



Pier 3 / 501 East Pratt Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202-3194
www.aqua.org

Contact: Jenny Yates
410-576-3874 (office)
443-799-8477 (cell)

NATIONAL AQUARIUM IN BALTIMORE ACCREDITATION RENEWED BY AMERICAN ZOO AND AQUARIUM ASSOCIATION

Rigorous Periodic Review Ensures Highest Standards

Baltimore, May 2006 – The National Aquarium in Baltimore is proud to announce that its accreditation was recently renewed by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA).

AZA requires zoos and aquariums to become accredited in order to be members of the association. Accreditation is granted for five years, at the end of which the institution must undergo the rigorous investigation again to insure it meets ever-rising industry standards in collection care, veterinary programs, conservation, education and safety, among other things.

The Aquarium was first accredited in [insert year] and has maintained its accreditation ever since. A dedicated team assures standards are understood and met or exceeded in the years between AZA inspection.

“We are very pleased to have our accreditation renewed by the AZA,” stated Paula Schaedlich, Deputy Executive Director of the National Aquarium in Baltimore. “We are continually evolving and reaffirming our commitment to animal care, professionalism, ethics, conservation and education in order to enrich lives and our community. By seeking and being granted accreditation by the AZA, we demonstrate to our visitors, donors, employees and volunteers that we are committed to the highest standards.”

The AZA Accreditation Commission establishes, upholds, and raises the highest zoological and aquarium industry standards through self-evaluation, on-site inspection, and peer review. The accreditation process includes an initial application and a two- or three-day inspection of the National Aquarium in Baltimore this spring by a team of zoo and aquarium professionals. The inspecting team observed all aspects of the Aquarium’s operation in areas such as collection care (including living environment and daily enrichment); keeper training; safety for animals, staff and visitors; educational programs; conservation efforts; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; visitor services and other areas. The inspection team then prepared an extensive written report for the Accreditation Commission. Finally, a formal hearing was held where top Aquarium officials were interviewed by the Commission, after which accreditation was granted.

Accreditation of zoos and aquariums became a mandatory requirement for membership in the AZA in 1980. In order to retain membership and remain accredited, zoos and aquariums undergo the complete accreditation process every five years. AZA was founded in 1924 and currently represents 210 accredited zoos and aquariums, most of which are located in North

America. AZA's mission is to support member excellence in animal care, conservation, education, science and recreation.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, a non-profit organization, is Maryland's most exciting and popular cultural attraction, as well as one of the region's leading conservation and education resources, hosting more than 1.6 million visitors per year. The Aquarium's mission is to connect people with aquatic life in order to create a better world for both. It is dedicated to education and conservation through more than a dozen programs that serve the environment and the community.

###