

**A Progress Report to the  
Save the Tiger Fund of the  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**

**Prepared by the Dallas Zoological Society**

**May 7, 1998**

**Executive Summary:**

The Dallas Zoological Society (DZS) is pleased to report that it has completed all of the work outlined in its original proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The purpose of the Foundation's grant was to underwrite the cost of researching, designing and partially funding the construction of the new Exxon Endangered Tiger Exhibit. The City of Dallas is funding the majority of the construction costs associated with this project.

On February 9, 1998, the Dallas Zoo officially broke ground on this exciting new exhibit. Construction is now well underway. The new tiger exhibit will be under construction until early 1999 and will open to the public in May, 1999. It is our strong belief that upon completion, this new exhibit will be one of the finest tiger exhibits in the nation.

**Progress Report:**

Following extensive research and a national conference on big cat exhibits in Dallas, DZS requested proposals from the best zoo architects in the United States. After reviewing these proposals, four design firms were selected to participate in design charettes with the Dallas Zoo's tiger exhibit committee. After two-day meetings with each of the four design groups, URSA International of Atlanta, Georgia was selected to design the Exxon Endangered Tiger Exhibit. URSA was selected because of the firm's demonstrated creativity, their sensitivity to tigers as a species, their positive chemistry with the Zoo, Society and Exxon "team," and their willingness to work within a well-defined budget.

URSA elected to hire a local firm, F&S Partners, to help expedite the design process in close consultation with them and to be an on-site liaison with the Zoo. Prior to the signing of the design contract, URSA and F&S made the decision to make F&S the lead architect with URSA's architects serving as primary consultants on the project. The Zoo and Society agreed to this arrangement because of their very positive prior experience with F&S. F&S had helped create the award-winning Jake L. Hamon Gorilla Conservation Research Center at the Dallas Zoo, now considered to be one of the best gorilla exhibits in the world. Once the design contract was signed, URSA and F&S immediately began work on the exhibit's design and embarked upon a detailed site analysis to study storm drainage capacities, the location of current utilities, geotechnical conditions, grades, and any remedial work that needed to be undertaken. The results of these studies were then integrated into the design.

As a part of the design process, URSA and F&S conducted a series of design workshops. Thanks to the input of tiger SSP coordinators Dr. Ron Tilson and Gerald Brady, the Dallas Zoo had already decided to exhibit Sumatran, and if available, Indochinese tigers. As a result, everyone agreed that the exhibit should be Southeast Asian in style and theme. It was strongly recommended that the entire exhibit area should illicit a feeling of being in Southeast Asia, the natural habitat of these tigers.

After considerable discussion, the basic exhibit concept emerged. A long pathway would be developed that would extend into a forested habitat, and two exhibit areas would be created along with two viewing buildings and an indoor holding/animal care building for the tigers. In addition, a detailed interpretive program was developed to include a variety of graphic panels, interactive audio and video devices, and artifacts. The purpose of these interpretive elements is to enhance the visitor experience and to educate them about the biology and behavior of tigers, the ecosystem of Southeast Asia, the interaction of humans and tigers in Southeast Asia, and the importance of supporting global tiger conservation efforts such as NFWF's Save the Tiger Fund.

During the course of the design process, Rich Buickerood, the Director of the Dallas Zoo, asked DZS to award a separate contract to these same architects to design a series of new primate exhibits that would be located next to the new tiger exhibit. Because of the close proximity to the tiger exhibit, everyone agreed that it would be advantageous to have the entire area of the Zoo look the same as opposed to designing these exhibits independent of one another. This would strengthen the Southeast Asian theme and ensure that the entire area of the Zoo appeared more cohesive and immersive. After consulting with representatives from Exxon about this change in how the grant would be used, it was agreed that DZS would pay F&S and URSA \$112,500 to design the new primate exhibits. In return, the City of Dallas agreed to allocate an additional \$112,500 in bond funding toward the construction of the tiger exhibit.

This arrangement greatly expedited the design process of both projects thereby ensuring that both exhibits could be completed by the target date of May of 1999. In addition, during this same time period, the Zoo requested and was given permission by the City of Dallas to use an additional \$575,000 in unrestricted bond funds specifically for the tiger exhibit. This increased the total project budget for the tiger exhibit from \$2,500,000 to \$3,075,000. The project budget for the primate exhibits was set at \$1,000,000.

The architects completed construction documents for both projects in September of 1997. Construction documents were then given to the City of Dallas so that construction bids could be solicited. However, before bids could be solicited, the City required that DZS turn over the portion of the NFWF grant funds that were intended to support the construction of the tiger exhibit. DZS gave the City a check in the amount of \$165,000 for this purpose. Although DZS had not yet requested these funds from NFWF, DZS provided these funds out of its cash reserves.

Following a two month bid process for the construction of these new exhibits, the City was surprised that the bids they received from qualified construction companies were from \$500,000 to \$2,000,000 over the projected cost estimates provided by the architects. As a result, the City was faced with a dilemma. If they re-bid the project, it would delay construction by a minimum of four months thus significantly delaying the opening of the exhibit. In addition, there was no guarantee that the bids would come in lower. In fact, given the state of the construction market, it was likely that the bids might come back even higher. The reason for this scenario is that Dallas' economy has been booming and nearly every quality construction company in the North Texas region has more business than they can handle. This has led to a dramatic increase in the cost of new construction projects throughout the region.

Rather than delay construction and run the risk of even higher bids, the City made the decision to award the construction contract to C.F. Jordan Commercial, a well known and well-respected construction company. The City also agreed to spend an additional \$1,200,000 to construct both the tiger and primate exhibits. In order to fund the increased costs, the City used all of the remaining bond funds earmarked for the Dallas Zoo on these two projects. The cost for both projects, including the funding provided by NFWF, will total \$5,227,025 when they are complete.

In addition, the Zoo made the decision to eliminate one of the two tiger exhibit areas from the scope of the project in an effort to value engineer the project. As a result, one larger exhibit area is now being constructed. All of the other features including the interpretive graphics, viewing structures and the indoor tiger holding/breeding facility are being constructed as originally planned.

Although the Zoo's tiger exhibit committee is disappointed that we will not be able to build the second and smaller exhibit area, we remain confident that the Exxon Endangered Tiger Exhibit will still be an outstanding exhibit. In addition, thanks to the City's decision to provide supplemental funding to the project and to hire C.F. Jordan Commercial, the Exxon Endangered Tiger Exhibit will open as originally planned in May of 1999.

In summary, despite these unforeseen financial challenges, the Dallas Zoo, Exxon, and the Dallas Zoological Society eagerly await opening the new Exxon Endangered Tiger Exhibit. Not only will it be an important tool in the Zoo's efforts to educate the public about tiger conservation but it will also allow the Zoo to play a much more active and significant role in the captive breeding of this beautiful and highly endangered animal.

Thank you again for your support of this important project. If you have questions or would like additional information, please call Michael Meadows at 214-943-2771, extension 331.