



IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS

March 5, 2010

Via Fax

Mr. Joe Montisano, CEO
Central Florida Zoo
3755 U.S. 17
Sanford, FL 32771

Dear Mr. Montisano:

We share your sorrow at the tragic death of the elephant, Mary, and extend our condolences to your staff and volunteers and the greater Sanford community. You are now faced with an important decision regarding the future of your zoo's lone surviving elephant, Maude, as well as the broader issue of keeping elephants at the Central Florida Zoo.

In the past, the Central Florida Zoo indicated that when one of the elephants passed away it would consider relocating the surviving elephant. We hope you agree that keeping Maude alone is not an option because elephants are such gregarious animals and social bonds are critical to their well-being. And acquiring another elephant would leave the zoo still non-compliant with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) elephant standards that require a minimum of three female elephants. The zoo should now exercise the option of sending Maude to a spacious, natural-habitat elephant sanctuary, rather than relocating her to another zoo, where she would be relegated to yet another small and unnatural zoo display that does not meet her complex needs.

IDA is very concerned that if Maude is sent to another zoo, she might not successfully integrate with the elephants at that facility. Zoos are sometimes forced to repeatedly move an elephant when integration has failed, or, worse, the elephant is segregated from others and made to live alone. As you know, moving an elephant even under the best conditions is stressful, and if Maude is to be moved, it should be to a suitable, permanent facility. In fact, Maude has the best chance of integrating with other elephants at a sanctuary because the large space afforded the elephants better facilitates safe and successful introductions. Unlike most zoos, which have extremely limited elephant display areas, a sanctuary can give Maude the time, space and constant, 24-hour care she needs for a smooth transition.

No doubt you will be under pressure from the AZA elephant taxon advisory group (TAG) to place Maude in another zoo. Unfortunately, the TAG does not put an individual elephant's welfare first and instead places these animals in zoos based on institutional need (i.e., to fill an open slot) or for breeding. The TAG has demonstrated that it is more than willing to place elephants in unsuitable situations. For example, it currently is working with the San Antonio Zoo to place an older female Asian elephant at that facility, even though the zoo is constructing a new attraction that will feature African elephants, which will force the relocation of any Asian elephants. Further, the zoo's elephant exhibit lacks the physical space necessary to safely introduce elephants.

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When working with the TAG, the Central Florida Zoo has the right to refuse its recommendations. At least one zoo has refused a TAG recommendation because the selected facility was deemed inappropriate for its elephant. As an older female, Maude is no longer integral to the TAG's breeding objectives. You can and should request that she be designated "surplus," allowing you the freedom to send her to a facility based on her individual needs.

The Central Florida Zoo has the right to send Maude to an elephant sanctuary, if it decides this is the best place for her. The nation's two leading elephant sanctuaries, The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee and the PAWS Sanctuary in California, have set the bar for elephant care by providing natural-habitat environments with vast, complex spaces for elephants and large social groups from which elephants can choose their own companions, forming lasting bonds. Both sanctuaries provide high quality veterinary care and treatment, and the elephants are managed through positive-reinforcement methods only and never subjected to the threat of physical punishment.

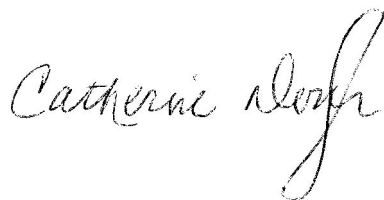
I urge you to fully explore the sanctuary option and suggest that you and your elephant staff visit a sanctuary to see firsthand the more natural and fulfilling life that Maude would have there. No zoo can provide similar space and natural conditions, or the opportunity for elephants to choose their own life-long companions. Eleven AZA-accredited zoos have sent elephants to sanctuaries, including zoos in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Detroit. No AZA-accredited zoo that has sent its elephant to a sanctuary has ever lost accreditation, though this red herring is always raised in these situations.

IDA cares deeply about elephants and we are hopeful that you will make the right decision for Maude. She has spent her life on public display, the last 27 years at the Central Florida Zoo. Relocation to a sanctuary is the most reasonable and humane choice for her, one that we are sure the public will support, as it will give Maude room to roam, the company of other Asian elephants, and the highest quality of life possible. All of the elephants in sanctuaries have come from captive situations, like Maude, and all have fully made the transition to living in a larger and more natural environment.

Finally, IDA would also like to request that the Central Florida Zoo publicly release Mary's necropsy report, as it is a matter of public interest.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Doyle". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Catherine Doyle
Director, Elephant Welfare Campaign
323-301-5730