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Minnesota Zoological Garden

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<http://www.mnzoo.org/>

AT A GLANCE

- A world-class conservation organization that is home to nearly 5,000 animals —many endangered
- 485-acre campus with 125 buildings and related facilities
- Nearly 1.5 million guests in FY23
- The state’s largest environmental educator, serving over 78,861 participants in FY23
- More than 94,276 free admissions to Minnesotans who qualify for public assistance programs through the “Free to Explore” admission program in FY23

PURPOSE

The mission of the Minnesota Zoological Garden (Minnesota Zoo or Zoo) is ***to connect people, animals, and the natural world to save wildlife.***

The Minnesota Zoo is an expansive environmental marvel with a campus including 125 buildings, 6.5 miles of roads, and 4.75.5 miles of pathways within nearly 500 acres of picturesque woodland and aquatic landscapes. Housing nearly 5,000 animals—including many threatened and endangered species from around the world—the Zoo is the state’s largest environmental learning center and a leader in wildlife conservation.

The Zoo provides engaging and hands-on learning and play opportunities for children to experience Minnesota’s native environment through amenities like the Hanifl Family Wild Woods and Woodland Adventure. Zoo guests can also learn about the natural world around the globe while visiting cutting-edge exhibits such as Discovery Bay, 3M Penguins of the African Coast, Medtronic Minnesota Trail, Tropics Trail, Northern Trail, Wells Fargo Family Farm, and Russia’s Grizzly Coast. Opened in 2023, the 1.25-mile Treetop Trail brings guests up to 32 feet above the ground and provides a year-round, accessible journey into nature for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. These experiences are designed to be intentional about building a bridge for collectively appreciating the treasures that Minnesota’s natural environment has to offer, as well as building awareness of global conservation issues.

The Zoo is ardently committed and actively engaged in saving wildlife and protecting the ecosystems upon which they rely in Minnesota and around the world. Minnesota Zoo experts use science, in partnership with other state and federal agencies, to focus on the reintroduction of the state’s most imperiled butterflies and the restoration of the prairieland they need to survive. Additional current conservation initiatives focus on threatened aquatic turtles, restoring native endangered freshwater mussels, and reintroducing wild bison herds onto Minnesota lands. Its international conservation efforts through the renowned black rhino project, reintroduction of Asian wild horses, and championing tiger conservation for decades led to the Minnesota Zoo’s recognition as a catalyst for wildlife conservation.

As a leading environmental education institution, the Minnesota Zoo has long offered a wide variety of expertly created educational and interpretive programming designed to build understanding and respect for nature and empower students to become change agents for protecting wildlife and wild places. In FY23, 92,592 students enjoyed educational programming offered through in-person and virtual community programs, school/youth group field trips, and classes. Also, over 3,490 in-person and virtual Summer Zoo Camp participants received age-appropriate professional education, animal encounters, special zoo experiences, active games, and tours in FY23.

Leveraging its proven environmental education model, the Minnesota Zoo continues to reimagine and offer new educational opportunities. The Zoo’s “Show Us Your Mussels” campaign inspires middle and high school students to create original digital media campaigns to educate the public about the importance of native mussels, their

impact to water quality, and what actions are needed to ensure their survival. Last Fall, the Minnesota Zoo officially launched Wild Wonders Preschool to connect nearly young children with nature by encouraging their innate affinity for the outdoors through dramatic play, art, stories, songs, and animal encounters.

The Minnesota Zoo continues to prioritize diversity, equity, access, and inclusion initiatives so that a zoo experience is never limited due to economic, cultural, physical, geographic, or other barriers. The “Zoo Explorers Fund” provides financial assistance to under-served schools throughout the state so that all students can experience the awe of a close encounter with a wild animal. Also, in FY23, 94,276 guests accessed the Zoo through the “Free to Explore” program, which ensures Zoo admission is free for Minnesotans who qualify for public assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, MinnesotaCare, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

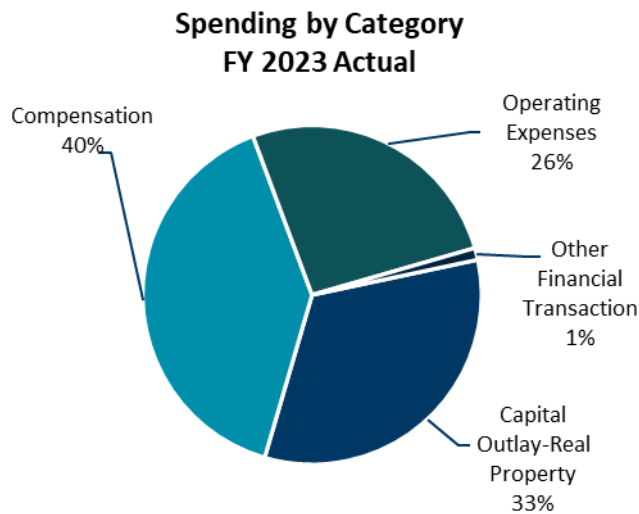
Furthermore, the Zoo offers a variety of programs which serve communities with special and differing needs. Recent examples include: American Sign Language (ASL) days at the Zoo, Dream Night for children with chronic healthcare needs, early access to special events for those requiring a less crowded and stimulating environment, autism camps, as well as a 2018 launch of MNZoo4All, an app to help people with autism and sensory-processing disorders navigate the Zoo in ways that best meet their needs. The Zoo bridges additional access barriers by providing maps of the campus in ten languages, ASL interpreters, sighted guides, tactile and virtual tours.

