



PACHYDERM FOREST: MYTHS AND FACTS

This state-of-the-art Pachyderm Forest was approved 13-2 by the Los Angeles City Council in 2006 after a thorough analysis and discussion, with the goal of building Billy and other Asian elephants a habitat with more roaming room than Asian elephants enjoy at the San Diego Wild Animal Park. Unfortunately, a small group of anti-zoo activists are spreading myths about the zoo, elephant care and Billy to pressure the council into halting this world-class educational exhibit one-third into construction. Here are some of the myths being spread, and facts you should know:

- **MYTH:** *The Pachyderm Forest is a waste of taxpayer money,*

FACT: Actually, ending the project will waste taxpayer money. As the Daily News reported on Jan. 12, Los Angeles County officials confirmed that “the city would have to refund nearly \$5 million within 60 days if it abandons plans” for the exhibit. That will siphon off money that could be used to hire police officers, purchase firefighting equipment, fix potholes and keep libraries open.

The Pachyderm Forest used money from bonds sold to investors--authorized by two measures overwhelmingly approved by voters--and \$5 million in PRIVATE donations. Finally, the nonprofit Greater Los Angeles Zoo Assn. is committed to a financing plan in which NO TAXPAYER MONEY will be needed to pay the bond interest.

- **MYTH:** *Too many elephants have suffered and died prematurely at the L.A. Zoo. A recent study has proven that life in zoos is cutting short elephants' lives.*

FACT: The Los Angeles Zoo environment doesn't kill elephants, or any animal for that matter, and no animals are made to suffer. The zoo's fundamental mission is providing animals with the best care possible, which includes full-time veterinarians providing a level of medical care animals won't get at “sanctuaries.” The vast majority of animal deaths at the zoo stem from medical conditions related to old age, just as they do in the overall human population.

No study conclusively proved zoos cut short elephant lives. The study cited is being used by partisan groups that, to color the facts, are relying on antiquated data from foreign zoos that do not have to meet the rigid standards zoos must meet in the United States.

- **MYTH:** *Billy constantly bobs his head up and down, a sign of psychological distress.*

FACT: UCLA neurologist Dr. Jeff Bronstein, who specializes in movement disorders, just put Billy through an evaluation. He concluded that “from the perspective of a neurologist with over 15 years of experience evaluating patients with movement disorders, I observed nothing that would suggest that Billy is being kept in an inhuman manor.”

- **MYTH:** *Now is the time to close the elephant exhibit and to send Billy to a sanctuary.*

FACT: A “sanctuary” that is hundreds of miles from Los Angeles and charges \$200 an individual would deprive working families and 20,000 schoolchildren a month chance to meet Billy and learn why Asian animals are endangered. After visiting the Pachyderm Forest site, famed animal expert Jack Hanna called it “a model for humane elephant care that will educate generations to come on the threats Asian elephants face in the wild.”