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P.J. the sea lion to leave Seneca Park Zoo

Male California sea lion will join new exhibit in South Carolina

Rochester, NY — April 27, 2015 —The Zoo's male California sea lion, P.J., will soon leave Seneca Park Zoo for Riverbanks Zoo & Garden in Columbia, South Carolina, as part of a recommendation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP) for this species. The move is expected to take place next week. Three other sea lions, Marina, Lily and Boomerang, will remain at the Zoo.

P.J. was born at the Zoo in June 2013 to female sea lion Marina, who was found stranded on a Los Angeles County beach along with Lily. They were rehabilitated at the Marine Mammal Care Center at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, California, and came to the Zoo in March 2011. Boomerang was also found stranded along the California coast and deemed non-releasable by National Marine Fisheries Service. He lived at the Mystic Aquarium before coming to the Zoo in May 2015.

Zoo Director Larry Sorel notes that the move supports P.J.'s future breeding potential as he continues to mature by providing more suitable social dynamics for both him and the three sea lions remaining at the Zoo. "Boomerang, the adult male sea lion, will now be able to function as a breeder without a younger male causing conflict," he says. "This helps maintain the genetic diversity of the California sea lion population in conservation care."

P.J.'s new habitat at Riverbanks Zoo & Garden will open in June as part of Destination Riverbanks, a new expansion and development project. Sea Lion Landing is a replica of San Francisco's Pier 39 where many sea lions live today.

"The sea lions are a guest favorite and an important part of the work the Zoo does to care for rehabilitated animals that can no longer survive in their natural range," says Zoo Society Executive Director Pamela Reed Sanchez. "We will miss P.J. but are proud that he has inspired thousands of guests as an ambassador for his relatives in the wild."

The sea lions reside in the *Rocky Coasts* section of the Zoo and can be viewed from multiple locations, including an indoor, underwater viewing gallery. Plan a visit this weekend to see the sea lions in action and say farewell to P.J. before he travels to his new home in South Carolina.

Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.