



May 17, 2022 – Annual Meeting Minutes

The annual meeting of the Audubon Nature Institute Board was held on Tuesday, May 17, at 8:30 am in the Zoo Presidents’ Room, Chairman Willard Dumas presiding.

In attendance: Willard Dumas, Poco Sloss, Chris Bardell, Caroline Calhoun, Leslie Gottsegen, Tommy Westfeldt, Ludovico Feoli, Mark Romig, Anne Long, Bart Farris, Wil Jacobs, Linda Baum, Dennis Lauscha, Beth Lambert, Henry Coaxum, Megan Eustis, James Ewers, Sandy Villere, Caryn Rodgers-Battiste

Excused: Julie Quinn, Vincent Palumbo, John Nickens, Beau Box, John Payne, Bernard Van der Linden, Susu Stall, Joe Jaeger, Hunter Cazes, Edgar Chase, Angus Cooper, Leah Brown, Peter Moss

Dr. Dumas opened the meeting by formally introducing three new board members, Dr. James Ewers, Sandy Villere III, and Caryn Rodgers-Battiste

The minutes of the March 2022 meeting were unanimously accepted as distributed (Jacobs/Romig).

Dr. Dumas then introduced and recognized Mr. Ron Forman, President and CEO, for his 50 years of Audubon leadership. Mr. Forman presented the nominating committee report in the absence of the committee chair. He first acknowledged Mr. Mark Romig and Mr. Henry Coaxum had reached their two-term limits and thanked them for their service to the board. The terms of Dennis Lauscha, Peter Moss, Poco Sloss, and Beth Lambert are up for renewal. The nominating committee met in March and are recommending the following be elected to four-year terms: Rick Buchsbaum, John Davies, Dennis Lauscha, Peter Moss, Poco Sloss, and Beth Lambert. The board unanimously elected the proposed slate (Nominating Committee/Romig). A total of 190 proxy votes were received.

Mr. Forman continued with his President’s report, starting with a financial update. The March YTD 2022 dashboard was shared with the group ahead of and during the meeting. Mr. Forman briefly discussed the overall revenue and expenses. Revenue was down 2% from budget but expenses were down 8% from budget. He commented on the similarity to the numbers after Katrina. Mr. Forman also mentioned that Audubon is having the same hiring difficulties that are being seen around the area. Wages have been raised for front-line workers to attract more employees.

MARCH YTD 2022 FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS)							
NET OPERATING RESULTS BY FACILITY	YTD ACTUAL 2022	YTD BUDGET 2022	BUDGET VARIANCE	YTD ACTUAL 2021	PRIOR YEAR VARIANCE	TOTAL FORECAST 2022	TOTAL BUDGET 2022
Aquarium	\$75	(\$621)	696	\$975	(900)	2,911	2,215
Zoo & Park	(\$1,108)	(\$928)	(180)	(\$365)	(743)	(3,828)	(3,648)
Butterfly Garden & Insectarium	\$0	\$0	0	(\$10)	10	-	-
FMASSC	(\$79)	(\$184)	105	(\$169)	90	(546)	(651)
Louisiana Nature Center	(\$67)	(\$81)	14	(\$48)	(19)	(98)	(112)
NET OPERATING RESULTS	(\$1,179)	(\$1,814)	\$635	\$383	(\$1,562)	(\$1,561)	(\$2,196)

Excludes capital revenues and expenses.

Mr. Forman then presented some of the highlights of the 2021 Year in Review that was shared with the group and can be found attached to the minutes. This report segued nicely into talking about the morning's Aquarium and Insectarium renovation press release. The press release was accompanied by a video that was shown to the board outlining the amazing updates and revitalization happening to the downtown facilities and riverfront.

Dr. Kyle Burks, EVP and COO, was introduced to give an update on Audubon facilities. He expressed that the Aquarium project would be a great way for Audubon to tell the story of the wonderful things we do. Woldenberg Park improvements will be vital for reimagining the City's waterfront. At the Zoo, baby orangutan Roux is still not out on exhibit. The team is working to build his strength and grip. The Topical Bird House project is wrapping up. The new exhibit will strategically open sometime after the summer. Efforts to refresh the Earth Lab have begun. The exhibit will be the new home for our ambassador animals. The next phase of Jaguar Jungle design is also underway. The historic Odenheimer complex is also slated to be refreshed. Over at the Audubon Louisiana Nature Center, April's Party for the Planet was a great success. The Species Survival Center has been busy breeding several giraffes for other facilities. Some other upcoming projects include Audubon Park stormwater management and Riverview Park improvements.

