

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL PARK
ASIA TRAIL, PHASE 2—ELEPHANT TRAIL
3001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C.

Delegated Action of the Executive Director

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996, I approve the final site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d) for the Asia Trail, Phase 2, which comprises renovation of the existing elephant house and development of three new elephant habitat areas, as depicted on NCPC Map File No. 2.00(38.00)-42254.

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The Smithsonian Institution (SI) has submitted final site and building plans for the renovation of the existing elephant house facility and habitats in the north central area of the zoo, directly adjacent to Asia Trail Phase 1, along the Olmsted Walk. The existing Elephant House was built in 1937 and designed by Edwin Hill Clark. The final renovation plans will provide an improved animal exhibition that aligns with the natural behaviors of the elephants as documented by Smithsonian scientists. The project site involves 3.6 acres, with no modification of the Olmstead Walk.

The final plans include the renovation of the existing Elephant House and a small 10,800 square-foot addition located to the northwest of the building. The design provides a variety of elephant habitats connected with visitor, keeper, and animal pathways, a pump and mechanical space building combined with a public restroom building that comprises 2,600 square feet, and a viewing interpretative pavilion featuring 925 square feet of covered space. All total, the construction would account for 42,055 square feet and will be certified in its design towards a LEED® rating of gold level for compliance featuring a green roof strategy. The exposed exterior surfaces of the building will be finished to differentiate new from old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, scale, proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the existing historic property and its environment. The final exterior design material finishes reflect relationships to the original Elephant House, improved material differential through the use of precast concrete, and focus on maintaining key existing detail features on the present building. The final site and building plans have been evaluated by the DC SHPO and a completed Memorandum of Agreement, for Section 106 process documentation, signed on May 22, 2007.

In February 2006, the Coordinating Committee reviewed this project and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated by all agencies participating.

NCPC staff had analyzed Asia Trail Project Phases 1 and 2, in conformance with the requirements of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In December 2003 the Smithsonian Institution prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) with input from NCPC. That document evaluated the use of the existing elephant house and introduction of new habitat areas. Staff concluded the NEPA compliance review with a Finding of No Significant Impact signed by the Executive Director in February 2004 based on adoption of the EA. Staff has determined that the final site and building plans are consistent with the analysis of environmental effects in the EA and the Finding of 2004.

The final design is responsive to the April 2007 Commission action on the preliminary submission as outlined below:

- **Construction Noise Plan:** Before beginning major construction on the project, SI will have a construction noise plan completed and certified by an acoustic engineer to substantiate that the project will comply with DC noise regulations.
- **Best Management Practices:** Plans and project construction activities will adhere to and implement the following practices:
 - Proper maintenance of equipment – the equipment of the contractor and subcontractors is maintained in proper working order so that it does not generate undue or unexpected noise.
 - Communication with the surrounding community – NZP will hold a community meeting prior to the start of construction to review the general scope and schedule of the project with the public, and maintain a website and listserv as a means to communicate with the public any major changes to the project work hours, truck routes, and staging areas.
 - Site configuration – The construction site has been configured so that the majority of activity areas and access are not near the edges of the park, and that staging and laydown areas are within the site, and not near the adjacent residential areas.
 - Re-route truck traffic away from residential streets – The main truck route for this project is via the public entrance to the Zoo, and through Parking Lot B. This reduces the truck traffic through residential areas.
 - Will employ work hour restrictions – Work hours will comply with DC noise regulations.
 - Purchase an approved sound level meter for self-monitoring – The contractor will install as directed by NZP a sound monitor and light indicator in the Elephant House. The light indicator will flash when it is subjected to 80 dBA or above at 4000 Hz. This will allow us to self-monitor and adjust activities as necessary.
 - Additional other noise management activities.

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP
Executive Director