BUDGET

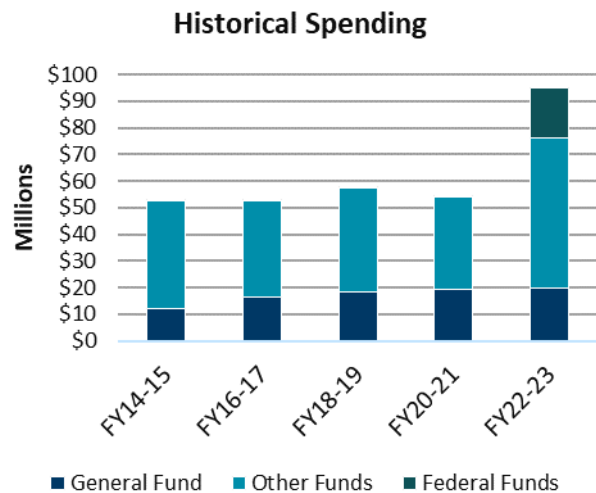
We are deeply committed to utilizing our resources with the utmost efficiency and effectiveness, a commitment that extends beyond the State’s investment in our mission. Our financial foundation is robust, supported by a dynamic blend of earned revenue, private investments, and corporate contributions. One of the most vital components of our success is the incredible support we receive from our dedicated volunteers. In FY23, we rebuilt the Minnesota Zoo’s volunteer core to 557 individuals who donated over 25,000 hours - a commitment we value at over \$747,300.

The Zoo’s primary source of revenue is earned from admissions, memberships, food and gift concessions, programs, events and facility rentals. In a typical year, the State’s investment in our operating budget through the General Fund and the Natural Resources Fund represents about one-third of the Zoo’s operating revenue. The Zoo also receives funding from the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund, federal grants, and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund dedicated to specific projects and programs. Charitable contributions to our nonprofit partner, the Minnesota Zoo Foundation, also support the Zoo’s mission. During FY21-23, the Zoo received additional state appropriations and federal grants to support the Zoo’s recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The State’s investment is key to maintaining the sustainability of our business. Investment from the General Fund ensures our ability to withstand the unanticipated expenses inherent in running a large campus with many outdoor areas, such as extreme weather events or fluctuations in the economy that can negatively affect our attendance.



Source: Statewide Integrated Financial Tools System (SWIFT)



Source: Consolidated Fund Statement

Because the Zoo cares for nearly 5,000 animals and a 485-acre campus regardless of whether the Zoo is open for admission, it has significant fixed operating costs. In a typical year, 68 percent of the Zoo's budget is allocated to personnel compensation and related expenses. Another five percent (approximately \$1.85 million) covers fixed utility costs. As state personnel costs and utility expenses continue to rise, the Zoo's fixed costs increase correspondingly.

STRATEGIES

In the fall of 2023, Zoo leadership, staff and Boards embarked on a strategic planning process emerging with a renewed commitment to mission and a strategic imperative to once again "reimagine zoo;" this time to broaden our reach and access by "welcoming all into nature." This new strategic direction emerged and has proven transformational with the opening of the Treetop Trail in July 2023, the Zoo's largest reuse project to date—repurposing the shuttered monorail and transforming it into the world's longest elevated pedestrian loop. Inviting guests into an immersive nature experience, the Treetop Trail has been a resounding success---and a superconductor for accelerating the Zoo's strategic vision. Our strategic and long-range plan intersect directly around advancing our nature vision to ensure fulfillment of our mission.

- Advance Animal Collection and Save Wildlife: Ensure the Minnesota Zoo's Animal Care, Health, Conservation and Behavior model remains exemplary and is industry leading.
- Champion People and Culture: Ensure the Minnesota Zoo is a desirable place to work and that the Zoo's expert team reflects Minnesota's diverse communities and is living its mission and values.
- Create a Nature Centered Guest Experience: Create the nation's leading nature zoo experience that is guest-centric, robust, accessible and welcoming to all.
- Build Animal and Nature-forward Long-Range Plan: Build/implement animal and nature-forward long-range plan for physical facilities , campus operations.
- Drive Revenue Generation for Growth: Maximize diverse revenue portfolio, optimize ROI, and increase business intelligence/acumen.

