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## Polar Bear Odyssey

### World Class Exhibit to Open June 3, 2010

On June 3rd, 2010 Como Zoo will proudly unveil "Polar Bear Odyssey". The new World Class Exhibit featuring 13,140 square foot of outdoor polar bear living space, and a 3,260 square foot state-of-the-art holding building with large indoor bedrooms, a cub den, daylight and pools.



Polar Bear Odyssey was designed with polar bears and the public in mind. Visitors will delight in up-close and personal views of the worlds largest land predator. Visitors will be able to observe the polar bears inside the 1,270 square foot Outpost - a climate-controlled building that provides both underwater views and expansive views of the entire habitat. Outside, visitors will have unobstructed views that bring the bears as close as twenty feet.

The new exhibit will emulate a Hudson Bay ecosystem complete with a river-washed stream, rocky cliffs and evergreen vegetation. Three salt water pools of various depths will provide the bears with options that mirror their native Tundra habitat. A unique feature of the Polar Bear Odyssey structure is the two separate habitat areas that can be joined together by a corridor. This allows Como Zoo to separate the two habitats when housing a family group, as the male bear must be isolated from the female and cubs. All land space in the habitat will be covered with soil, vegetation and gravel so the bears have a soft, tactile, natural surface under their paws. Other features include a 260 square foot digging pit filled with bark chips, gravel and sand and two designated stations for the public to watch operant animal training sessions between zookeepers and polar bears.

The project was designed using the most stringent requirements available for polar bears to insure it contains the features needed to provide the highest standards of quality care for this threatened species. Polar Bear Odyssey places the bears in a natural landscape immersive environment. The habitat provides a multitude of opportunities for the bears to exhibit natural behaviors such as digging, swimming, foraging and hunting.

The new \$15.35 million dollar exhibit meets or exceeds the most recent versions of the USDA Marine Mammals Act, Association of Zoos and Aquariums Polar Bear Standards and the Canadian Polar Bear Protection Act. These three standards provide detailed requirements for all elements of the care and management of polar bears, including square feet of habitat space per bear, height of habitat barriers, opportunities for bears to display natural behaviors, type of water, filtration systems, size of holding space, and more. Como Zoo elected to pursue the most stringent standards available for polar bear care to insure a high quality of life for the bears, to increase the probability of receiving a wild bear from Canada, and to guarantee the habitat could house a family group with cubs. Polar Bear Odyssey also received a major endorsement from Polar Bears International (PBI). PBI is a nonprofit organization whose mission of conservation through research and education has caused it to emerge as the key resource center world-wide for polar bears. This internationally-recognized expert on polar bears endorsed Polar Bear Odyssey as an exceptional design for a polar bear habitat and believes it will serve as a model for other zoos in North America.

Also new is the 650 square foot Lodge which can provide a great get-away for business meetings, education classes and private receptions. The Lodge has floor to ceiling windows looking out into Polar Bear Odyssey. Attached to the Lodge will be beautiful new restroom facilities.

Como Zoo has managed polar bears as a part of its animal collection for over forty years. Since the beginning, the polar bears have been one of the public's most beloved animals.

## Media Policy

We welcome media to visit and shoot at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. We have a check-in policy and can assist with parking, please call 651-248-9836