



ZOOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION  
OF AMERICA

Advocate. Educate. Conserve.

# STRATEGIC LONG-RANGE PLAN 2023-2026



# Zoological Association of America Strategic Long-Range Plan 2023-2026



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## Board of Directors

**Holly Hunt, Chair**

African Safari Wildlife Park

**Betsey Brewer Bethel, Vice Chair**

Southwick's Zoo

**Kayte Hogan, Treasurer**

Zooworld

**Marica Woodard, Secretary**

Montgomery Zoo & Mann Wildlife Museum

**Jim Andelin**

Metro Richmond Zoo

**Dr. Barbara Baker**

**Judy Domaszek**

Wildwood Wildlife Park

**Michael Fouraker**

Fort Worth Zoo

**Mike Kerr**

Nova Wild

**Susan Kleven**

Frank Buck Zoo

**Dr. Eric Trager**

Animal World & Snake Farm Zoo

## ZAA Staff

**Kelly George, PhD, Executive Director**

**Meg Lampert, Administrative Manager**

**Sarah Haskins, Administrative Assistant**

# Letter from the Chair of the Board

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Dear colleagues,

When ZAA unveiled its first Strategic Long-Range Plan in 2018, we charted a promising new path for our organization by outlining our overarching ambitions and goals for the coming years. Despite the unforeseen challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, I am proud to say that, thanks to the support of ZAA's staff and members, we have made many incredible accomplishments.

However, just as your needs and interests shifted in the half-decade prior to the release of ZAA's first Strategic Long-Range Plan, we recognize your current needs and interests are likely not what they were in 2018. ZAA is also a much larger organization than it was five years ago, due in no small part to the achievements of the first Strategic Long-Range Plan. This past August, ZAA's board of directors convened with Dr. George in Charlotte, North Carolina, for a two-day workshop to scheme, dream, define, refine, tweak and toil over a new Strategic Long-Range Plan. Informed by your responses to this past summer's member survey, this document incorporates many of the overarching ambitions and goals first defined in 2018 while introducing exciting new objectives and philosophies.

Just like its predecessor, this Strategic Long-Range Plan is not an immortal text designed to guide ZAA for decades to come, nor is it immune to modification; it is a living, breathing document subject to changes in its environment. The board of directors will use your feedback to make adjustments as needed or requested in the short term, and, in a few years, this document will reach the end of its lifespan and be replaced by a new Strategic Long-Range Plan that addresses the needs of its time.

This was a true team effort. I wish to thank our members for sharing their perspectives and expertise through the survey; my fellow board members for translating the survey results into an action-oriented plan; and, of course, ZAA's hard-working staff members—Dr. George, Meg Lampert and Sarah Haskins—for their unwavering dedication to anything and everything ZAA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holly Dand".



# Letter from the Executive Director

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Dear ZAA Membership,

It was a true pleasure to work with the Board of Directors during a 2-day workshop to create this 3-year strategic plan based on membership survey input. The engagement and dedication to ZAA by its members and board is really inspiring, and I'm so honored to be the Executive Director of such an amazing organization!

The first highlight of the plan is the simplification of ZAA's Mission and Purpose. We believe this straightforward messaging offers a clear description and direction of our organization. Second, I would like to highlight the focus areas of the plan: Advocate, Educate, and Conserve. These focus areas are in essence who we are as an organization and as individual facilities and members. These areas have become the pillars that underpin everything we do.

You will also note the transparency of the specific actionable items and measurable outcomes for each of our goals and objectives. This is to ensure that we have an accounting of our successes and can identify areas for improvement as we progress. The exciting thing of note here is that our committees have been explicitly incorporated into this strategic plan, offering opportunities for member engagement and input on how to specifically achieve the associated objectives.

So, on behalf of the ZAA Administrative Office, we look forward to working with our ZAA community as we initiate our strategic plan.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karyn [Last Name]". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

# Mission Statement

The Zoological Association of America (ZAA) promotes responsible management, conservation, and propagation of animals through professional standards in husbandry, animal welfare, safety, and ethics.