RESULTS

Type of Measure	Name of Measure	Previous Value	Date	Current Value	Date
Quantity	Zoo Attendance	1.25M	FY23	1.46M guests	FY24
Quantity	Free to Explore – <i>eliminating financial barriers</i>	210,276 guests	FY23	248,000	FY24
Results	Conservation Impact: Over the past several years, the Minnesota Zoo has been coordinating an endangered freshwater turtle program that focuses in large part on the conservation of wood turtles. Current wood turtle conservation efforts conducted by the Minnesota Zoo and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) include a head starting program.	30 wood turtle hatchlings cared for	September 2022	57 wood turtle hatchlings cared for	September 2024
Quality	Association of Zoos and Aquariums Accreditation	1 of 215 accredited Zoos and Aquariums of the 2,800 animal exhibitors in the United States	FY23 Re- accredited	Maintained Accredited	FY24

Performance Measure Notes:

Attendance: Attendance is a crucial element in ensuring our long-term financial health and the effectiveness of our conservation message. We monitor attendance figures meticulously on a daily basis, understanding that these numbers are influenced by a variety of factors, such as weather conditions, marketing efforts, ticket prices, and broader economic trends. Although we can't control these external variables, our responsibility lies in crafting an exceptional experience for every guest who walks through our gates.

A positive guest experience is not merely a matter of satisfaction; it is a key driver of repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations. When our visitors leave with a sense of wonder and fulfillment, they are more likely to return and to spread the word, directly boosting future attendance. This cyclical pattern of increased visitation fuels our ability to invest in new exhibits, enhance conservation programs, and expand our educational outreach.

Conservation: The conservation impacts include increased numbers and healthy populations of endangered species in the Zoo's care; increased rearing and reintroductions of endangered butterflies; a growing rearing and release program for state-threatened freshwater turtles; increased engagement with partners in the field (in situ initiatives) and recognition of the Zoo's work by professional partners, peers and other stakeholders. Outreach

programs like Show Us Your Mussels get local students involved in the Zoo's conservation work and generate new educational materials.

See Minnesota Statutes Chapter 85A (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=85A>) for an overview of the Minnesota Zoo's purpose, organization and authority.

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Forecast Base	
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
<u>Expenditures by Fund</u>						
1000 - General	9,809	9,809	13,384	14,162	13,582	13,582
2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue	9,782	23,414	25,064	31,000	23,032	24,790
2050 - Environment & Natural Resources	390	389	413	580		
2110 - Zoos Lottery In Lieu	330	190	255	405	255	255
2301 - Arts & Cultural Heritage	2,033	1,998	2,002	2,000		
2403 - Gift	3,986	13,484	6,412	6,810	1,420	1,390
3000 - Federal	7,329	76	194	187	148	72
3015 - ARP-State Fiscal Recovery	5,877	5,618				
5000 - Master Lease			200	800		
Total	39,536	54,978	47,924	55,944	38,437	40,089
Biennial Change				9,353		(25,342)
Biennial % Change				10		(24)

Expenditures by Program

Minnesota Zoo	39,536	54,978	47,924	55,944	38,437	40,089
Total	39,536	54,978	47,924	55,944	38,437	40,089

Expenditures by Category

Compensation	20,984	21,878	26,559	28,639	26,122	26,960
Operating Expenses	17,917	14,415	17,935	19,750	12,315	13,129
Grants, Aids and Subsidies	49	7				
Capital Outlay-Real Property		18,058	2,958	7,555		
Other Financial Transaction	586	620	472			
Total	39,536	54,978	47,924	55,944	38,437	40,089

Total Agency Expenditures	39,536	54,978	47,924	55,944	38,437	40,089
Internal Billing Expenditures	106	124	147	129	125	125
Expenditures Less Internal Billing	39,430	54,854	47,777	55,815	38,312	39,964

Full-Time Equivalents

214.26	259.52	286.63	286.39	256.45	256.76
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(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Forecast Base	
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
1000 - General						
Balance Forward In				605		
Direct Appropriation	9,809	9,809	13,989	13,557	13,582	13,582
Balance Forward Out			605			
Expenditures	9,809	9,809	13,384	14,162	13,582	13,582
Biennial Change in Expenditures				7,928		(382)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				40		(1)
Full-Time Equivalents	124.49	114.71	147.72	135.57	129.35	129.35

