SeaWorld® San Diego in San Diego, Calif., has been a global leader in marine animal care and welfare, education, conservation, research and rescue for more than five decades. While guests enjoy all of the world-class animal shows, exhibits and education programs at SeaWorld, behind the scenes there is a mission—one that has continued since the park’s inception—to care for the environment and the animals beyond the park’s borders. SeaWorld continues to embrace initiatives that address today’s most pressing environmental challenges in the areas of waste, water and food.

Waste reduction strategies are constantly reevaluated looking for opportunities to reduce or eliminate waste. In 2011, SeaWorld eliminated the use of plastic bags in the park’s gift shops. Guests can now buy a paper bag or reusable bag when purchasing items from gift shops. A portion of these proceeds are donated to conservation efforts by Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute (HSWRI) and the SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund. SeaWorld also eliminated all polystyrene tableware and flatware in its restaurants in 2013. In all, more than 8 million individual pieces of tableware and cutlery were shifted to more eco-friendly and sustainable materials. The installation of hand dryers has reduced paper towel waste by almost 65 percent since 2013. Lastly, the use of “right sized” trash can liners resulted in reducing plastic used by about 20,000 pounds since 2013.

Since 2008, SeaWorld has engaged in a variety of water savings approaches in the park to meet state and local water reduction targets. In 2015, SeaWorld implemented a saltwater flushing system in its newest restroom replacement located near Shamu Stadium. The conversion has resulted in over 1.5 million gallons of water saved annually. In addition, the park purchased pathway concrete deep cleaning devices which reuse water, saving more than one million gallons of water annually. Other water saving strategies include...
installation of more drought-tolerant plants, computerized irrigation controllers, low-flow nozzles and mulching landscaped areas to conserve soil moisture.

As for energy conservation, SeaWorld installed four electric vehicle charging stations for guests to use for free, encouraging the use of energy efficient vehicles. SeaWorld has undergone major retrofits over the last few years to replace most lighting fixtures within the park, back offices and parking lot with LED or other energy saving bulbs.

Pre-consumer food scrap recycling continues to be one of the greatest success stories of SeaWorld’s conservation efforts. Collecting an average of one ton of food waste a day and sending that to the local greenery for composting keeps that material out of the landfill and is redistributed as nutrient rich soil for San Diego residents.

Since 1996, the park has received San Diego’s Recycler of the Year or Director’s award 19 times and is a nine-time recipient of the prestigious State of California Waste Reduction Awards program.

Conservation Award

Brazilian Conservationists Receive Cincinnati Zoo’s 2016 Conservation Award

Each year, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden in Cincinnati, Ohio, invites several of the world’s leading conservationists to participate in its Barrows Conservation Lecture Series and presents one of the speakers with the Zoo’s Wildlife Conservation Award. Legendary conservationists Dr. Suzana Padua and Dr. Claudio Padua are this year’s recipients and were recognized in April when they were in Cincinnati to speak to a standing-room-only audience at the Zoo.

The Paduas’ 30 years of conservation work in Brazil started with an effort to save black lion tamarins from extinction and includes co-founding IPÊ Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (IPÊ), a nonprofit organization that works for the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development in the Atlantic Coastal Forest region of Brazil. IPÊ projects benefit endangered species and the people who live around the protected areas where IPÊ works. The aim is to raise local peoples’ awareness to the importance of conservation and offer viable alternatives that integrate social and environmental needs.

“It is an honor to host Suzana and Claudio Padua and to present them with the Cincinnati Zoo’s Wildlife Conservation Award. The most significant thing about their work is that, from the start, the Paduas understood that effective species conservation requires the support of communities. They helped residents in the areas surrounding the tamarins’ forest home understand that tamarin conservation not only preserved the Atlantic Forest, already very much threatened, but also improved their own lives,” said Cincinnati Zoo Director Thane Maynard.

The list of conservationists who have been honored with the Zoo’s conservation award annually since 1993 includes Jane Goodall, the first to receive the award, Ted Turner, John Ruthven and many other internationally-known figures.