## Purpose

ZAA consists of a wide range of members and accredited facilities including publicly and privately funded facilities, nonprofit organizations, and individual members. ZAA organizations provide educational programming designed to help the public connect with wildlife and understand the vital importance of conservation. In addition, ZAA members and accredited facilities make significant contributions to global conservation through reintroduction programs, rescue efforts, and rehabilitation work around the world.

## Objectives

ZAA strives to:

**Advocate** – proactively support our members, animals, visitors, and industry.

**Educate** – provide professional development and community outreach.

**Conserve** – promote conservation and awareness of all wild things.



# ZAA History

## **International Society of Zooculturists (ISZ)**

In 1987, Ron Blakely, then the Director of the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas, who was also a co-founder of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), invited animal professionals from both the public and private sectors to meet at the zoo and propose the creation of an organization that would deal more personally with “animals only” related issues and concerns, without the distractions of marketing, graphics, gift shops, etc. A need for such an organization was identified by all present and thus the “International Society of Zooculturists” was formed.

## **United Zoological Association (UZA)**

In 2000, professionals representing publicly and privately owned animal collections met to discuss problems that were not being addressed by other organizations. As a result, the United Zoological Association (UZA) was formed.

## **Zoological Association of America (ZAA)**

In 2003, ISZ and UZA became sister organizations – ISZ was for individuals and UZA was for facilities. In February 2005, ISZ and UZA combined to form the Zoological Association of America (ZAA.) ZAA’s mission is to promote responsible ownership, management, conservation, and propagation of animals in both private and public facilities through professional standards in husbandry, animal care, safety, and ethics.





# ZAA's Focus and Direction

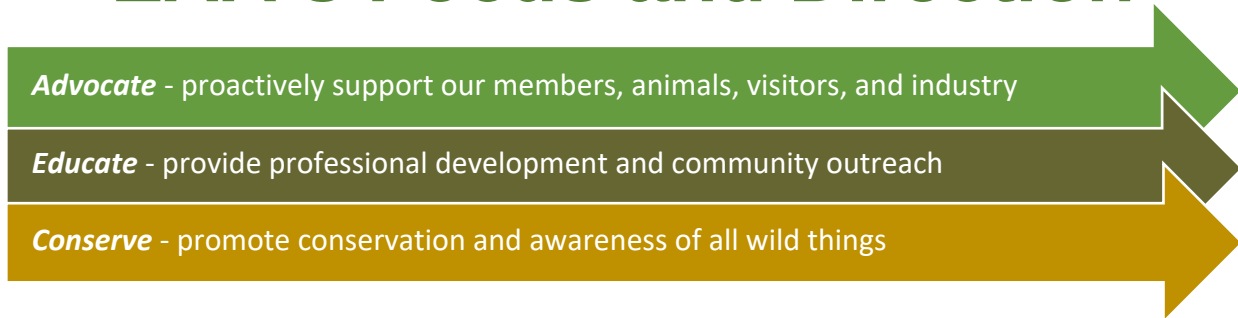


Figure 1 ZAA's Focus and Direction

## ZAA's Focus and Direction

ZAA's focus is to *advocate, educate, and conserve*, directing its efforts both internally within the organization and industry and externally with the community at large.

### Advocate

ZAA advocates in multiple ways and contexts. A primary example is the legislative efforts conducted at the federal and state levels to monitor and respond on behalf of our members and the industry to proposed bills and issues. In-person visits to Capitol Hill meeting with staffers and representatives enhance these legislative efforts and aid in the recognition of ZAA as a reputable zoological accrediting organization.

The ZAA also strongly advocates for our animals, maintaining high standards of animal welfare, safety, and care through our accreditation process. ZAA's standards are kept current with the latest advancements in animal welfare science and animal management through the expertise of our organizational committees.

Additionally, the ZAA advocates for its visitors and members by supporting efforts for safe and memorable experiences and career opportunities.



