participating institutions.

The Policy for Full Participation in the SSP Program ensures that AZA Accredited Institutions and Certified Related Facilities have input into the SSP Master Planning process and that they fully comprehend, agree to, and follow the final SSP recommendations. The Board now further defines Full Participation in the SSP program, and the processes used to achieve Full Participation, as follows:

- The Institutional Liaison (IL) at AZA Accredited Institutions or Certified Related Facilities will ensure that an Institutional Representative (IR) is appointed for each SSP species the institution/facility owns or holds, or for which the institution selects to support as defined by the SSP Management Group.
- Each IR must serve as the primary point of contact for all matters relating to their assigned SSP and will ensure that their institution responds to SSP needs for information during Master Planning.

- Periodically and regularly, the SSP Coordinator will ask each participating institution's IR how their institution will participate in the SSP: breeding, non-breeding (where an institution cannot breed due to space, or other factors), or support.
- Prior to the Master Plan development, at the request of the SSP Coordinator, each IR will provide all relevant data regarding individual SSP animals to the corresponding SSP Coordinator and Studbook Keeper in a timely manner. Further, IRs *must* ensure that all proposed acquisitions or dispositions of the SSP species are included in the SSP Master Plan or, if the Master Plan is already published, are approved in advance by the SSP Coordinator or, preferably the SSP Management Group. SSP Coordinators and IRs must work collaboratively to develop an SSP Master Plan that strives to meet the needs of the SSP program and the needs of participating institutions.
- A draft of the SSP Master Plan, which must include a written record of all animal management recommendations, will be published on the AZA web site for a 30-day comment period and the SSP Coordinator will notify all IRs as soon as the Plan is available for comment. IRs at all participating institutions must inform the SSP Coordinator during the comment period that they will adhere to the Master Plan recommendations, or why they cannot, which will initiate the resolution discussions described below. If all participants agree with the recommendations, the final Master Plan will be published and implemented.
- Each IR must ensure that their institution's Director and IL are aware of the Master Plan and its recommendations and must initiate a collaborative discussion with the SSP Coordinator to resolve differences regarding Master Plan recommendations during the comment period. All involved should maintain accurate records of all related communications and discussions.
- If a resolution with no change to the SSP recommendations is found, then the final Master Plan will be published and implemented.
- If a resolution that causes changes in the SSP recommendations is reached, the edited Master Plan will be re-posted for a final 30-day comment period. IRs at institutions affected by the edited recommendation(s) must respond to the SSP Coordinator during the final comment period regarding their agreement to adhere to the recommendations; institutions not affected by the changes will not need to respond again. At this stage, the finalized Master Plan will be published and all institutions agreeing to adhere to the Master Plan's recommendations will commence implementing the Plan.
- If no resolution is found through direct discussion between the SSP Coordinator and the IR(s), they must work cooperatively with the IL, institutional Director, and corresponding TAG Chair to find one. If necessary, the discussion can extend for an additional 30 days, during which time the institution disputing a recommendation must not engage in any breeding or acquisitions and / or dispositions of species that run counter to the SSP recommendations.

If differences are not resolved by the steps outlined above, then the SSP Coordinator and / or any other involved parties must request that AZA's Wildlife Conservation Management Committee (WCMC) mediate the situation as defined in the AZA Animal Management Reconciliation Policy and, again, the institution disputing the recommendation must not engage in any breeding, acquisitions and / or dispositions that run counter to the SSP recommendations until the mediation and, if necessary, the reconciliation process is complete. Emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances will be considered for the health and welfare of the animals. Institutions not affected by the disagreement will continue carrying out their recommendations. (See: <http://www.aza.org/AboutAZA/BrdAppPolicies/index.html>).