

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL ZOO & CONSERVATION BIOLOGY INSTITUTE



Smithsonian

Action & Optimism

The National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute is unique within the Smithsonian family because we have the responsibility of caring for some of the rarest wildlife species on the planet. With that awesome responsibility comes a clear moral and ethical imperative that we stand for nature. Some say we live in the Anthropocene, the age of humans, or that we are in the midst of the 6th mass extinction, unrivaled since the age of dinosaurs 65 million years ago. What we know is this: it took 200,000 years for the human population to reach 1 billion people, and only 200 more to reach nearly 8 billion. Whatever we choose to call it, we humans have made things very hard for wildlife, and they urgently need our help.

Conservation is not a field for pessimists. We choose to focus on solutions, and on how we can take our successes to scale. We have played a major role in reintroducing diverse species like the black-footed ferret, golden lion tamarin, Panamanian frogs, loggerhead shrikes, Bali mynah, Guam rail, Przewalski's horse, scimitar-horned oryx, and there will be many more to come! We have inspired children and guests of all ages and trained and advanced the careers of thousands of conservationists, many of whom have gone on to become global and national leaders in conservation.

In the greater scheme of things, our conservation efforts are still in their infancy, and it's up to us—you, me, and our entire Conservation Team—to lock arms and stand for nature. We are proud of our impact in the areas of conservation science, and in pioneering breakthroughs in animal care. We also recognize that we must increase our investments in improving guest experience, and in providing new, impactful education and learning opportunities across a wide spectrum of audiences. As we move forward, we will seek to effectively deploy all of our resources, including our staff and supporters, guest-facing and behind-the-scenes facilities, field sites and global partnerships to help save species and the ecosystems they require to thrive.

I am extremely proud of the work we do as one Conservation Team in creating a shared legacy of saving species for future generations, powered by an army of partners and supporters who will never accept the abolition of nature and all of its magnificence. Thank you for your interest and support to help save species.

Sincerely,



Steven Monfort

John and Adrienne Mars Director
Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute

Vision & Mission

OUR VISION:

Humankind unites in support of a biodiverse planet where wildlife and nature thrive.

OUR MISSION:

We save species by using cutting-edge science, sharing knowledge and providing inspirational experiences for our guests.



Our Conservation Team

This strategic plan applies to the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute (NZP/SCBI), Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ), Smithsonian Facilities (SF), National Zoological Park Police, and other supporting partners. This collection of staff, students, and volunteers constitutes our "Conservation Team," and collectively we work together to achieve our common mission of "saving species."

Strategy Statement

We are an awesome Conservation Team, ready to solve the immense challenges facing wildlife—in our care and in nature. We work together at our two campuses in Washington, DC and Front Royal, VA, at the Smithsonian's downtown Washington, DC locations, and at field sites around the world, to create and share breakthrough knowledge to save and care for wildlife and to inspire the next generation of conservationists.

Our strategy for positive conservation impact is to prioritize four key areas of our work: Animals, Education & Learning, Guest Experience, and Science. These four categories together are where we must have a profound effect in order for us to play a meaningful role in saving species. This means prioritizing these areas in the coming years, placing them foremost in our conservation work, including our programs, services, research, staffing, and resource use.

Our animals inspire wonder and empathy to help generate support for our work to save species in the wild. Powered by the generous support of our donors, sponsors, members, visitors, volunteers and board members, we seek to empower our millions of visitors to take action, creating ripples of behavioral change to help save the planet.

We leverage our diverse partnership network, including our Smithsonian Mason School of Conservation, to train the next generation of conservationists, and to ensure that successive generations of conservation professionals are ready to carry forward vital work.

We are unique within the zoo and conservation community for our longevity (founded in 1889) and reputation as the world's leading zoo-based conservation biology program. Our value proposition is strengthened by being part of the Smithsonian Institution, which allows us to harness unmatched intellectual and institutional strengths to support us in achieving our mission of saving species.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: Impact Areas & Critical Functions