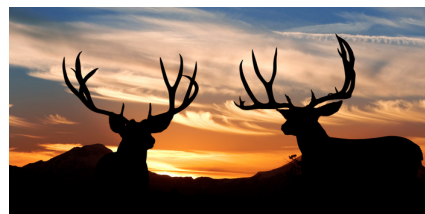


## Educate

The ZAA educates in a variety of efforts to enhance the knowledge base of our membership. These efforts include the opportunities for networking and idea sharing at conferences and mid-year meetings, various workshops providing additional training in many different aspects of the zoo industry, and the provision of scholarships to attend these events. The ZAA is also nationally and internationally recognized for the professional development webinar series produced on a weekly basis, offering a platform for a variety of internal and external experts to share their understanding, ideas, and practices with our community.

## Conserve

The ZAA has at its core the emphasis to conserve. High standards of animal care, welfare, safety, and ethics are recognized throughout the ZAA accreditation program. Conservation efforts are supported through project management, financial contributions, scientific research efforts, as well as collaboration with field projects.



# Overarching Ambitions and Strategies

## **Advocate**

### *Code of Conduct Committee*

The Code of Conduct Committee provides oversight and direction to the ZAA member codes, assuring organizational ethics and professionalism.

### *Government Affairs Committee*

The Government Affairs Committee, working side-by-side with ZAA's Government Affairs consultant, advocates for our members as the ZAA responds to both state and federal bills and issues.

### *Membership Committee*

The Membership Committee enhances our community by providing a multi-level membership structure and consistency in the processing of membership applications.

### *Public Relations and Marketing Committee*

The PR/Marketing Committee advocates for the ZAA, members, and industry by providing professional and engaging marketing materials and social media content.

### *Safety & Security Committee*

The Safety & Security Committee supports ZAA members through training and guidance during times of challenges and emergencies.

## **Educate**

### *Animal Training Committee*

The Animal Training Committee educates the ZAA community in training philosophy to create best practices and animal-trainer relationships.

### *Conference Committee*

The Conference Committee creates fun and engaging venues for the continuing education and networking of ZAA members and conference participants.

### *Education Committee*

The Education Committee offers scholarship opportunities for attendance at educational workshops and training and creates educational materials for public outreach.

### *Professional Development Committee*

The Professional Development Committee provides continuing education for the zoological community, expanding knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of our industry.

## **Conserve**

### *Accreditation Committee*

The Accreditation Committee ensures the commitment to high standards and practices of animal care and wellbeing.

### *Animal Management Program (AMP)/Conservation Committee*

The AMP/Conservation Committee gives direction to species conservation efforts through animal management programs (AMPs), monetary support for research, management programs, and training.

### *Animal Welfare Committee*

The Animal Welfare Committee strives to maintain relevant and high standards of animal wellbeing to ensure the animals conserved by ZAA facility members are assured optimal positive welfare through guidance and education.

# Advocate

<p><i>Goal: Provide optimal support to our accredited facilities, members, visitors, and the community.</i></p>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Measurable Outcomes</b>
<p><u>Code of Conduct Committee</u> Maintain high standards of conduct to assure organizational ethics and professionalism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine member code of conduct.</li> <li>• Review and maintain SOP for responding to submitted concerns.</li> </ul>	<p>Member acknowledgment of professional code via membership renewal.</p>
<p><u>Government Affairs Committee</u> Establish ZAA legislative recognition at the federal and state levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish quarterly visits to Capitol Hill.</li> <li>• Create “toolkit” for how to engage with your state representatives.</li> <li>• Obtain ZAA observer privileges at CITES Animal Management Meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase legislative recognition of ZAA.</p>
<p><u>Membership Committee</u> Better define the current multi-level membership structure for zoological and aquarium professionals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine SOP for membership application process.</li> <li>• Promote a membership drive.</li> <li>• Membership brochure</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in memberships.</p>
<p><u>PR/Marketing Committee</u> Create ZAA brand recognition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new branded marketing materials.</li> <li>• Review and maintain SOP for social media posts.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in social media presence. Website analytics for benchmarking.</p>
<p><u>Safety and Security Committee</u> Sustain a safe environment for staff, animals, and visitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize safety training workshops.</li> <li>• Create helpful resources to encourage safe practices.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase participation in safety training workshops.</p>