Next, Mr. Daine Appleberry, Sr. VP of Uptown Facility Operations, was introduced to present some new branding, marketing, and logo changes. He gave some background on the process and the initial partnership with Trumpet in 2019 to evaluate Audubon's purpose and mission. A lot has changed since 2000, the last time this exercise was done. Studies show that purpose-driven brands are more successful. And rebuilding post-COVID allows for Audubon to make future decisions and marketing efforts through the lens of purpose and mission. Mr. Appleberry continued to discuss the current marketing and advertising strategy and shared the new anthem video that defines Audubon's purpose. Finally, he unveiled the new Audubon logo, which conveys the new message that Audubon does more just celebrate the wonders of nature. The first public viewing will happen with the launch of a new website over the summer and be phased in until permanent signage is unveiled with the opening of the new Aquarium/Insectarium.

Mr. Forman ended his report by sharing that tennis upgrade planning is still underway and briefly discussed the capital campaign progress. They have identified \$140M in projects with a need for about \$30M to be raised.

Dr. Dumas asked for any old or new business. Mr. Louis Shepard, Audubon Member, was allowed to address the board. He commented that he believes there should always be at least one Board Member who regularly utilizes the Audubon Tennis Courts. It was acknowledged that at least one current Board Member does regularly play tennis at Audubon.

Lastly, Mr. Forman and Dr. Dumas shared that they were presenting Mr. Poco Sloss with a proclamation certificate recognizing his leadership as immediate past Chairman and thanked him for his service.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned by 9:30 am.

Audubon Nature Institute 2021 Year in Review

2021 was a year marked by rebuilding and resilience in the face of uncertainty. The global catastrophe of the COVID-19 pandemic forever changed the way we all live, work, and move through the world. Public safety measures to slow the spread of the virus forced Audubon to close all public facilities for several months in 2020 when we make the majority of the revenue that sustains our operations through the year. The devastating financial impact and the absence of governmental financial aid for zoos and aquariums left Audubon no choice but to drastically scale down operations, including laying off close to 75% of our staff. Through it all, we continued providing exceptional care for the animals and parks in our charge.

Though 2021 brought continued uncertainty with new variants and Hurricane Ida, it also held some bright spots for Audubon. As our operations returned to normal, and visitation rebounded, we finally received federal aid in the form of a Shuttered Venue Operating grant, and we were able to begin bringing back some employees laid off in 2020 to rebuild our team.

Below are some highlights of Audubon's work in 2021 to rebuild better than ever before. We look to the future with optimism, ready to embark on new adventures and new ways to educate and inspire our community.

Major Achievements

- Audubon Aquarium of the Americas and Audubon Zoo were once again among the top winners of the USA TODAY **10Best Readers' Choice travel award contest**. The **Aquarium ranked 6th** and the **Zoo secured 7th place** among 20 nominees, all accredited by the AZA, that were "hand-picked by a panel of zoo and family travel experts." The Aquarium was also ranked in the top 10 in the nation by Travel + Leisure Magazine.
- After months of working with AZA and other zoos, aquariums, and cultural institutions financially devastated by COVID shut-downs in 2020 to petition the federal government to expand qualifications for federal relief, Audubon received the maximum award—\$10 million—through the **SBA's Shuttered Venue Operators Grant**.
- Staff from **Audubon's Coastal Wildlife Network**, which serves as Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' primary response partner, had a busy year in 2021, rehabilitating and releasing a group of sea turtles dubbed "the Krewe of Turtles" for their Carnival season release. The turtles arrived at CWN for rehabilitation after they were cold stunned off the coast of New England in November 2020. On August 30th, CWN also responded to a report from a local resident on August 30, 2021, about a young bottlenose dolphin trapped in a drainage canal in Slidell, La, after Hurricane Ida. The rescue was coordinated by NOAA Fisheries Service and included our partners in the Southeast Regional Marine Mammal Stranding Network. Our partners included SeaWorld Orlando, SeaWorld San Antonio, The Institute for Marine Mammal Studies, National Marine Mammal Foundation, Alabama Marine Mammal Stranding Network, and NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement. Fortunately, on September 5th, responders were able to rescue the dolphin from the drainage canal, and after the expert veterinarian team assessed it and deemed it healthy enough for release, CWN staff and our partners transported, tagged, and released the dolphin in Bay St. Louis, Ms.
- -In February of 2021, Audubon Aquarium of the Americas welcomed the hatching of its **56th endangered African penguin chick** as part of our SSP breeding program. The chick was the offspring of Hubig (mother) and Ocio (father), who are also parents to Zion, the African penguin chick hatched at the Aquarium in 2020.

