

Dear colleagues,

As we embark on the holiday season, a time for reflection and gratitude, I am pleased to look back on the accomplishments of the AZA Elephant Strategy in 2023. These achievements were made possible by our supportive AZA community, engaging in thoughtful conversations and strategic problem-solving. Since the approval of the AZA Elephant Strategy in July, we have navigated challenges and witnessed continued success in 2023. A few recent highlights include:

- AZA welcomed Sharon Joseph and Norah Fletchall to the team, supporting the implementation of the elephant strategic plan in 2024. They will collaborate with AZA staff, the Elephant TAG, and elephant holders to reach our short-term goals and establish a sustainable system to achieve our long-term goal where all elephants thrive within AZA.
- A list of talking points was distributed to elephant holders, emphasizing the AZA community's commitment to elephants, the paradigm shift, strategic priorities for thriving populations, and outlining the next steps in the strategic plan.
- AZA welcomes the African Elephant as the 39th SAFE species program, approved by the Wildlife Conservation Committee. This achievement aligns with our strategic plan, combining in-situ and ex-situ efforts to advocate for African savanna and forest elephants. The program, led by Niki Kowalski and Corey Neatrour, will work on developing strategic goals and objectives for their three-year program plan.

The work continues! As we move forward, short-term goals for 2024 include:

- Creating centralized resource/expertise lists accessible to all AZA holding facilities.
- Defining processes for Elephant Breeding and Transfer plans, viable animal placements, and follow-through on breeding and transfer.
- Modernizing the AZA Elephant Program Annual Report to serve as a communication and professional development tool for facilities and TAG/SSP groups.

Long-term initiatives to be achieved over the next 24 months include:

- Reviewing the AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care, aligning with collective definitions of "optimal care" and "thriving."
- Developing an AZA Animal Care Manual for elephants, replacing the outdated Elephant Husbandry Resource Guide.
- Assisting each facility in creating a written long-range elephant strategic plan aligned with the AZA Elephant Strategy.

We express gratitude for the continued dedication and support of the AZA community. Together, we are driving this strategic plan toward a shared vision for a thriving elephant population within AZA.

Together, we stand strong. Together, We Are AZA!

Happy Holidays,

Lisa New
AZA Board Chair
APMC Board Liaison