*Figure 2 Advocate: Goal, Objectives, Action Items, and Measurable Outcomes*



# Educate

<i>Goal: Deliver relevant up-to-date resources.</i>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Measurable Outcomes</b>
<p><u>Animal Training Committee</u> Provide resources to the ZAA community on a variety of training philosophies including animal/trainer relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create quarterly magazine column featuring behavior.</li> <li>• Organize animal training workshops.</li> </ul>	<p>Measurement of engagement in magazine column authorship.</p> <p>Participation in workshop opportunities.</p>
<p><u>Conference Committee</u> Create fun and engaging venues for continuing education and networking opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide exhibitors with opportunities to share their expertise and products to conference participants.</li> <li>• Organize and coordinate midyear and annual conference to promote scientific advancements and collaborations.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in exhibitors at annual conference.</p> <p>Increase in conference participation, both presenters and attendees.</p> <p>Increase in participant networking satisfaction score.</p>
<p><u>Education Committee</u> Provide scholarships and produce resources to promote educational programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and maintain SOP for awarding scholarships.</li> <li>• Produce a webinar on tips for promoting educational programs.</li> <li>• Update and maintain educational resource materials.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in number of scholarships awarded.</p> <p>Establish baseline for future measurement of webinar engagement.</p>
<p><u>Professional Development Committee</u> Generate content to enhance the professional development of ZAA members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to produce weekly webinar series.</li> <li>• Review and maintain SOP for webinar production.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in webinar attendees.</p> <p>Train additional hosts and committee members.</p>

*Figure 3 Educate: Goal, Objectives, Action Items, and Measurable Outcomes*

# Conserve

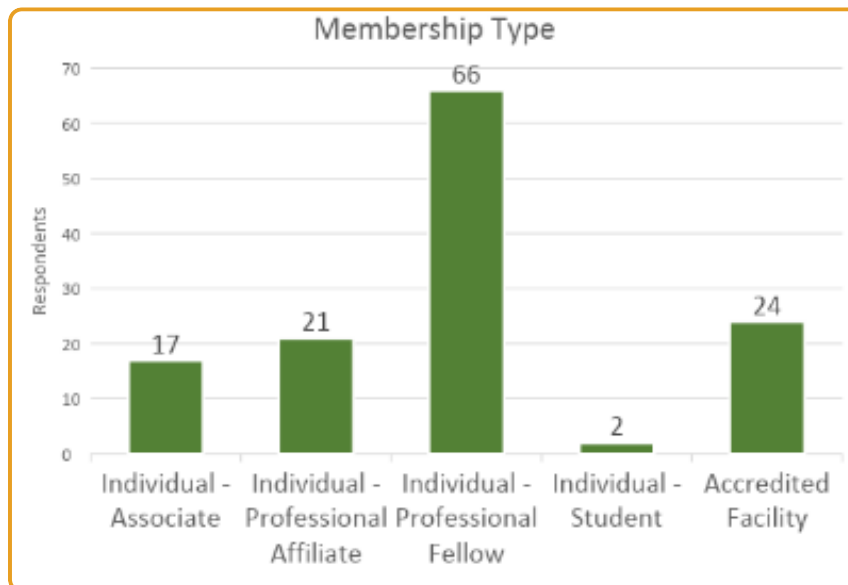
<p><i>Goal: Increase number of accredited facilities, increase number of AMPs and conservation efforts, and continue to improve animal welfare.</i></p>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Measurable Outcomes</b>
<p><u>Accreditation Committee</u> Increase the number of ZAA accredited facilities while maintaining consistent inspections and high standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamline accreditation processes.</li> <li>• Maintain consistent inspection and accreditation processes.</li> <li>• Educate membership on importance of accreditation.</li> </ul>	<p>Reduce average cycle time from submission to decision.</p> <p>Increase in the number of accredited facilities.</p>
<p><u>AMP/Conservation Committee</u> Increase AMPs and species conservation efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue studbook training.</li> <li>• Add additional AMPs.</li> <li>• Increase participation in AMPs.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in AMPs.</p> <p>Expand the national and international recognition and credibility of ZAA as a conservation organization.</p>
<p><u>Animal Welfare Committee</u> Uphold ZAA's commitment to animals in our care by striving to maintain welfare standards aligned with current scientific knowledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and recommend animal welfare standards.</li> <li>• Produce and maintain resource bank for member access to current animal welfare materials.</li> <li>• Provide guidance and education to members on animal welfare.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase member access to animal welfare resource bank.</p> <p>Increase presentations, webinars, and education on animal welfare.</p>

