



### **General Conservation Messages**

These general conservation messages were developed by the AZA Conservation Education Committee and were approved by the AZA Board of Directors in March, 2000. These messages provide supportive statements for general environmental topics and are designed to provide a consistent voice between AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums in their efforts to raise awareness about the topics.

#### **1. All life on Earth exists within an ecosystem.**

- Ecosystems are made of interdependent relationships between groups of living things (biodiversity) and their physical environment.
- An impact on any element of an ecosystem has ramifications throughout the ecosystem.

#### **2. Human beings are an integral part of all ecosystems.**

- Human activities within ecosystems affect these systems

#### **3. Healthy ecosystems provide many essential services and benefits that sustain and improve human lives.**

- Natural systems maintain a habitable planet by regulating climate and by cycling water, oxygen and carbon dioxide and soil nutrients.
- Natural systems provide human beings with essential services (ecosystem services) that sustain life on Earth: fresh air, clean water, soil and oceans that can produce food.
- People depend on thousands of plants and animals to live their daily lives.
- Biological diversity provides a multitude of natural resources used commercially for food, shelter, fiber, and other products.
- Nature is the primary sources for many common medicines upon which so many of us depend, and is also the likely source for promising new pharmaceuticals that may hold the secret for combating cancers, AIDS, and other threatening diseases.
- Healthy ecosystems underpin healthy human economics and sustainable nature systems support sustainable human communities. Many jobs depend directly on protecting natural ecosystems (fishing, farming, etc.).

#### **4. The human experience requires a connection to nature. These experiences in wild places in our community enrich our lives and inspire our choices for future generations.**

- For all human beings, nature is a place to renew the human spirit and refresh our emotional and mental health. For people of faith, nature is the work of and a connection to a higher power.
- Nature provides wondrous places to play and recreate, to explore, to be creative, to learn and enjoy both as individuals and with our friends and families.
- The beauty and resources of the natural world are national treasures. They help define America's national heritage and character, and provide the nation with valuable and irreplaceable natural resources.
- The variety of life on Earth, its biodiversity, is both essential and inspirational for human existence.

#### **5. Human beings are responsible for dramatic changes to ecosystems at a rate unprecedented in Earth's history.**

- The growth of the human population coupled with the increased consumption of resources by individuals will increasingly impact the planet's finite resources.
- The primary human threats to the environment are global warming, habitat destruction, invasive species, and overuse of individual species.

**6. We have the responsibility to care for the Earth, to leave healthy ecosystems for our families and future generations.**

- Due to the unprecedented changes the human species is causing on the planet, we must often intervene to save wildlife.
- Many decisions involved with caring for the Earth are extremely complex, and must take into account both human and animal needs.

**7. Through informed actions, we can positively impact ecosystems. These actions include:**

- Making appropriate lifestyle decisions.
- Actively participating in public decisions.
- Sharing our knowledge and feelings about wildlife and wild places.
- Supporting conservation organizations, including AZA zoos and aquariums.
- Being "informed" means considering multiple points of view.
- Responsible zoos and aquariums strive to conserve ecosystems and promote care and positive action for the natural world.
- Responsible zoos and aquariums share knowledge, ideas and projects that empower people to take conservation action.
- Responsible zoos and aquariums are active partners in the conservation community and help further conservation efforts worldwide by seeking workable and realistic solutions to conservation problems.
- Responsible zoos and aquariums provide animal and nature experiences that engender a sense of wonder.
- Responsible zoos and aquariums disseminate valuable information about animals and the ecosystems they inhabit.
- Responsible zoos and aquariums model caring by being leaders in animal care.
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- Responsible zoos and aquariums commit to serving diverse segments of human society and provide a forum for exploring and communicating different perspectives concerning the natural world.