



**For Immediate Release**

## **Los Angeles Residents by 3-to-1 Majority Want LA Zoo's New Elephant Habitat Completed**

**Los Angeles, CA. – January 26, 2009** – Los Angeles city residents by an overwhelming 3-to-1 majority want the Los Angeles Zoo to continue to expand and upgrade its care for Asian elephants with the new Pachyderm Forest project, according to results from an independent polling firm released today.

The results, which come on the eve of a Los Angeles City Council vote Wednesday on whether to continue the project, show 67% of Los Angeles residents believe the zoo should enhance elephant care by finishing the habitat. Pachyderm Forest will house Billy and other Asian elephants, whose future on our planet grow more uncertain each year, in an area larger than what Asian elephants enjoy today at the San Diego Wild Animal Park.

“Los Angeles residents are excited about the Pachyderm Forest and are making it clear they want this habitat completed,” said Connie Morgan, president of the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association. “Not only will it provide Billy with a spacious living area where he will receive exceptional, humane care, but our new habitat will make Los Angeles a global leader in educating our next generation of conservationists on the dangers these magnificent animals face.”

Just 22% of the respondents agreed with the small group of anti-zoo activists who are trying to pressure the council into reversing its 13-2 vote approving the project. After being reminded that LA City voters passed a Zoo Bond Measure, with the expectation that the funds would be used to improve, upgrade and expand animal exhibits to create a more natural, humane and safe environment for all animals, including the elephants, 69% agreed that the City Council should resist a small group of animal activists who seek to overturn the will of LA voters.

Tellingly, a whopping 93% of Los Angeles residents surveyed said they want Billy cared for at a humane facility that is required to meet the high accreditation standards set by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), which the Los Angeles Zoo is required to do. None of the alternative sites the anti-zoo activists propose for Billy are required to meet these standards of accountability, nor are their activities and veterinary facilities certified or monitored by an equivalent professional organization.

“No one can out-love us when it comes to elephants,” said AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy. “The elephant experts are at the zookeepers and veterinarians at the Los Angeles Zoo, who eat sleep and breathe high standards for animal care and welfare. These are the real heroes, who work hard every day taking care of Billy and the other animals.”

Other findings of the survey include:

- Nearly 7 in 10 Los Angeles residents reacted negatively to the hundreds of job losses that would result from shutting down the project in the middle of a deep economic downturn. Through the life of the project as many as 1,000 construction jobs could be lost if Pachyderm Forest is discontinued.
- Another 7 in 10 Los Angeles residents agreed that closing the habitat and shipping Billy to a distant location will deprive local schoolchildren and their families of the opportunity to learn about the threat of extinction facing Asian elephants today. Another 73% agreed the Los Angeles Zoo should build a new elephant habitat as part of its role in teaching wildlife conservation, breeding additional Asian elephants and helping prevent the extinction of the species.
- Eight in 10 residents have a favorable impression of the Los Angeles Zoo, with 3 out of 4 reporting they visited the zoo within the last five years. Another 7 in 10 said they believe zoos pay an important function and should remain open.
- Pachyderm Forest enjoys broad support by race, sex, age, income and political affiliation

The survey was conducted in January by the independent polling firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates, and involved a representative sample of 500 randomly selected Los Angeles city residents.

“These poll numbers show across-the-board public support for the LA Zoo,” said John Fairbank, principal in Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates. “I’ve worked for many candidates, including some members of the City Council, and I can say without a doubt that if Billy and the Zoo were candidates, they would win in a landslide.”

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Source: Greater Los Angeles Zoo Assn., Association of Zoos and Aquariums