*Figure 4 Conserve: Goal, Objectives, Action Items, and Measurable Outcomes*

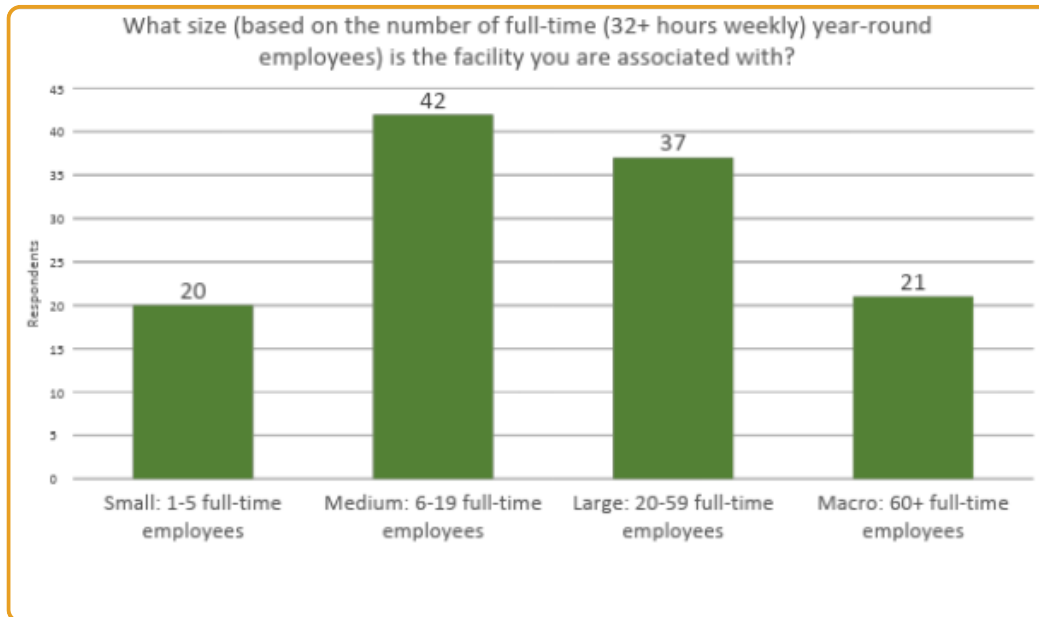
# Appendix

## 2023 Membership Survey Results

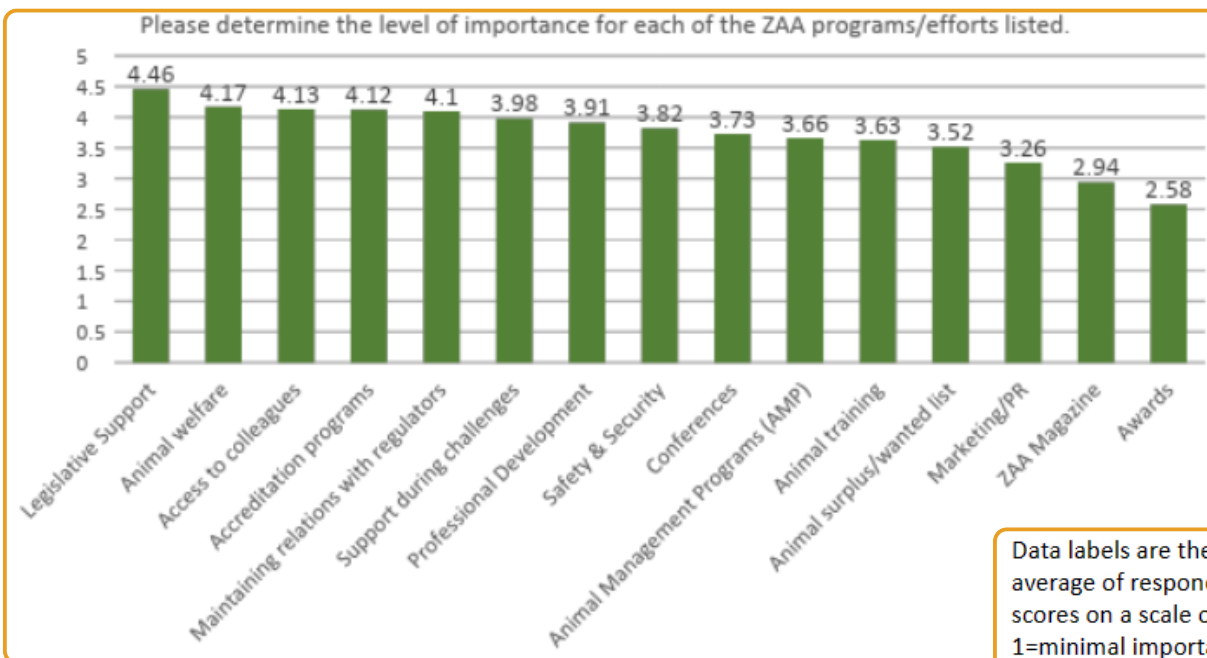