2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue

Balance Forward In	11,462	16,812	12,085	9,177		
Receipts	15,046	18,360	22,158	21,823	23,032	24,790
Internal Billing Receipts	92	138	135	125	125	125
Transfers Out			2			
Balance Forward Out	16,725	11,758	9,177			
Expenditures	9,782	23,414	25,064	31,000	23,032	24,790
Biennial Change in Expenditures				22,867		(8,242)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				69		(15)
Full-Time Equivalents	3.52	33.63	104.08	77.75	112.20	113.49

2050 - Environment & Natural Resources

Balance Forward In	1,081	1,072	703	283		
Direct Appropriation	391			297	0	0
Cancellations	20		7			
Balance Forward Out	1,062	683	283			
Expenditures	390	389	413	580		
Biennial Change in Expenditures				214		(993)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				27		(100)
Full-Time Equivalents	2.90	3.25	2.55	3.24		

2110 - Zoos Lottery In Lieu

Direct Appropriation	330	190	255	405	255	255
Expenditures	330	190	255	405	255	255
Biennial Change in Expenditures				140		(150)

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base	
					FY26	FY27
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				27		(23)
Full-Time Equivalents	1.39	1.67	1.99	2.55	2.43	2.43

2301 - Arts & Cultural Heritage

Balance Forward In	133		2			
Direct Appropriation	1,900	2,000	2,000	2,000	0	0
Balance Forward Out		2	0			
Expenditures	2,033	1,998	2,002	2,000		
Biennial Change in Expenditures				(28)		(4,002)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				(1)		(100)
Full-Time Equivalents	8.71	11.96	14.61	12.94		

2403 - Gift

Balance Forward In	5,721	9,790	2,625	1,147		
Receipts	8,031	6,319	4,934	5,663	1,420	1,390
Balance Forward Out	9,766	2,625	1,147			
Expenditures	3,986	13,484	6,412	6,810	1,420	1,390
Biennial Change in Expenditures				(4,249)		(10,412)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				(24)		(79)
Full-Time Equivalents	13.07	13.30	14.79	53.24	11.67	11.38

3000 - Federal

Receipts	7,329	76	194	187	148	72
Expenditures	7,329	76	194	187	148	72
Biennial Change in Expenditures				(7,024)		(161)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				(95)		(42)
Full-Time Equivalents	0.46	0.94	0.89	1.10	0.80	0.11

3015 - ARP-State Fiscal Recovery

Balance Forward In		5,618				
Direct Appropriation	11,495					
Balance Forward Out	5,618					
Expenditures	5,877	5,618				

Minnesota Zoological Garden

Agency Financing by Fund

(Dollars in Thousands)

	Actual FY22	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimate FY25	Forecast Base FY26 FY27
Biennial Change in Expenditures				(11,495)	0
Biennial % Change in Expenditures				(100)	
Full-Time Equivalents	59.72	80.06			

5000 - Master Lease

Receipts			200	800	
Expenditures			200	800	
Biennial Change in Expenditures				1,000	(1,000)
Biennial % Change in Expenditures					(100)

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	Biennium 2026-27
Direct				
Fund: 1000 - General				
FY2025 Appropriations	13,557	13,557	13,557	27,114
Base Adjustments				
Minnesota Paid Leave Allocation		25	25	50
Forecast Base	13,557	13,582	13,582	27,164
Fund: 2050 - Environment & Natural Resources				
FY2025 Appropriations	297	297	297	594
Base Adjustments				
All Other One-Time Appropriations		(297)	(297)	(594)
Forecast Base	297			
Fund: 2110 - Zoos Lottery In Lieu				
FY2025 Appropriations	405	405	405	810
Base Adjustments				
All Other One-Time Appropriations		(150)	(150)	(300)
Forecast Base	405	255	255	510
Fund: 2301 - Arts & Cultural Heritage				
FY2025 Appropriations	2,000	2,000	2,000	4,000
Base Adjustments				
One-Time Legacy Fund Appropriations		(2,000)	(2,000)	(4,000)
Forecast Base	2,000			
Dedicated				
Fund: 2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue				
Planned Spending	31,000	23,032	24,790	47,822
Forecast Base	31,000	23,032	24,790	47,822
Fund: 2403 - Gift				
Planned Spending	6,810	1,420	1,390	2,810
Forecast Base	6,810	1,420	1,390	2,810
Fund: 3000 - Federal				
Planned Spending	187	148	72	220
Forecast Base	187	148	72	220
Fund: 5000 - Master Lease				

(Dollars in Thousands)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	Biennium 2026-27
Planned Spending	800			
Forecast Base	800			
Revenue Change Summary				
Dedicated				
Fund: 2000 - Restrict Misc Special Revenue				
Forecast Revenues	21,823	23,032	24,790	47,822
Fund: 2403 - Gift				
Forecast Revenues	5,663	1,420	1,390	2,810
Fund: 3000 - Federal				
Forecast Revenues	187	148	72	220
Fund: 5000 - Master Lease				
Forecast Revenues	800			