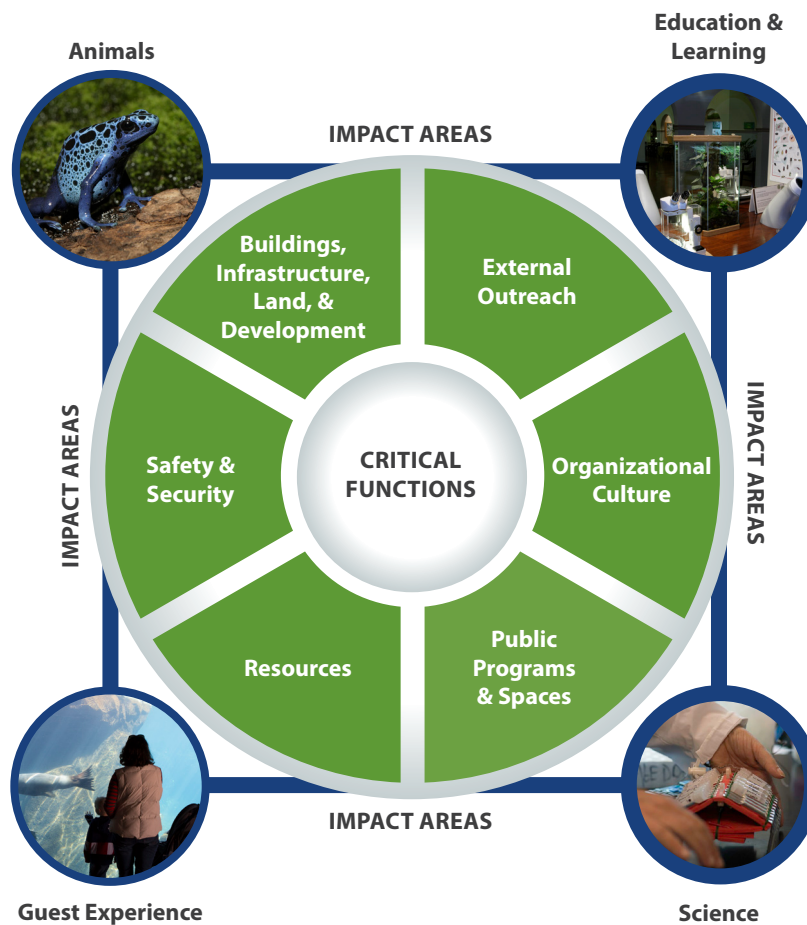
The following sections of this document provide details for each of the four Impact Areas, where we strive to have a positive effect in the world, and the six Critical Functions, our internal efforts that support success in our Impact Areas.

IMPACT AREAS AND CRITICAL FUNCTIONS



This is an over-arching, pan-organization strategy for all Conservation Team members that outlines how we will operate and perform.

1. Each Impact Area is overarching and whole-organizational (NZZP/SCBI, FONZ, and Smithsonian Facilities), and they define how we will focus, operate, and perform. They do not reflect just one organization's responsibility, and no single department within any one of the organizations or teams solely owns any of the Impact Areas or Critical Functions.
2. Each of the visions are intended to be aggressive, yet pragmatic and achievable.
3. Achieving the work will require significant funding, focus, and buy-in.
4. This strategic plan has a five-year timeframe (Jan 2020 through Dec 2025).





IMPACT AREA: Animals

The Conservation Team ensures excellence in animal health and well-being through innovative husbandry, management, housing, and care.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

Our Conservation Team provides holistic, expert care for our animals, increases knowledge of the biology and health of the animals in our care, improves the demographic and genetic sustainability of both captive and wild populations, and shares their passion for saving species with our visitors.

This Impact Area includes

- Animal care, husbandry, management, animal health, species' sustainability, Standard Operating Procedures, ambient environment, habitat design and containment, records, transport, social environment, nutrition, behavior management, and wellness for:
 - Accessioned collection animals
 - Program animals (collection and non- collection)
 - Non-accessioned animals
 - Pest animals (e.g., deer, raccoons)



IMPACT AREA: Education & Learning

The Conservation Team delivers formal, nonformal, and informal education programs designed to teach and inspire diverse audiences—ranging from young children to graduate students, professionals, and practitioners—to care about and take action to save species.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

The Education and Learning Team seeks to develop a passionate global community that celebrates their connection to nature, takes meaningful action to protect it, and inspires others to do the same.