### Membership Survey Results – Respondents (n=130)



# Membership Survey Results – Respondents (n=130)



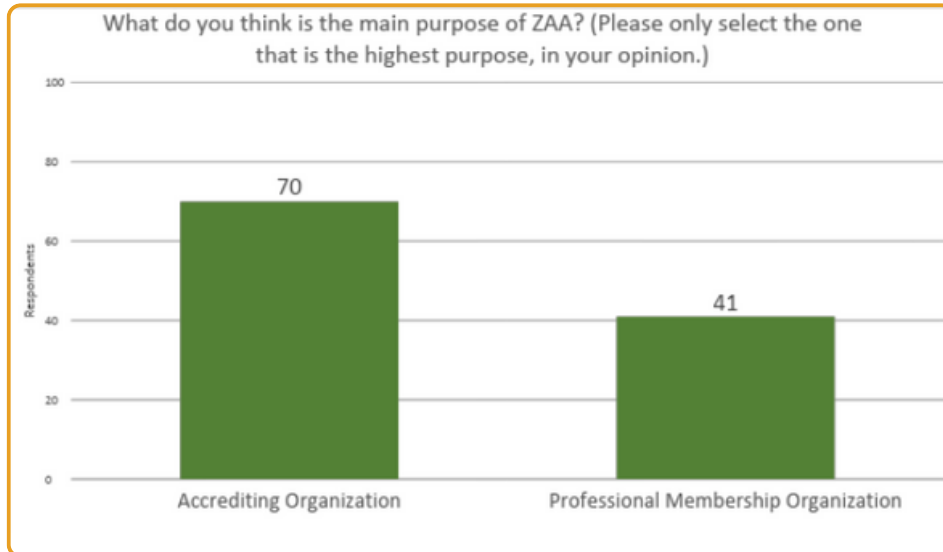
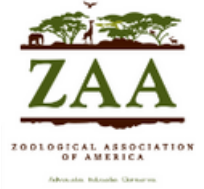
## Member Survey Results - Membership