- -At Audubon Zoo, our herpetology department was the **most successful breeder of monitor lizards in the world in 2021**. Not only have we been successful with breeding monitors, we've also had egg viability rates and hatch rates much higher than most other institutions.
- **Alliance for Sustainable Wildlife at Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center enjoyed another year of breeding successes**, welcoming the hatchings of whooping cranes, Mississippi sandhill cranes, saddle-billed storks, and their first blue-billed curassow as well as the births of sable antelope, sitatunga, giraffe, and barasingha. The sitatunga herd got a new home, moving from a 12-acre enclosure to a 46-acre enclosure. Not only does this give the herd more space, it allowed ASW to turn the smaller enclosure into a bachelor pen (male animals only), which will help zoo populations by holding male offspring for longer periods of time after they become sexually mature. The bachelor pen is now home to barasingha, sable antelopes, male sitatungas, and Nile lechwes.
- FMASSC and Audubon Zoo are also serving another critical role for species preservation—they are **two of the only four AZA-accredited facilities that house barasingha**, a swamp-loving species of deer whose populations are rapidly declining in their home habitat along the border of India and Nepal.
- **Audubon continued its Community Connect access initiative in 2021**. The program involves three components: Orleans Parish Appreciation Days, which offer free admission to an Audubon attraction for Orleans Parish residents on Wednesdays (attractions available on a rotating schedule); the Audubon SNAP Program, which provides free admission to Audubon attractions every day for SNAP benefit recipients and their families; and the Audubon Museum Culture Pass, which allows Orleans Parish Public Library cardholders to check out passes that can be used at any Audubon attraction any day the attractions are open to the public. **In 2021, Community Connect made it possible for more than 64,000 community members to visit Audubon facilities (as compared to 30,000 in 2020)**.
- In 2021, Audubon Nature Institute and New Orleans Museum of Art partnered with the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation to expand the **Taylor Scholars Awards Program** to include sixth grade students for the first time. The addition of sixth grade will greatly impact the number of students that are recognized for their academic achievements. More than 223,000 high-achieving students in grades 6 through 12 statewide received free Audubon Memberships in the 2020-2021 school year as part of the ongoing initiative established by the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation to reward Louisiana students' hard work.
- Audubon has continued to strengthen its **social media initiatives**, adding fans, friends, and followers daily. At year end, our social media network included more than **389,400 Facebook** followers, **23,200 Twitter** followers; **51,380 Instagram** followers; **3,963 LinkedIn** followers; **15,900 YouTube** subscribers, **27,000 TikTok** followers; and **171,500 email** subscribers.

New Arrivals and Programs

- The much-anticipated **new Shark Discovery gallery** opened in June of 2021 on the second floor of Audubon Aquarium, giving guests a new way to connect with wildlife by reaching into 60-foot-long, 13,000-gallon touchpool filled with a variety of touchable shark and ray species.
- Recovery from COVID-19 closures continued with the **reopening of some of Audubon guests' favorite attractions**, including the Zoo's "Criaturas de la Noche" nocturnal house in Jaguar Jungle and the Reptile Encounter building and the return of the Swamp Train, Gottesman Endangered Species Carousel, Cool Zoo and Gator Run, birthday parties, and

fall and winter camps. Across Magazine Street, the Audubon Park Clubhouse Café reopened for brunch and lunch and in New Orleans East, the Interpretive Center at Audubon Louisiana Nature Center was open to the community once again.

- 2021 was a big year for **orangutan babies** at Audubon Zoo, as Jambi, the group's male, fathered infant Madu with female Reese, who joined Bulan, his offspring with matriarch Feliz born in 2020. Later in the year, animal care staff discovered that the group's other mature female, Menari, was pregnant with twins—an extremely rare and often dangerous phenomenon in orangutans. Menari gave birth on Christmas Eve. Sadly, one of the twins did not make it, but the other, a male dubbed “Roux” by public vote, survived and is now thriving after overcoming some early health challenges.
- **New births** continued to arrive throughout the year as a reminder of the perseverance of life in the face of tragedy, including Pacha the endangered Baird's tapir, a prehensile-tailed porcupette, an owl monkey, and a clutch of dwarf shield-tailed agama.
- Across Audubon, teams found new ways to stay with connected with our community during lockdown and adapt guest-favorite events to new COVID safety protocols. The Education team continued offering **virtual outreach programs** for children across the state. These virtual programs allow students to discover amazing animals with Audubon educators as they explore nature and science together. Students can interact in real time with educators and live animals through streaming video conferencing as they discover new things about the world around them. Thanks to the support of Shell, Chevron, and the New Orleans Pelicans, **Audubon was able to offer virtual programming to Title 1 schools in Louisiana free of charge.**