Green Tales

Utah’s Hogle Zoo’s Path Towards Sustainability

By Liz Larsen

On behalf of Utah’s Hogle Zoo in Salt Lake City, Utah, we are excited to welcome the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) “greenies” for the Annual Conference in September. For those who have not visited in a while, you are in for a surprise. After 10 years of capital improvements, the Zoo has transformed, providing us with several opportunities to demonstrate our commitment towards a more sustainable future. When visiting, we invite you to take a closer look at some of our green features.

Green Buildings – In 2009, the Animal Health Center opened as a LEED Gold facility. With a conference room and offices, the building is a state-of-the-art animal hospital, with a lab and ample quarantine units. The design team was able to utilize the former hospital building walls, expanding the footprint with local materials. The most significant feature of this building is its energy consumption. Although larger in size, the building uses about half the power of the former hospital.

In 2012, administrative functions were consolidated under one roof, with the opening of the Conservation Resource Center (CRC). Another LEED Gold building, the CRC’s claim to fame is its spectacular building envelope. This reduces temperature exchange with the outside – letting the advanced heating and cooling system perform optimally, using less energy.

Green Power – Taking advantage of our western sunshine, we have partnered with Blue Sky, a renewable energy program of Pacific Power, to install three large solar arrays on our major rooftops. Sixty 10.8kw photo voltaic panels are on the elephant barn, 90 20kw panels are on the Animal Health Center, and 85 21.25kw panels have been installed on the most recently completed administration complex. As technology has improved, so has the capacity of each installation. Each array is net-metered, allowing us to feed energy we do not use back into the grid.

Green Landscapes – Minimizing wasteful use of water has been an intentional aspect of the master plan, the majority of the Zoo’s landscaping has been converted to water wise plantings – only one larger patch of grass remains. The area is affectionately named “Mossy’s Carpet”, named after our grounds foreman, who is fairly protective of this last bit of turf. Through our landscape efforts, and elimination of most of the antiquated dump-and-fill ponds, and through utilization of advanced filtration systems, the Zoo has reduced water use by 65 percent since 2002.

Green Team – At the heart of the Zoo’s movement towards sustainability is the many staff-engagement programs led by the Zoo’s Green Team. Committed to advancing sustainability in our operations, this team of multi-departmental advocates is continually improving the Zoo’s recycling efforts, promoting alternative commuting strategies, and engaging with our community. Delegates will see the Green Team in action, working with a Green Brigade of volunteers, as we strive for Zero Waste at the Annual Conference Icebreaker.

Green City – Salt Lake City has launched many progressive programs of which delegates should take advantage. The City has several fantastic ethnic and up-scale restaurants, many of which are our sustainability partners in the City’s e2 Business Program. If you want to sightsee at your own pace, try out a GreenBike, the City’s bike-share program. Regardless of your interests, we hope that you enjoy your time at the Zoo and in the City while benefiting from the many green initiatives in practice.

Liz Larsen is the Conservation Director at Utah’s Hogle Zoo.