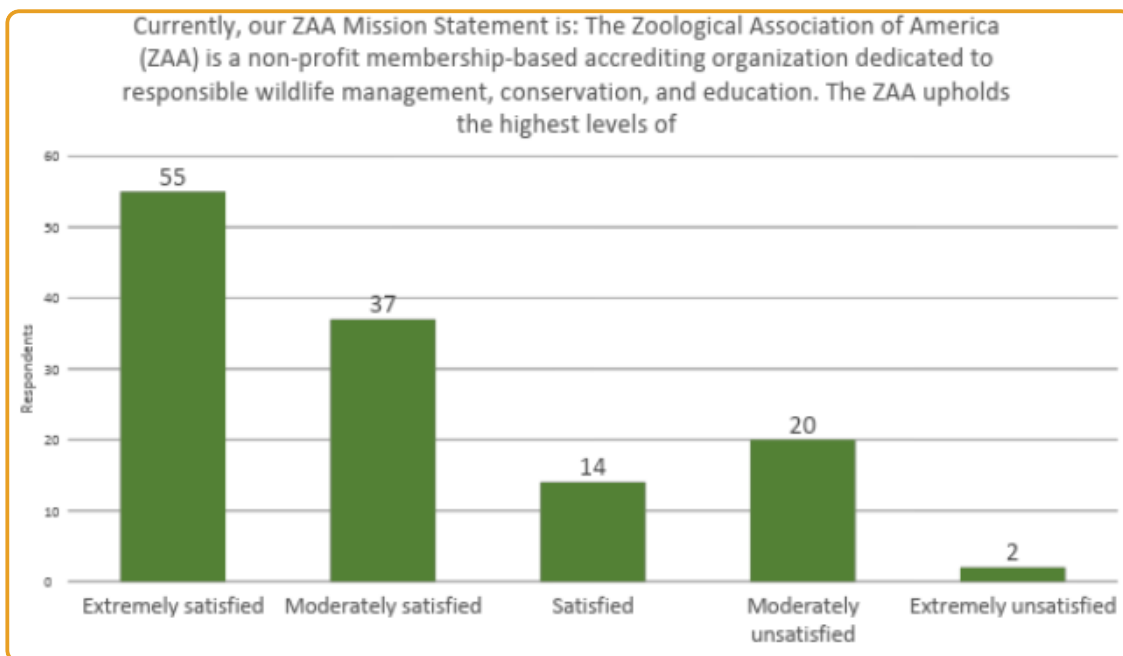
Data labels are the average of respondents' scores on a scale of 1=minimal importance to 5=maximum importance