This Impact Area includes:

- Zoo visitors (in-person)
- Virtual Zoo visitors (National and International)
- Pre-K - 12 students and teachers
- Volunteers
- Interns
- Graduate students
- Fellows
- Undergraduates, professionals, and practitioners



IMPACT AREA: Guest Experience

The guest experience for visitors to our Rock Creek campus—before, during and after a visit—includes the Zoo's physical space and staff engagement during a guest's visit, but also critical digital engagements for pre-trip planning and post-trip follow-up. Our Front Royal campus is not open to the public, but we recognize the importance of guest experience there for key stakeholders and visitors, including students, trainees, potential donors and influencers, elected officials, and members of the public. At both campuses, we strive to ensure that all guests experience visits that stimulate an improved understanding and support for our mission. The Guest Experience aspects of this strategic plan focus primarily on the Rock Creek campus.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

The Conservation Team collaborates to transform guests' experiences by actively engaging visitors with our staff, animals, science, and nature-oriented play—with the goal of fostering increased understanding and empathy for the animals in our care and inspiring personal and collective action to save species in nature.

This Impact Area includes:

- **Hospitality:** entry/exit, parking, wayfinding, food, retail, restrooms, comfort and convenience elements, accessibility, and responding to informational requests
- **Workforce:** all staff, volunteers, interns, students, and trainees working at both campuses, especially those who interact with guests
- **Engagement:** viewing animals, animal demos, exhibits, public events/programs, ticketed FONZ events, paid experiences, playgrounds, and digital communications



IMPACT AREA: Science

The Conservation Team conducts cutting-edge research and develops science-based solutions to the world's wildlife conservation challenges.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

A science team that is well integrated internally and collaborates externally delivering high impact science to achieve conservation outcomes. Our science is strengthened and supported by partnerships across the Conservation Team, the wider Smithsonian, and with external organizations to more effectively achieve our mission of saving species.

This Impact Area includes:

- Research that advances the conservation of species in human care and in nature, and our understanding of ecosystem processes, species interactions, and human-animal conflict
- Scientific mentoring and training in animal sciences and ecology
- Disseminating scientific output through publications, books, and public presentations



CRITICAL FUNCTION: Buildings, Infrastructure, Land, and Development

The Conservation Team ensures excellence in animal health care, well-being, exhibits, and welfare to support our mission of saving species, and care provide a safe, secure, and healthy environment that enhances the Smithsonian experience for all.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

The Conservation Team provides appropriate functional spaces for both animals and staff—including animal exhibits, office buildings, labs, land and pastures, fencing, aquatic systems, utilities, roadways, and pedestrian walkways—that effectively support and enable the mission of the organization.

This Critical Function includes:

- Planning, Design and Construction, including key headquarters units, such as Real Estate, Architectural History and Historic Preservation, and Master Planning
- Oversight and code compliance reviews per Smithsonian Directive-410 for all “built environment” projects, with jurisdiction over human health, safety, and welfare
- Facilities Operation and Reliability, Safety Health and Environmental Management, Emergency Management, Business Administration and Technical Services, and Protective Services
- Life Support Systems for the living collections for both terrestrial and aquatic species
- Integrated and responsible environmental and operational management of grounds, land, fields, forests, and streams



CRITICAL FUNCTION: External Outreach

Robust external outreach positions the Smithsonian’s National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute as a world-leading, trusted, and valued zoo and conservation organization focused on understanding and sustaining species in our care, as well as their counterparts in nature. External outreach programs convey information, stimulate thought and conversations, inspire actions, promote virtual and physical visitation, and garner support and resources to realize Conservation Team objectives.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

Conservation Team-led external outreach engages and inspires significantly more people to support nature and our efforts to save species.

This Critical Function includes:

- Traditional media relations, social media platforms, website, video, photos, and images
- Advertising and marketing
- Newsletters/brochures, communiqués/reports, and FONZ Wild.Life magazine
- Public presentations and programs (on- and off-site)
- Branded products, movies, and shows
- Community, member, diplomatic, crisis, and fundraising communications
- Communications policies and procedures



CRITICAL FUNCTION: Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is the “soul” of an organization, reflecting the shared core values and behaviors, and which impacts an organization’s ability to collectively achieve its mission. Our overarching goal is to provide clarity around roles, responsibilities and relationships, and to build an internal culture of respect and professionalism that extends to our interactions with each other, and with our public and partners.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

The Conservation Team exemplifies and maintains the highest standards for positive organizational culture, and leads in encouraging, supporting, and empowering the spread of that culture throughout the organization. This positive working culture is based on a core set of values, including competency, honesty, integrity, trust, reliability, collaboration, transparency, and a laser focus on mission.

