

March 31, 2016

***CONFIDENTIAL***

Baird Fleming, DVM, Zoo Director  
The Honolulu Zoo  
151 Kapahulu Avenue  
Honolulu, HI 96815-4096

Dear Dr. Fleming:

As you know, at its meeting in Omaha, Nebraska on March 19-21, 2016, the AZA Accreditation Commission voted unanimously to deny the accreditation of the Honolulu Zoo. In making its decision the Commission concluded that, at present, the institution does not meet AZA accreditation standards in a number of key areas. Additionally, the Commission believes that the number and nature of the issues are such that they cannot be resolved in one year or less.

We know that the animal collection at the Honolulu Zoo is being well cared for by a staff of very dedicated professionals under your leadership. In addition, the Commission is encouraged by the amount of work that has been done by you, your staff, and your governing authority in preparing for the zoo's accreditation review and in efforts made thus far to address the issues identified during the inspection process. However, the lack of sustained leadership at the Honolulu Zoo as evidenced by a turnover of five directors in five years, and insufficient financial support by the City/County and Honolulu Zoo Society, have resulted in three recurring five-year AZA accreditation cycles of underachievement. The Mayor's proposed FY 2017 budget includes increased support for both Zoo Operations and Capital Planning, but has yet to be adopted by the City Council. You also indicated that contract renegotiations with the Honolulu Zoo Society emphasizing fundraising and outlining each organization's area of responsibility, authority, and obligation, is ongoing. The Accreditation Commission believes that completing these actions, in combination with enacting your strategic plan to make the Honolulu Zoo the most recognized and impactful conservation organization in Hawaii, will take more than one year to yield outcomes.

Denying accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums now will provide sufficient time for the Honolulu Zoo to demonstrate sustained directorial leadership, productive collaboration between the City/County governing authority and Zoo Society, and consistent financial support.

**Appeals Process:** If you wish to appeal the decision of the Accreditation Commission, a request for appeal may be filed with the AZA Executive Committee in writing within thirty (30) days of the date of this letter. If an appeal is filed, the Executive Committee must decide within forty-five (45) days of its receipt whether to grant the appeal. If an appeal is granted, it will be heard by the AZA Board of Directors at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The request for appeal should be sent to the Executive Committee in care of the AZA office, 8403 Colesville Road, Suite 710, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

**SSPs and Animals On Loan:** If you choose not to submit a request for appeal, you should begin notifying every SSP in which you are a participant of your change in membership status, as well as those AZA-accredited institutions from which you now have animals on loan. If you do intend to submit a request for appeal these notifications can be withheld until a decision on the appeal has been made.

**To Reapply:** Please note that following denial of accreditation, an institution may not reapply for accreditation for at least one year, and after all issues cited on the List of Concerns have been addressed. The earliest date you may submit an application is March 1, 2017.

Please don't hesitate to contact me, AZA Executive Director Kris Vehrs, or Vice President of Accreditation Programs Denny Lewis if you have any questions, or need assistance of any kind. Be assured that the AZA Board of Directors and the Accreditation Commission support your efforts and stand ready to work with you in assuring that, under your dedicated leadership, the Honolulu Zoo is well positioned when it next makes application. We all look forward to the time when AZA accreditation is achieved once again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chuck Wikenhauser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chuck Wikenhauser  
Chair, Accreditation Commission [October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016]

cc: The Honorable Kirk Caldwell, Mayor [Enclosure: Accreditation Report]  
Steve Burns, Chair, AZA Board of Directors  
Kristin L. Vehrs, Executive Director  
Denny Lewis, Vice President, Accreditation Programs  
Accreditation Commission