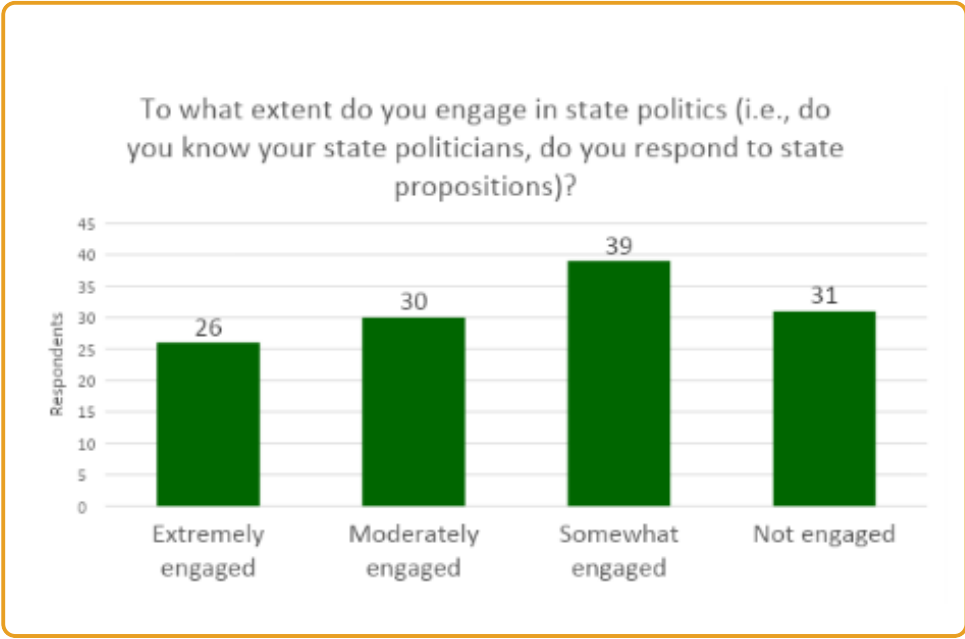
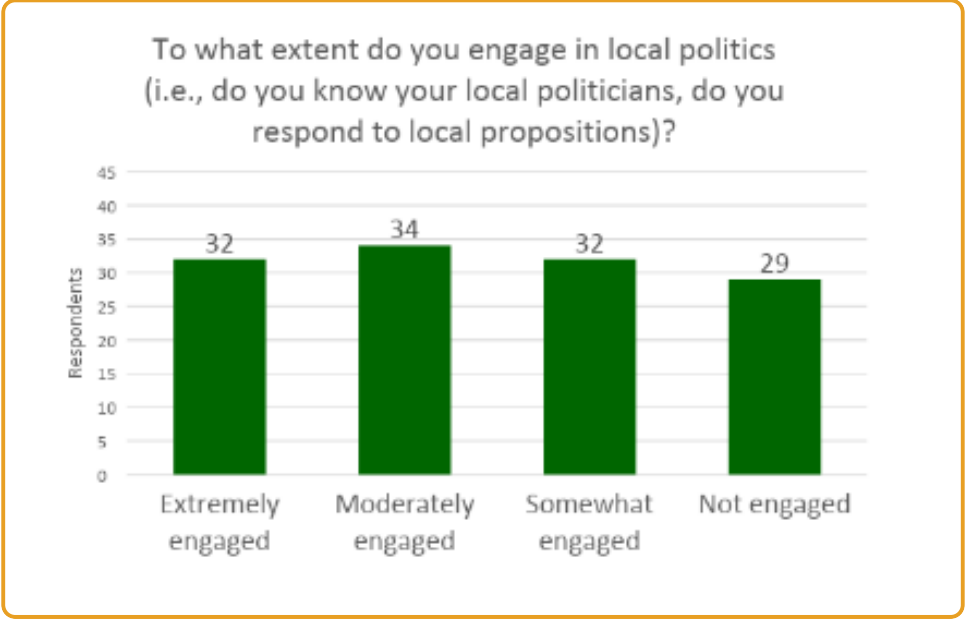
# Member Survey Results – ZAA’s Purpose



# Member Survey Results – ZAA’s Mission



# Member Survey Results – Legislation



# Member Survey Results – Strategic Focus



Data labels are the average of respondents' scores on a scale of 1=minimal effort to 5=maximum effort

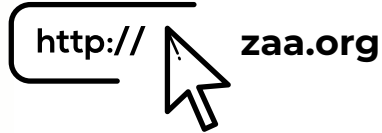


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## Zoological Association of America

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### 2023 GRANT RECIPIENTS



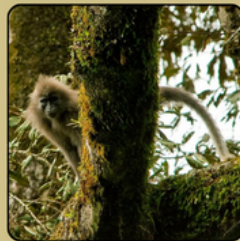
#### Jemma University, Ethiopia

Spatial Ecology of the Endangered Beisa Oryx  
in Omo National Park, Ethiopia



#### Mbeya University of Science & Technology

SARKERT- Saving Highland Mangabey from  
Extinction Risk in Tanzania



#### Biodiversity Conservancy Nepal

Integrating camera traps for critically endangered  
Chinese pangolin



#### Mt. Suswa Conservancy, Kenya

The Protection and Conservation of Threatened  
Harrison's Giant Mastiff Bat



#### BirdLife Zimbabwe

Secretary Bird Research and Survey

#### Niabi Zoo/ University of Dubuque

Invertebrate and ichthyofaunal diversity across  
protected and altered riparian habitats in Paraguay