This Critical Function includes:

- All employees
- Students
- Volunteers
- Trainees



CRITICAL FUNCTION: Public Programs & Spaces

The Conservation Team actively manages visitor-accessible spaces, public programs, special events and off-site endeavors that provide engaging experiences with animals, staff, and external experts to share knowledge, inspire visitors to value wildlife and habitats, and that enhance guest experience, and ultimately visitation.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

Striking and well-functioning curated spaces and robust public programs enhance guest experience, drive visitation, loyalty, entertain, and most importantly, inspire and convey our organization’s mission of saving species.

This Critical Function includes:

- Concept, design, research, production/ acquisition, and maintenance of permanent and temporary exhibits
- Exhibit interpretive/informational elements for guests
- Multi-use spaces, including Amazonia Gallery, Conservation Pavilion, Theater
- Educational spaces, including classrooms and play areas
- Art (many forms), architecture, horticulture, and landscape design
- Visual look and design elements in the public spaces and for guest amenities
- Creation and management of wayfinding materials (signage, maps, guidebook)
- Partnerships within SI and also outside organizations to create public programs, or to add value to existing Conservation Team public programs
- Festivals, themed days, expert speakers, films, cultural events, book signing events, children/ family focused events and other events



CRITICAL FUNCTION: Resources

The Conservation Team ensures excellence in animal health and well-being through innovative husbandry, management, housing, and care. All of the sources of funding that are needed to achieve success across the Conservation team, and the infrastructure necessary to enable the organization to operate, create, and sustain programs in support of our common mission.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

A revenue and resource management ecosystem that is transparent, strategic, cohesive, and efficient, that enables a high-level of internal customer service, and that enables securing funds for supporting Impact Areas and Critical Functions.

This Critical Function includes:

- Revenue generation, including Federal and Trust funds for staff and operations, professional development, capital and maintenance, and FONZ funds that support Conservation Team goals
- Philanthropy, grants, donations and sponsorships, and other funding from Central Smithsonian
- Revenue from food, retail, ticketed events, space rental, in-kind donations, parking, licensing agreements, and other miscellaneous sources
- Financial management, Human Resources, and Procurement
- Enabling functions (IT, Park Operations, Safety and Security)



CRITICAL FUNCTION: Safety & Security

The Conservation Team works to ensure individual and collective safety and security for guests, staff, volunteers, and animals from any type of risk or danger.

FIVE-YEAR VISION

NZP/SCBI is recognized as a leader in preparing for and managing safety, security and emergencies, fully prepared to respond to day-to-day safety risks and any threats to the safety and security of staff, visitors, volunteers, and animals.

This Critical Function includes:

- Conservation Team
- Protective Services (NZP Police and Office of Protection Services)
- Emergency Management
- Safety, Health, and Environmental Management
- Infrastructure (e.g., fencing, building and grounds, mass notification/evacuation system)
- Procedures (e.g., preparedness, emergency response, active shooter protocol, Code Red and Code Green measures)



Conservation Starts Here

The implementation of this strategy will require significant funding and focus throughout the Conservation Team. The intention is for this five-year organizational advancement process to be visionary and aggressive, but also pragmatic and achievable. Success will require all Conservation Team members to play their part in pushing this work forward proactively, determinedly, and cooperatively.

For the Conservation Team's overall success, these efforts will reach across departments, so that team members share both the efforts and the outcomes.

We see the need to hold ourselves to a higher standard for our own performance, to build on our existing collaborative successes towards achieving deeply impactful conservation work. We know how high the stakes

are. The United Nations' May 2019 report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) shows this clearly. IPBES Chair, Sir Robert Watson says, "The health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever, [but also] that it is not too late to make a difference... Through 'transformative change,' nature can still be conserved, restored and used sustainably."¹

The NZP/SCBI Advisory Board and FONZ Board of Directors play a crucial role in bringing this five-year strategy to fruition. As advisors to the Conservation Team leadership and as ambassadors to the broader world, they bring expertise in organizational management, guest engagement, education and learning, philanthropy, and so much more. They have played

a direct role in helping to shape this strategic direction and will continue to provide guidance to the Conservation Team leadership.

We look forward to their continued support, whether in enrolling new external expertise, in establishing a refined view of guest experience, or in identifying external resources to amplify our Impact Areas. Together we will drive this process forward and redouble our successes in our efforts to save species.

For our part, we of the Conservation Team will rise to the challenge and lead that much-needed transformative change to realize our vision of a biodiverse planet where we all thrive.

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

