

**NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL PARK
ASIA TRAIL ELEPHANT FACILITY
3001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC**

Delegated Action of the Executive Director

November 26, 2004

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996, I approve the concept design plans to construct a new zoo exhibit, called the Asia Trail Elephant Facility, at the National Zoological Park (National Zoo), as depicted on NCPC Map File No. 2.00(38.00)-41489.

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The Smithsonian Institution (SI) has submitted concept design plans for Phase 2 of the project called the Asia Trail, which involves development of a new Asian elephant exhibit. The SI advises that this project will significantly improve wildlife and zoo exhibition management and the need to upgrade the park.

Programmatic conflicts with the preservation of the existing historic elephant structure, the expanded space requirements of the elephant interpretive program, and the results of further architectural and engineering studies have made the initial Asia Trail elephant exhibit site unfeasible. Therefore, the SI has decided to relocate the elephant exhibit and construct a new exhibit and associated facilities at an alternate location at the Zoo in proximity to the Asia Trail project. The submitted new elephant exhibit is proposed to be constructed in an area immediately north of and adjacent to Olmsted Walk, contiguous with Asia Trail elements south of Olmsted Walk approved by the Commission in March 2004. The proposed site for the new elephant exhibit is the current site of the cheetah, zebra, and kangaroo displays, which will be relocated within the Zoo or at the Zoo's Front Royal Animal Facility in Virginia.

The proposed elephant facility would involve constructing an elephant stabling building with indoor exhibit and off-exhibit areas, animal yards and paddocks, elephant trek, a small reproductive research laboratory, class rooms, and associated storage and building mechanical system areas. The exhibit would be built to accommodate a multi-generation herd of eight elephants.

Features of the development would include:

- A 42,500 gross square foot, “T”-shaped, elephant holding building;
- A 38,000 square foot pool-yard and a separate 21,800 square foot holding yard;
- A 250-seat outdoor terraced amphitheater and visitor walkway;
- A pedestrian boardwalk and elevated deck for viewing;
- A pool with barriers for viewing of elephant demonstrations;
- A 800 linear-foot elephant trek;
- New vegetation including Asian-themed and native deciduous canopy trees, planters with sub-canopy trees, and perennials; and
- Rock outcrops, boulders, and grasses to create a lush shaded area.

The project is consistent with the Commission approved master plan, is less than 50,000 square feet in building space area, and would have no adverse impact on land uses or environmental resources of the general site.

The new site is sympathetic to the intention of the Commission approved Asia Trail concept in developing thematic zones for animal species and continues to affirm this approach in the relocated exhibit area. The site has always been an animal exhibit area in the overall Zoo Master Plan. The SI has initiated Section 106 consultation with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office to reflect the change in the revised location for the Asia Trail Elephant Facility. In conformance with the Commission’s Environmental and Historic Preservation compliance procedures, the SI will be completing a project supplemental environmental assessment that is scheduled to be submitted prior to the SI presenting preliminary site and building plans for the new elephant exhibit.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on November 10, 2004, forwarding the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies present.

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP
Executive Director