

## **Cost of snubbing Los Angeles voters on zoo project now projected at \$17 million and counting**

*Faulty elephant studies cited by small group wanting to pull plug on Billy's new home*

Los Angeles – December 16, 2008 – Scrapping the Pachyderm Forest now under construction at the Los Angeles Zoo would not only defy the wishes of voters who overwhelmingly approved expanding and enhancing the zoo's facilities, it would also cost a minimum of \$17 million, a new analysis by the non-profit Greater Los Angeles Zoo Assn. shows.

Citing faulty studies, a small group is currently attempting to pressure the Los Angeles City Council to pull the plug on the forest exhibit, designed as one of the nation's largest areas replicating an elephant's natural environment. Should that happen, the analysis shows the following consequences will occur:

- Within 60 days, the city must drain more than \$9 million from its general fund, enough to pay the starting salaries of approximately 150 new police officers for an entire year. The funds also could be used to purchase critical firefighting equipment, fill potholes, keep libraries open and provide other critical services to Los Angeles residents.
- Construction would halt on the project, resulting in immediate and future construction job losses. Approximately \$3 million spent to date at the direction of voters would effectively be written off should the site never be developed, leaving a 6-acre hole in the middle of the zoo. Alternatively, additional costs would have to be incurred to convert the area to some other use.
- Another \$5 million in private donations from everyday citizens earmarked for Pachyderm Forest would have to be returned.

Pachyderm Forest's first resident will be Billy, a Malaysian elephant beloved by Los Angeles children. Billy's fans include more than 20,000 schoolchildren a month who visit him on school field trips at no charge.

Larger than the living area now enjoyed by either Asian or African elephants at San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park, Pachyderm Forest will allow elephants to roam an area the size of Dodger Stadium with 24-hour state-of-the-art monitoring so they remain safe and healthy.

A small group had made clear their goal is to ship Billy out of Los Angeles to sites that are inaccessible and unaffordable to all but our wealthiest residents, with no guarantees Billy will ever receive the level of care that he gets now at a first-class zoo. One of the

zoo's most important missions is to make sure working families in Los Angeles can affordably experience the wonders of nature.

Antiquated studies from foreign zoos that don't adhere to Association of Zoos and Aquariums standards are being cited. Those studies splice and dice data to conveniently fit agendas, and are irrelevant to the level of care Billy receives.

The nonprofit Greater Los Angeles Zoo Assn. is committed to structuring a plan that will fund additional amounts needed for Billy's new home. Pachyderm Forest grew out of two bond measures—CC and A—approved by 79% and 65% of voters, respectively, to provide funds to expand and enhance the Los Angeles Zoo. In 2006, the City Council subsequently voted 13-2 to build the Pachyderm Forest.

In addition to housing Billy and other elephants, the forest will be devoted to conservation and educational exhibits showing the dangers Asian elephants face today in the wild. Pachyderm Forest will make Los Angeles a leader among zoos in providing a spacious, healthy environment for elephants, something zoos across the country are expected to emulate in the coming years.

Los Angeles citizens who want to preserve Billy's new home, favor fiscal responsibility and want to make sure their voice is heard are encouraged to visit [www.billyshome.com](http://www.billyshome.com) for information on how they can help.

###

Contacts:

Laura Stegman  
Laura Segal Stegman Public Relations  
310-470-6321 (office)  
310-991-2835 (cell)

Source: Greater Los Angeles Zoo Assn.